

Before the Building Practitioners Board

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| | BPB Complaint No. CB25516 |
| Licensed Building Practitioner: | Mark Shute (the Respondent) |
| Licence Number: | BP 129629 |
| Licence(s) Held: | Carpentry |

Decision of the Board in Respect of the Conduct of a Licensed Building Practitioner

Under section 315 of the Building Act 2004

(Subject to Final Submissions)

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|----------------------------------|---------------|
| Complaint or Board Inquiry | Complaint |
| Hearing Type: | On the Papers |
| Hearing and Draft Decision Date: | 22 June 2021 |
| Final Decision Date: | 27 July 2021 |

Board Members Present:

Mr M Orange, Deputy Chair, Barrister (Presiding)
Mr D Fabish, LBP, Carpentry and Site AOP 2
Mrs F Pearson-Green, LBP, Design AOP 2
Mr R Shao, LBP, Carpentry and Site AOP 1

Procedure:

The matter was considered by the Building Practitioners Board (the Board) under the provisions of Part 4 of the Building Act 2004 (the Act), the Building Practitioners (Complaints and Disciplinary Procedures) Regulations 2008 (the Complaints Regulations) and the Board's Complaints and Inquiry Procedures.

Disciplinary Finding:

The Respondent **has** committed a disciplinary offence under section 317(1)(da)(ii) of the Act.

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Summary of the Board's Draft Decision

- [1] The Respondent failed to provide a record of work on completion of restricted building work. He is fined \$1,500 and ordered to pay costs of \$500.

The Charges

- [2] On 22 June 2021, the Board received a Registrar's Report in respect of a complaint about the conduct of the Respondent.
- [3] Under regulation 10 of the Complaints Regulations, the Board must, on receipt of the Registrar's Report, decide whether to proceed no further with the complaint because regulation 9 of the Complaints Regulations applies.
- [4] Having received the report, the Board decided that regulation 9 applied to aspects of the complaint but not to all of the allegations.

Regulation 9 Decisions

- [5] The complaint to the Board also contained allegations that the Respondent had:
- (a) carried out or supervised building work or building inspection work in a negligent or incompetent manner (s 317(1)(b) of the Act);
 - (b) held himself or herself out as being licensed to carry out or supervise building work or building inspection work of a type that, at that time, he or she was not licensed to carry out or supervise (s 317(1)(db) of the Act); or
 - (c) conducted himself or herself in a manner that brings, or is likely to bring, the regime under this Act for licensed building practitioners into disrepute (s 317(1)(i) of the Act).

Section 317(1)(c)

- [6] With regard to the allegation under section 317(1)(c), which related to the Respondent's licence having been suspended at various times during the build, the Board decided that regulation 9(a) of the Complaints Regulations applied. It provides:

Complaint not warranting further investigation

A complaint does not warrant further investigation if—

- (a) it does not come within the grounds for discipline;*

- [7] The Board noted that the Respondent was licensed between when the building work started and when the various council inspections were carried out. There was no evidence of when the actual work was carried out.
- [8] The Respondent's licence has been suspended at various points in time. His licence was suspended as follows:
- 13 November 2017 to 14 August 2018
 - 20 November 2018 to 16 October 2019
 - 21 November 2019 to 19 February 2020
 - 20 November 2020 to 20 November 2021
- [9] The suspensions were for non-payment of licensing fees.
- [10] Under section 297 of the Act, a person ceases to be a Licensed Building Practitioner when their license is suspended:

297 Effect of licensing suspension

- (1) A person is not a licensed building practitioner, for the purposes of this Act, for the period for which his or her licensing is suspended.*

- (2) *At the end of the period of suspension, the person's licensing is immediately revived (unless there is some other ground to suspend or cancel that person's licensing under this subpart).*

- [11] In effect, the Respondent was not a Licensed Building Practitioner when his licence was suspended. He was not authorised, during those periods, to carry out or supervise restricted building work.
- [12] The Board only has jurisdiction over Licensed Building Practitioners. Given the wording of section 297, the Board does not have any jurisdiction over a person when their licence is suspended.
- [13] It is an offence under section 85 of the Act for an unlicensed person to carry out restricted building work, with the penalty being a fine not exceeding \$50,000. The prosecuting authority for offences under section 85 is the Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment. The Board cannot deal with such matters. The Respondent, if he carried out or supervised restricted building work when his licence was suspended, may have committed an offence under section 85 of the Act. Notwithstanding, as noted above, that is not a matter that the Board can proceed with.
- [14] The Respondent is cautioned about licensing. He must not carry out or supervise any restricted building work if his licence has been suspended. He should also note that it is not enough to say that he regained his licence when the inspections were carried out or when documentation is required. His licence is required when the work is carried out.

Section 317(1)(db)

- [15] Regulation 9(a) also applies to the allegation under section 317(1)(db). The offence under the section applies to situations where a person is licensed in one class but represents that they can carry out or supervise restricted building work that requires a different class of licence. There was no evidence that the Respondent had represented that he could undertake any restricted building work outside of carpentry.
- [16] The same considerations as those under section 317(1)(c) above apply as regards the allegation that he represented that he could carry out restricted building work when he was not licensed. The Board has no jurisdiction.
- [17] The Respondent should note that it is an offence under section 314 of the Act to hold out as being licensed while not being licensed. Again the maximum fine is \$50,000, but the Board is not the prosecuting authority.

Disrepute

- [18] With regard to the allegation of disrepute, the Board decided that regulation 9(f)(ii) of the Complaints Regulations applied. It provides:

Complaint not warranting further investigation

A complaint does not warrant further investigation if—

- (f) the investigation of it is—*
- (ii) unnecessary; or*

- [19] In considering whether the investigation of a complaint is necessary, the Board is required to consider the directions of the courts as regards the threshold for matters to be dealt with as a disciplinary matter. In *Collie v Nursing Council of New Zealand*¹, Justice Gendall stated, as regards the threshold for disciplinary matters:

[21] Negligence or malpractice may or may not be sufficient to constitute professional misconduct and the guide must be standards applicable by competent, ethical and responsible practitioners and there must be behaviour which falls seriously short of that which is to be considered acceptable and not mere inadvertent error, oversight or for that matter carelessness.

- [20] Again, in *Pillai v Messiter (No 2)*,² the Court of Appeal stated:

... the statutory test is not met by mere professional incompetence or by deficiencies in the practice of the profession. Something more is required. It includes a deliberate departure from accepted standards or such serious negligence as, although not deliberate, to portray indifference and an abuse.

- [21] With specific regard to allegations of disrepute, when the disciplinary provision was introduced to Parliament, the accompanying Cabinet paper noted:

This power would only be exercised in the most serious of cases of poor behaviour, such as repetitive or fraudulent behaviour, rather than for minor matters.

- [22] It is on the basis of the above court directions and the facts as presented in the complaint and response that the Board has decided that, whilst there was some evidence of conduct that may have come within the disciplinary provision, it will not proceed with the allegations of disrepute.

Disciplinary Offence to be Investigated

- [23] On the basis of the Registrar's Report, the Respondent's conduct that the Board resolved to investigate was that the Respondent had failed, without good reason, in respect of a building consent that relates to restricted building work that he or she is to carry out (other than as an owner-builder) or supervise, or has carried out (other

¹ [2001] NZAR 74

² (1989) 16 NSWLR 197 (CA) at 200

than as an owner-builder) or supervised, (as the case may be), to provide the persons specified in section 88(2) with a record of work, on completion of the restricted building work, in accordance with section 88(1) (s 317(1)(da)(ii) of the Act).

- [24] Under regulation 10, the Board is required to hold a hearing in respect of that matter.

Draft Decision Process

- [25] The Board's jurisdiction is that of an inquiry. Complaints are not prosecuted before the Board. Rather, it is for the Board to carry out any further investigation that it considers is necessary prior to it making a decision. In this respect, the Act provides that the Board may regulate its own procedures³. It has what is described as a summary jurisdiction in that the Board has a degree of flexibility in how it deals with matters; it retains an inherent jurisdiction beyond that set out in the enabling legislation⁴. As such, it may depart from its normal procedures if it considers doing so would achieve the purposes of the Act, and it is not contrary to the interests of natural justice to do so.
- [26] In this instance, the Board has decided that a formal hearing is not necessary. The Board considers that there is sufficient evidence before it to allow it to make a decision on the papers.
- [27] The Board does, however, note that there may be further evidence in the possession of persons involved in the matter or that the Board may not have interpreted the evidence correctly. To that end, this decision is a draft Board decision. The Complainant and the Respondent will be provided with an opportunity to comment on the Board's draft findings and to present further evidence prior to the Board making a final decision. If the Board directs or the Respondent requests an in-person hearing, then one will be scheduled.

Evidence

- [28] The Board must be satisfied on the balance of probabilities that the disciplinary offences alleged have been committed⁵. Under section 322 of the Act, the Board has relaxed rules of evidence that allow it to receive evidence that may not be admissible in a court of law.
- [29] The Respondent was engaged to carry out building work on an alteration to an existing residential dwelling. The building work was carried out under a building consent. The building work included restricted building work for which a record of work must be provided on completion. The Respondent's building work started on or about 20 August 2018 and came to an end in or about June 2019 when the contract was brought to an end. A record of work has not been provided.

³ Clause 27 of Schedule 3

⁴ *Castles v Standards Committee No.* [2013] NZHC 2289, *Orlov v National Standards Committee 1* [2013] NZHC 1955

⁵ *Z v Dental Complaints Assessment Committee* [2009] 1 NZLR 1

- [30] The Respondent was not licensed for the whole of the build. The periods when he was suspended are set out in paragraph [8]. He was, however, licensed when inspections were carried out and during periods of the build. He must provide a record of work for the restricted building work that he carried out or supervised when he was licensed.
- [31] The Respondent was provided with the complaint and was asked to provide a response. He stated that he did not carry out any restricted building work when he was not licensed. The response, however, appeared to imply that the only critical date for licensing was that which related to the start of the project and that, as the suspensions were because he had not paid his licence fees, they did not matter.
- [32] As noted above, the Respondent must be licensed at all times when restricted building work is carried out or supervised, and there are significant fines for carrying out restricted building work when not licensed.
- [33] The Respondent also stated:
- With regard to the record of work not being provided I can't do that at this point as the works are yet to be completed.*
- [34] In a phone interview on 23 June 2020, the Respondent noted that he would ask the complainant (the owner) to find another builder.

Draft Conclusion and Reasoning

- [35] The Board has decided that the Respondent **has** failed, without good reason, in respect of a building consent that relates to restricted building work that he or she is to carry out (other than as an owner-builder) or supervise, or has carried out (other than as an owner-builder) or supervised, (as the case may be), to provide the persons specified in section 88(2) with a record of work, on completion of the restricted building work, in accordance with section 88(1) (s 317(1)(da)(ii) of the Act) and **should** be disciplined
- [36] There is a statutory requirement under section 88(1) of the Building Act 2004 for a licensed building practitioner to provide a record of work to the owner and the territorial authority on completion of restricted building work⁶.
- [37] Failing to provide a record of work is a ground for discipline under section 317(1)(da)(ii) of the Act. In order to find that ground for discipline proven, the Board need only consider whether the Respondent had “good reason” for not providing a record of work on “completion” of the restricted building work.
- [38] The Board discussed issues with regard to records of work in its decision C2-01170⁷ and gave guidelines to the profession as to who must provide a record of work, what a record of work is for, when it is to be provided, the level of detail that must be

⁶ Restricted Building Work is defined by the Building (Definition of Restricted Building Work) Order 2011

⁷ *Licensed Building Practitioners Board Case Decision C2-01170* 15 December 2015

provided, who a record of work must be provided to and what might constitute a good reason for not providing a record of work.

- [39] The starting point with a record of work is that it is a mandatory statutory requirement whenever restricted building work under a building consent is carried out or supervised by a licensed building practitioner (other than as an owner-builder). Each and every licensed building practitioner who carries out restricted building work must provide a record of work.
- [40] The statutory provisions do not stipulate a timeframe for the licenced person to provide a record of work. The provisions in section 88(1) simply states “on completion of the restricted building work ...”. As was noted by Justice Muir in *Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment v Bell*⁸ “... the only relevant precondition to the obligations of a licenced building practitioner under s 88 is that he/she has completed their work”.
- [41] As to when completion will have occurred is a question of fact in each case. In most situations’ issues with the provision of a record of work do not arise. The work progresses, and records of work are provided in a timely fashion.
- [42] In the present matter, the contractual relationship came to an end. The Respondent has not returned to carry out any further restricted building work and could not do so as his license was suspended. Completion, therefore, occurred in June 2019. Moreover, even if the contractual relationship had not ended then, in June 2020, the Respondent stated he would be telling the owner to get another builder. Again this is evidence that he would not be returning and would not be carrying out any further restricted building work.
- [43] The Board does not accept the submission that the work was not complete and that the Respondent could not, as a result, provide a record of work. On the basis of the Respondent’s submission, completion would, potentially, never occur. That would mean that a record of work may never be provided, which could defeat the purposes of the legislation, which is to create a permanent record of who did what in the way of restricted building work.
- [44] The Respondent should also note that a record of work can capture not only what has been done but also what has not been done by the licensed building practitioner. By providing adequate detail within the record of work, they can afford themselves a degree of protection against future liability by limiting the record to only that which they have completed.
- [45] On the basis of the above, the Board finds that the record of work was not provided on completion as required, and the disciplinary offence has been committed.
- [46] Section 317(1)(da)(ii) of the Act provides for a defence of the licenced building practitioner having a “good reason” for failing to provide a record of work. If they

⁸ [2018] NZHC 1662 at para 50

can, on the balance of probabilities, prove to the Board that one exists, then it is open to the Board to find that a disciplinary offence has not been committed. Each case will be decided by the Board on its own merits, but the threshold for a good reason is high.

- [47] In this instance, there were ongoing payment and funding issues. Whilst these have not been put forward as a reason, the Respondent should note that the Board has repeatedly stated that a Record of Work is a statutory requirement, not a negotiable term of a contract. The requirement for it is not affected by the terms of a contract nor by contractual disputes. Licensed building practitioners should now be aware of their obligations to provide them, and their provision should be a matter of routine.
- [48] The Respondent should also note that the requirement is on the licensed building practitioner to provide a record of work, not on the owner or territorial authority to demand one. He is required to act of his own accord and not wait for others to remind him of his obligations.

Draft Decision on Penalty, Costs and Publication

- [49] Having found that one or more of the grounds in section 317 applies, the Board must, under section 318 of the Actⁱ, consider the appropriate disciplinary penalty, whether the Respondent should be ordered to pay any costs and whether the decision should be published.
- [50] The matter was dealt with on the papers. Included was information relevant to penalty, costs and publication, and the Board has decided to make indicative orders and give the Respondent an opportunity to provide further evidence or submissions relevant to the indicative orders.

Penalty

- [51] The purpose of professional discipline is to uphold the integrity of the profession; the focus is not punishment but the enforcement of a high standard of propriety and professional conduct. The Board does note, however, that the High Court in *Patel v Complaints Assessment Committee*⁹ commented on the role of “punishment” in giving penalty orders stating that punitive orders are, at times, necessary to provide a deterrent and to uphold professional standards. The Court noted:

[28] I therefore propose to proceed on the basis that, although the protection of the public is a very important consideration, nevertheless the issues of punishment and deterrence must also be taken into account in selecting the appropriate penalty to be imposed.

- [52] The Board also notes that in *Lochhead v Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment*,¹⁰ the Court noted that whilst the statutory principles of sentencing set out in the Sentencing Act 2002 do not apply to the Building Act, they have the advantage of simplicity and transparency. The Court recommended adopting a

⁹ HC Auckland CIV-2007-404-1818, 13 August 2007 at p 27

¹⁰ 3 November 2016, CIV-2016-070-000492, [2016] NZDC 21288

starting point for a penalty based on the seriousness of the disciplinary offending prior to considering any aggravating and/or mitigating factors.

- [53] Record of work matters are at the lower end of the disciplinary scale. The Board's normal starting point for a failure to provide a record of work is a fine of \$1,500, an amount which it considers will deter others from such behaviour. There are no aggravating nor mitigating factors present. As such, the Board sees no reason to depart from the starting point. The fine is set at \$1,500.

Costs

- [54] Under section 318(4) the Board may require the Respondent "to pay the costs and expenses of, and incidental to, the inquiry by the Board."
- [55] The Respondent should note that the High Court has held that 50% of total reasonable costs should be taken as a starting point in disciplinary proceedings and that the percentage can then be adjusted up or down having regard to the particular circumstances of each case¹¹.
- [56] In *Collie v Nursing Council of New Zealand*,¹² where the order for costs in the tribunal was 50% of actual costs and expenses, the High Court noted that:

But for an order for costs made against a practitioner, the profession is left to carry the financial burden of the disciplinary proceedings, and as a matter of policy that is not appropriate.

- [57] The Board notes the matter was dealt with on the papers. There has, however, been costs incurred investigating the matter, producing the Registrar's Report and in the Board making its decision. The costs have been less than those that would have been incurred had a full hearing been held. As such, the Board will order that costs of \$500 be paid by the Respondent. The Board considers that this is a reasonable sum for the Respondent to pay toward the costs and expenses of, and incidental to, the inquiry by the Board.

Publication

- [58] As a consequence of its decision, the Respondent's name and the disciplinary outcomes will be recorded in the public register maintained as part of the Licensed Building Practitioners' scheme as is required by the Act¹³. The Board is also able, under section 318(5) of the Act, to order publication over and above the public register:

In addition to requiring the Registrar to notify in the register an action taken by the Board under this section, the Board may publicly notify the action in any other way it thinks fit.

¹¹ *Cooray v The Preliminary Proceedings Committee* HC, Wellington, AP23/94, 14 September 1995, *Macdonald v Professional Conduct Committee*, HC, Auckland, CIV 2009-404-1516, 10 July 2009, *Owen v Wynyard* HC, Auckland, CIV-2009-404-005245, 25 February 2010.

¹² [2001] NZAR 74

¹³ Refer sections 298, 299 and 301 of the Act

- [59] As a general principle, such further public notification may be required where the Board perceives a need for the public and/or the profession to know of the findings of a disciplinary hearing. This is in addition to the Respondent being named in this decision.
- [60] Within New Zealand, there is a principle of open justice and open reporting which is enshrined in the Bill of Rights Act 1990¹⁴. The Criminal Procedure Act 2011 sets out grounds for suppression within the criminal jurisdiction¹⁵. Within the disciplinary hearing jurisdiction, the courts have stated that the provisions in the Criminal Procedure Act do not apply but can be instructive¹⁶. The High Court provided guidance as to the types of factors to be taken into consideration in *N v Professional Conduct Committee of Medical Council*¹⁷.
- [61] The courts have also stated that an adverse finding in a disciplinary case usually requires that the name of the practitioner be published in the public interest¹⁸. It is, however, common practice in disciplinary proceedings to protect the names of other persons involved as naming them does not assist the public interest.
- [62] Based on the above, the Board will not order further publication.

Draft Section 318 Order

- [63] For the reasons set out above, the Board directs that:

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| Penalty: | Pursuant to section 318(1)(f) of the Building Act 2004, the Respondent is ordered to pay a fine of \$1,500. |
| Costs: | Pursuant to section 318(4) of the Act, the Respondent is ordered to pay costs of \$500 (GST included) towards the costs of, and incidental to, the inquiry of the Board. |
| Publication: | The Registrar shall record the Board's action in the Register of Licensed Building Practitioners in accordance with section 301(l)(iii) of the Act. In terms of section 318(5) of the Act, there will not be action taken to publicly notify the Board's action, except for the note in the Register and the Respondent being named in this decision. |

- [64] The Respondent should note that the Board may, under section 319 of the Act, suspend or cancel a licensed building practitioner's licence if fines or costs imposed as a result of disciplinary action are not paid.

¹⁴ Section 14 of the Act

¹⁵ Refer sections 200 and 202 of the Criminal Procedure Act

¹⁶ *N v Professional Conduct Committee of Medical Council* [2014] NZAR 350

¹⁷ *ibid*

¹⁸ *Kewene v Professional Conduct Committee of the Dental Council* [2013] NZAR 1055

Submissions on Draft Decision

- [65] The Board invites the Respondent and the Complainant to:
- (a) provide further evidence for the Board to consider; and/or
 - (b) make written submissions on the Board's findings. Submissions may be on the substantive findings and/or on the findings on penalty, costs and publication.
- [66] Submissions and/or further evidence must be filed with the Board by no later than the close of business on 26 July 2021.
- [67] If submissions are received, then the Board will meet and consider those submissions.
- [68] The Board may, on receipt of any of the material received, give notice that an in-person hearing is required prior to it making a final decision. Alternatively, the Board may proceed to make a final decision which will be issued in writing.
- [69] If no submissions or further evidence is received within the time frame specified, then this decision will become final.

Request for In-Person Hearing

- [70] If the Respondent, having received and considered the Board's Draft Decision, considers that an in-person hearing is required, then one will be scheduled, and a notice of hearing will be issued.
- [71] A request for an in-person hearing must be made in writing to the Board Officer no later than the close of business on 26 July 2021
- [72] If a hearing is requested, this Draft Decision, including the Board's indicative position on penalty, costs and publication, will be set aside.

Right of Appeal

- [73] The right to appeal Board decisions is provided for in section 330(2) of the Actⁱⁱ.

Signed and dated this 2nd day of July 2021


Mr M Orange
Presiding Member

This decision and the order herein were made final on 27 July 2021 on the basis that no further submissions were received

Signed and dated this 27th day of July 2021


Mr M Orange
Presiding Member

ⁱ Section 318 of the Act

- (1) *In any case to which section 317 applies, the Board may*
 - (a) *do both of the following things:*
 - (i) *cancel the person's licensing, and direct the Registrar to remove the person's name from the register; and*
 - (ii) *order that the person may not apply to be relicensed before the expiry of a specified period:*
 - (b) *suspend the person's licensing for a period of no more than 12 months or until the person meets specified conditions relating to the licensing (but, in any case, not for a period of more than 12 months) and direct the Registrar to record the suspension in the register:*
 - (c) *restrict the type of building work or building inspection work that the person may carry out or supervise under the person's licensing class or classes and direct the Registrar to record the restriction in the register:*
 - (d) *order that the person be censured:*
 - (e) *order that the person undertake training specified in the order:*
 - (f) *order that the person pay a fine not exceeding \$10,000.*
- (2) *The Board may take only one type of action in subsection 1(a) to (d) in relation to a case, except that it may impose a fine under subsection (1)(f) in addition to taking the action under subsection (1)(b) or (d).*
- (3) *No fine may be imposed under subsection (1)(f) in relation to an act or omission that constitutes an offence for which the person has been convicted by a court.*
- (4) *In any case to which section 317 applies, the Board may order that the person must pay the costs and expenses of, and incidental to, the inquiry by the Board.*
- (5) *In addition to requiring the Registrar to notify in the register an action taken by the Board under this section, the Board may publicly notify the action in any other way it thinks fit."*

ⁱⁱ Section 330 Right of appeal

- (2) *A person may appeal to a District Court against any decision of the Board—*
 - (b) *to take any action referred to in section 318.*

Section 331 Time in which appeal must be brought

An appeal must be lodged—

- (a) *within 20 working days after notice of the decision or action is communicated to the appellant; or*
- (b) *within any further time that the appeal authority allows on application made before or after the period expires.*