

## **Before the Building Practitioners Board**

	BPB Complaint No. CB25870
Licensed Building Practitioner:	Mark Wells (the Respondent)
Licence Number:	BP 126267
Licence(s) Held:	Carpentry

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### **Decision of the Board in Respect of the Conduct of a Licensed Building Practitioner Under section 315 of the Building Act 2004**

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Complaint or Board Inquiry	Complaint
Hearing Type:	On the Papers
Hearing and Draft Decision Date:	3 May 2022
Final Decision Date:	28 June 2022

#### **Board Members Present:**

Mr M Orange, Deputy Chair, Barrister (Presiding)  
Mrs F Pearson-Green, LBP, Design AOP 2  
Ms J Clark, Barrister and Solicitor, Legal Member  
Ms K Reynolds, Construction Manager

#### **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.

#### **Draft Disciplinary Finding:**

The Respondent **has** committed disciplinary offences under sections 317(1)(d) and 317(1)(da)(ii) of the Act.

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**Summary of the Board’s Draft Decision**

[1] The Respondent supervised building work in a manner that was contrary to a building consent and failed to provide a record of work on completion of restricted building work. He is fined \$3,000 and ordered to pay costs of \$500. The decision will be recorded in the Register of Licensed Building Practitioners for a period of three years.

**The Charges**

- [2] On 3 May 2022, 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] Whilst the Registrar recommended that regulation (9)(f)(ii) applied, the Board did not agree and decided that regulation 9 did not apply. Under regulation 10 the Board is required to hold a hearing.

- [5] 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 procedures<sup>1</sup>. 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 legislation<sup>2</sup>. 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.
- [6] 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.
- [7] The Board does, however, note that there may be further evidence in the possession of persons involved in the matter. To that end, this decision is a draft Board decision. 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.

#### **Disciplinary Offences Under Consideration**

- [8] The complaint was framed as alleged negligent or incompetent building work under section 317 (1)(b) of the Act for the Respondent's failure to correctly follow the Council inspection process, including a final inspection. The Board considers the alleged conduct is more appropriately investigated under section 317(1)(d) of the Act.
- [9] On the basis of the Registrar's Report, the Respondent's conduct that the Board resolved to investigate was that the Respondent had
- (a) carried out or supervised building work or building inspection work that does not comply with a building consent (s 317(1)(d) of the Act); and
  - (b) 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).

#### **Function of Disciplinary Action**

- [10] The common understanding of the purpose of professional discipline is to uphold the integrity of the profession. The focus is not punishment, but the protection of the

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<sup>1</sup> Clause 27 of Schedule 3

<sup>2</sup> *Castles v Standards Committee No. [2013] NZHC 2289, Orlov v National Standards Committee 1 [2013] NZHC 1955*

public, the maintenance of public confidence and the enforcement of high standards of propriety and professional conduct. Those purposes were recently reiterated by the Supreme Court of the United Kingdom in *R v Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales*<sup>3</sup> and in New Zealand in *Dentice v Valuers Registration Board*<sup>4</sup>.

- [11] Disciplinary action under the Act is not designed to redress issues or disputes between a complainant and a respondent. In *McLanahan and Tan v The New Zealand Registered Architects Board*,<sup>5</sup> Collins J. noted that:

*“... the disciplinary process does not exist to appease those who are dissatisfied ... . The disciplinary process ... exists to ensure professional standards are maintained in order to protect clients, the profession and the broader community.”*

### **Evidence**

- [12] The Board must be satisfied on the balance of probabilities that the disciplinary offences alleged have been committed<sup>6</sup>. 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.
- [13] The Respondent was engaged to carry out building work at [OMITTED], New Plymouth. The work involved the renovation of a basement area in a dwelling to include a kitchen and a bathroom under a building consent. The building work included restricted building work for which a record of work must be provided on completion.
- [14] The Complainant advised that the Council contacted her in July 2021 (Document 2.1, page 33 of the Board’s file) to inquire whether work in respect of a building consent issued on 6 June 2019 had been completed. The work had been completed. The Complainant then began a protracted process of trying to obtain from the Respondent the documentation required by the Council to obtain a Code Compliance Certificate. This included telephone messages and emails from October 2020 to August 2021 (Document 2.1, Pages 40-45 of the Board’s file).

### **Record of Work**

- [15] The Respondent’s building work started in August 2019 and came to an end in October 2019, according to the Complainant. In his response to the Investigator, the Respondent did not refute these dates. The Complainant asked the Respondent for the record of work by email dated 1 October 2020 (Document 2.1, Page 40 of the Board’s file). A record of work dated 2 November 2020 (Document 2.1, Page 37 of the Board’s file) was provided by the Respondent to the Complainant on 3

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<sup>3</sup> *R v Institute of Chartered Accountants in England and Wales* [2011] UKSC 1, 19 January 2011.

<sup>4</sup> [1992] 1 NZLR 720 at p 724

<sup>5</sup> [2016] HZHC 2276 at para 164

<sup>6</sup> *Z v Dental Complaints Assessment Committee* [2009] 1 NZLR 1

November 2020 (Document 2.1, Page 40 of the Board's file), and the Complainant passed it to the Council (Document 2.1, Page 40 of the Board's file).

Contrary to Building Consent

- [16] The building consent dated 6 June 2019 was stated to be subject to conditions, including – *“Inspections shall be carried out in accordance with the attached schedule of inspection types.”* (Document 4.1, Page 66 of the Board's file). That schedule required the following inspections to be complied with – sanitary drains (under slab), block window infill, pre-line (plumbing), pre-line (frame), and final inspection (Document 4.3, Page 79 of the Board's file).
- [17] The Council alerted the Complainant on 27 November 2020 that no inspections had been recorded by the Council for plumbing (sanitary and water supply), new framing, insulation, and block infill (Document 2.1, Page 41 of the Board's file.)
- [18] The Respondent was emailed directly by the Council about the missing inspections on 21 April 2021 (Document 2.1, Page 41 of the Board's file). The Council required the Respondent to *“supply statements from the personal (sic) who completed the un-inspected work noted above, once received these will be received and accepted if suitable.”*
- [19] The Respondent initially engaged with the Complainant and gave dates by which the documents would be provided and expressed difficulty in *“getting the right information”* (Document 2.1, Page 43 of the Board's file). However, by August 2021, no documents had been provided, and the Respondent did not reply to the Complainant's emails of 9 and 25 August 2021 (Document 2.1, Pages 44-45 of the Board's file).
- [20] In response to the complaint, the Respondent stated to the Investigator on 16 December 2021, that:
- (a) he organised the work which was carried out by his employees – two qualified builders and an apprentice;
  - (b) he had provided the record of work on 20 November 2020 but was unsure who he had given it to, and
  - (c) he was *“still working on information for ccc”*. (Document 2.2, Page 52 of the Board's file).
- [21] He did not respond to the alleged failure to carry out and comply with certain Council inspections.

### Draft Conclusion and Reasoning

[22] The Board has decided that

- (a) the Respondent **has** supervised building work that does not comply with a building consent (s 317(1)(d) of the Act); and
- (b) 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

### Contrary to a Building Consent

[23] Under section 40 of the Act, all building work must be carried out in accordance with the building consent issued. Section 40 provides:

**40 Buildings not to be constructed, altered, demolished, or removed without consent**

- (1) *A person must not carry out any building work except in accordance with a building consent.*
- (2) *A person commits an offence if the person fails to comply with this section.*
- (3) *A person who commits an offence under this section is liable on conviction to a fine not exceeding \$200,000 and, in the case of a continuing offence, to a further fine not exceeding \$10,000 for every day or part of a day during which the offence has continued.*

[24] Under section 14E of the Act, a builder must ensure that the building work complies with the building consent.

[25] The process of issuing a building consent and the subsequent inspections under it ensure independent verification that the Building Code has been complied with and that the works will meet the required performance criteria in the Building Code. In doing so, the building consent process provides protection for owners of works and the public at large. This accords with the purposes of the Act.

[26] The building consent in this case, was subject to certain conditions, including the requirement for specified inspections to be carried out and complied with.

[27] Four specified council inspections were not carried out, and accordingly, the Board finds that the Respondent supervised building work which did not comply with a building consent.

- [28] Carrying out or supervising building work contrary to a building consent is a form of strict liability offence. All that needs to be proven is that the building consent has not been complied with. No fault or negligence has to be established<sup>7</sup>.

### Record of Work

- [29] 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 work<sup>8</sup>.
- [30] 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.
- [31] The Board discussed issues with regard to records of work in its decision C2-01170<sup>9</sup> 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 provided, who a record of work must be provided to and what might constitute a good reason for not providing a record of work.
- [32] 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.
- [33] 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*<sup>10</sup> “... the only relevant precondition to the obligations of a licenced building practitioner under s 88 is that he/she has completed their work”.
- [34] As to when completion will have occurred is a question of fact in each case.
- [35] 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. Completion occurred in October 2019. A record of work was not provided until 3 November 2020 and only on the request of the Complainant. On this basis, the Board finds that the record of work was not provided on completion as required, and the disciplinary offence has been committed.
- [36] 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

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<sup>7</sup> *Blewman v Wilkinson* [1979] 2 NZLR 208

<sup>8</sup> Restricted Building Work is defined by the Building (Definition of Restricted Building Work) Order 2011

<sup>9</sup> *Licensed Building Practitioners Board Case Decision C2-01170* 15 December 2015

<sup>10</sup> [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.

- [37] The Respondent did not put forward any reason for supplying the record of work 13 months after completion of the restricted building work.
- [38] The Board notes that the Complainant also referred to an electrical certificate she was seeking from the Respondent as requested by the Council. The Board's jurisdiction as regards non-provision of documents is only in relation to the record of work. The disciplinary provisions under section 317 of the Act do not include a failure to provide documentation other than a record of work.

### **Draft Decision on Penalty, Costs and Publication**

- [39] Having found that one or more of the grounds in section 317 applies, the Board must, under section 318 of the Act<sup>i</sup>, consider the appropriate disciplinary penalty, whether the Respondent should be ordered to pay any costs and whether the decision should be published.
- [40] 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

- [41] 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*<sup>11</sup> 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.*

- [42] The Board also notes that in *Lochhead v Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment*,<sup>12</sup> 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 starting point for a penalty based on the seriousness of the disciplinary offending prior to considering any aggravating and/or mitigating factors.

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<sup>11</sup> HC Auckland CIV-2007-404-1818, 13 August 2007 at p 27

<sup>12</sup> 3 November 2016, CIV-2016-070-000492, [2016] NZDC 21288



[43] Record of work matters are at the lower end of the disciplinary scale. However, supervising building work which does not comply with a building consent is in the mid-range of seriousness. The Board's starting point was a fine of \$4,500, which accorded with the fines imposed for similar offences. However, the Board decided to reduce the fine to reflect the matter being dealt with on the papers. The fine is set at \$3,000.

#### Costs

[44] 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."

[45] 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 case<sup>13</sup>.

[46] In *Collie v Nursing Council of New Zealand*,<sup>14</sup> 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.*

[47] 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

[48] 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 Act<sup>15</sup>. 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.*

[49] 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

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<sup>13</sup> *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.

<sup>14</sup> [2001] NZAR 74

<sup>15</sup> Refer sections 298, 299 and 301 of the Act

of a disciplinary hearing. This is in addition to the Respondent being named in this decision.

[50] Within New Zealand, there is a principle of open justice and open reporting which is enshrined in the Bill of Rights Act 1990<sup>16</sup>. The Criminal Procedure Act 2011 sets out grounds for suppression within the criminal jurisdiction<sup>17</sup>. Within the disciplinary hearing jurisdiction, the courts have stated that the provisions in the Criminal Procedure Act do not apply but can be instructive<sup>18</sup>. 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*<sup>19</sup>.

[51] 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 interest<sup>20</sup>. 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.

[52] Based on the above, the Board **Will Not** order further publication.

### Section 318 Order

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

**Penalty:** Pursuant to section 318(1)(f) of the Building Act 2004, the Respondent is ordered to pay \$3,000.

**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(I)(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.**

[54] 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.

### Submissions on Draft Decision

[55] The Board invites the Respondent to:

(a) provide further evidence for the Board to consider; and/or

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<sup>16</sup> Section 14 of the Act

<sup>17</sup> Refer sections 200 and 202 of the Criminal Procedure Act

<sup>18</sup> *N v Professional Conduct Committee of Medical Council* [2014] NZAR 350

<sup>19</sup> *ibid*

<sup>20</sup> *Kewene v Professional Conduct Committee of the Dental Council* [2013] NZAR 1055

- (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.
- (c) Submissions and/or further evidence must be filed with the Board by no later than the close of business on **27 June 2022**.
- (d) If submissions are received, then the Board will meet and consider those submissions.
- (e) 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.
- (f) If no submissions or further evidence is received within the time frame specified, then this decision will become final.

#### **Request for In-Person Hearing**

- (g) 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.
- (h) A request for an in-person hearing must be made in writing to the Board Officer no later than the close of business on **27 June 2022**.
- (i) 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**

- (j) The right to appeal Board decisions is provided for in section 330(2) of the Act<sup>ii</sup>.

Signed and dated this 1<sup>st</sup> day of June 2022



**Mr M Orange**  
Presiding Member

**This decision and the order herein were made final on 28 June 2022 on the basis that no further submissions were received.**

Signed and dated this 28<sup>th</sup> day of July 2022



**Mr M Orange**  
Presiding Member

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**<sup>i</sup> 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.”*

**<sup>ii</sup> 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.*