

NT BUILDING PRACTITIONERS BOARD

**PROPOSED AMENDED QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE REQUIRED BY APPLICANTS FOR REGISTRATION AS A BUILDING PRACTITIONER**

- For inclusion in DPI Discussion Paper -

**Background**

Over the past year the NT Building Practitioners Board (the Board) has become increasingly aware that the currently prescribed categories for registered building practitioners are not sufficiently aligned with current building industry practices both in the Northern Territory and interstate.

This has become particularly evident as interstate practitioners seek registration in the Territory under the provisions of the *Mutual Recognition Act*, and as the pace of national reform aimed at harmonising registrations of various trade and professional occupations accelerates.

More recently the report prepared for the Minister for Planning and Lands by industry and government officers from Queensland addressed building certification practices in the Territory including the issue of appropriate registration categories for building certifiers and building inspectors.

Further, a number of the reforms developed and committed to by the Government arising from the building industry reform package in 2005 have not been finalised for a number of reasons.

The Board therefore supports the publication of this wide ranging Discussion Paper to address the issues which remain unresolved or which have arisen in recent times and welcomes the opportunity to make this contribution.

**Scope of this Paper**

The currently prescribed building practitioner categories in the Territory are briefly as follows. A more detailed description of each category is at Addendum A.

- Building Certifier (Unrestricted)
- Building Certifier (Residential)
- Certifying Engineer (Structural)
- Certifying Engineer (Hydraulic)
- Certifying Engineer (Mechanical)
- Certifying Architect
- Certifying Plumber and Drainer
- Certifying Plumber and Drainer (Design)
- Building Contractor Residential (Unrestricted)
- Building Contractor Residential (Restricted)

The Board is aware of current proposals, consistent with the national reform process, to review the qualification and registration requirements for plumbers and drainers in the Territory and therefore does not propose any immediate substantial change to the Certifying Plumber and Drainer category.

However the Certifying Plumber and Drainer (Design) category, which appears to be unique to the Territory, does not specifically require trade qualifications and is therefore included in this review.

Similarly, the national reform process is examining the requirements for registration of builders and given that this category was only established for residential building in the Territory some 3 years ago, it is not proposed to make any substantial change to the two related Building Contractor Residential categories at this stage. However the Board notes that there is a substantial variation in the requirements for registration of builders throughout Australia and has had some difficulties and concerns with the current mutual recognition process. The Board therefore welcomes this national review.

The registration of Building Certifiers in the Territory has, as noted above, been raised in the recent Queensland report and comment is made on this in other sections of this Discussion Paper. The Board as a whole has not yet had an opportunity to fully consider and discuss the matters raised in that report and the Board will provide its views in a separate response to the Discussion Paper. The Board also understands that the registration and accreditation requirements for building certifiers are also being reviewed at the national level and, as a consequence of these current reviews, no further comment is provided in this paper.

Therefore, in this paper the Board is proposing that consideration be given to replacing and/or amending the existing categories of;

- Certifying Engineer (Hydraulic)
- Certifying Engineer (Mechanical)
- Certifying Plumber and Drainer (Design)
- Certifying Engineer (Structural), and
- Certifying Architect

### **Building Hydraulic Services**

Most of the difficulties experienced by the Board in determining an appropriate registration category for practitioners in recent times has related to the area of building hydraulic services and fire protection systems. This situation has developed over time and has become more complex with the rapid increase in multi storey buildings being constructed, particularly in the Darwin CBD. To date at least 4 of the current registration categories, including the first 3 listed above, have been involved with certification of the design and/or construction of hydraulic services and fire protection systems.

Given that many projects involve consultants based interstate, it is not surprising that many of these have sought registration in the Territory for certification purposes and this has further highlighted the wide variation in registration and qualification requirements in this field.

In seeking to address these issues the Board has become aware that national bodies such as Engineers Australia and the National Engineering Registration Board (NERB) have been progressively developing new fields for recognition of professional engineering competencies. In particular the NERB, which has representatives from all states and territories, has now established a registration area for a building services engineer and a fire protection engineer.

For some time now the qualification requirements for registration in the Territory have involved both membership of Engineers Australia or registration on the National Professional Engineers Register (NPER) which is oversighted by the NERB. The Board therefore considers it appropriate that any new categories in the Territory should recognise developments in this area by national bodies, even though this is not yet a uniform procedure throughout Australia. Additionally the Board understands that Engineers Australia is developing a policy aimed at pursuing a nationally consistent registration system for engineers and the Board believes its proposals are consistent with this approach.

The Board is also aware of a number of other national industry organisations which provide membership in various categories relating to fire protection and hydraulic services to practitioners who may or may not have professional or other formal qualifications. However it has become clear from resolving a number of registration issues in recent years that there are many widely experienced people operating in these areas of the building industry who are not necessarily academically qualified by current standards, but are nonetheless competent to certify works in which they have long experience.

While in general terms the Board favours an approach that as far as possible is consistent with national directions for reform, it is not aware of any immediate reform proposals which specifically address the field of building hydraulic services.

It therefore proposes that the 3 categories of registration that certify in this area (excluding Certifying Plumbers and Drainers), be collapsed into 2 categories which recognise both the professional and non professional backgrounds of practitioners in these fields. The proposal also recognises that the Board needs the ability to identify and recognise the experience on which an applicant's claim for registration is based and that in the case of professional engineers this information is best determined by existing and long standing national bodies.

The proposed new requirements are as follows;

**. Building Services Engineer  
(New Category)**

Qualifications

Either —

- (a) Membership of Engineers Australia as a chartered professional engineer eligible to use the post nominals, CPEng, combined with membership of the Civil or Mechanical College as appropriate; or
- (b) a certificate of registration as a building services engineer on the National Professional Engineers Register (NPER) subject to confirmation that the registration was obtained on the basis of experience determined by the Board as relevant to the certification functions approved by the Board.

**Subject to the specific endorsement by the Board for each function listed below, a building services engineer may certify the design and/or construction of;**

- hot and cold water systems
- sanitary plumbing
- drainage
- on-site sewage treatment systems
- fire hydrants and fire hose reels
- fire sprinkler/suppression systems
- lift systems
- air conditioning and ventilation systems

**servicing buildings and structures of all classes.**

**Building Services Technician  
(New Category)**

Qualification

Either —

- (a) a Certificate III or IV in a relevant trade/discipline or other educational qualification determined to be equivalent by the Board plus at least 5 years practical experience in the area of practice for which registration is sought; **or**
- (b) a Diploma in a relevant discipline plus at least 4 years practical experience in the area of practice for which registration is sought.

**Subject to the specific endorsement by the Board for each function listed below, a building services technician may certify the design and/or construction of;**

- hot and cold water systems
- sanitary plumbing
- drainage
- on-site sewage treatment systems
- fire hydrants and fire hose reels
- fire sprinkler/suppression systems
- lift systems
- air conditioning and ventilation systems

**servicing buildings and structures of all classes unless otherwise determined by the Board.**

## **Structural Engineer**

The Board is proposing to retain a single category for structural engineer but with an amendment to the current qualification and experience requirements to align with those used by Engineers Australia and the National Professional Engineers Register.

The proposed new requirements are as follows;

### **Structural Engineer (Amended)**

#### Qualifications

Either —

- (a) Membership of Engineers Australia as a chartered professional engineer eligible to use the post nominals, CPEng, combined with membership of the Structural College; or
- (b) a certificate of registration as a structural engineer on the National Professional Engineers Register (NPER).

**A structural engineer may certify the design and/or construction of structures in all classes of buildings, in accordance with the structural provisions of the Building Code of Australia.**

## **Certifying Architect**

To date the Board has not registered any practitioners in this category. It has been suggested that this is because the equivalent experience requirements for an architect are well in excess of other categories and that the experience required in building surveying work is not relevant to the stated function of this category in relation to certifying that the design of buildings meeting the requirements of the Building Code of Australia.

The proposed new requirements to address this situation are as follows;

### **Certifying Architect (Amended )**

#### Qualifications

For the purposes of section 24(1)(c) of the Act, it is a condition for registration as a certifying architect that the applicant for registration -

- (a) is registered as an architect under the *Architects Act*; and
- (b) has had at least 2 years practical experience in designing buildings to meet the requirements of the Building Code of Australia in relation to all classes of buildings.

**A certifying architect may certify that the design of any class of building meets the requirements of the Building Code of Australia.**

## **Certifying Plumber and Drainer**

As noted previously in regard to certifying plumbers and drainers, it is considered appropriate to leave the existing arrangements substantially in place given that this category is subject to current national reform processes and a review by the NT Government.

However, in the interim the Board considers it desirable to seek some form of additional qualification such as a written acknowledgement by the practitioner of the special duties associated with certification as distinct from the requirements for an Advanced Tradesman Licence granted by the NT Plumbers and Drainers Licensing Board.

This would be in a short form similar to the declaration provided by owner-builders and also require a commitment to practice within the practitioner's level of competence. This would address some of the Board's concerns regarding relatively inexperienced tradesmen certifying more complex works that are increasingly found in modern multi storey buildings.

## **Continuing Development Schemes**

The NT *Building Act* provides for the Minister to introduce specific requirements for the continuing (professional) development of registered practitioners. This is to ensure that practitioners keep abreast of changes in building codes and professional/technical requirements relevant to the particular category.

While no such requirements have yet been introduced, the Board has undertaken consultation with industry and professional bodies over the past 2 years. A survey of practitioners in early 2008 indicated strong support for the introduction of continuing development requirements even if it was voluntary in the first instance.

The Board has previously indicated its support for continuing development and will continue to do so in the future.

It welcomes and encourages further discussion on this matter.

## **Timeframe for Introduction of Changes**

A further issue relating to any amendment to practitioner categories is the timing for the implementation of new or amended categories and the qualification requirements for both initial registration and renewal.

The Board's preferred position is that all new registrations from a specified date, for example 1 January 2010, should be based solely on already existing (or amended) national accreditation requirements for building certifiers, professional engineers and architects registered by the Board.

This would provide certainty for those professionals who frequently operate across state and territory borders and importantly, require all those registered on that basis to participate in existing, well established and nationally based continuing professional development schemes.

The Board's preferred position is that this requirement would also apply for all registration renewals in these categories lodged after a period of time, say a further 2 years, ie 1 January 2012. This should allow more than adequate time for practitioners to achieve national accreditation in the relevant category where this is a requirement for registration.

## **Conclusion**

The Board is aware that some individual practitioners may object to some aspects of these proposals and specific comment is welcomed in response to the matters raised above in this paper.

The inclusion of this document in the broader Discussion Paper will ensure that interested parties can respond in the wider context of the ongoing reforms occurring in the building industry at both Northern Territory and national level.



**BUILDING PRACTITIONERS BOARD**  
**CURRENT QUALIFICATIONS AND EXPERIENCE REQUIRED BY APPLICANTS FOR**  
**REGISTRATION AS A BUILDING PRACTITIONER**

**24 JANUARY 2003**

<b>Class of Building Practitioner</b>	<b>Qualifications &amp; Experience</b>
1. Building Certifier (Unrestricted)	<p><u>Qualifications</u></p> <p>A degree, diploma, or other educational qualification, required for accreditation as a building surveyor by the Australian Institute of Building Surveyors.</p> <p><u>Experience</u></p> <p>For the purposes of section 24(1)(c) of the Act, it is a condition for registration as a building certifier that the applicant for registration has had at least 4 years practical experience in building surveying in relation to all classes of buildings.</p> <p><b>A building certifier (unrestricted) may issue building permits and occupancy permits for all classes of buildings or structures, in accordance with the requirements of the NT Building Act, Building Regulations and provisions of the Building Code of Australia.</b></p>
2. Building Certifier (Residential)	<p><u>Qualifications</u></p> <p>A degree, diploma, or other educational qualification, required for accreditation as a building surveyor by the Australian Institute of Building Surveyors.</p> <p><u>Experience</u></p> <p>For the purposes of section 24(1)(c) of the Act, it is a condition for registration as a building certifier (residential) that the applicant for registration has had at least 3 years practical experience in building surveying of Class 1 and Class 10 buildings.</p> <p><b>A building certifier (residential) may issue building permits and occupancy permits for class 1 and 10 buildings or structures, in accordance with the requirements of the NT Building Act, Building Regulations and provisions of the Building Code of</b></p>

**Australia.**3. Certifying Engineer (Structural) Qualifications

Either —

- (a) a degree or other educational qualification, required for membership of Engineers Australia as a professional engineer eligible to use the post nominals MIEAust; or
- (b) a certificate of registration as a structural engineer on the National Professional Engineers Register — (NPER).

Experience

**Note:** The following experience requirement does not apply to an applicant who holds a certificate of registration as a structural engineer on the National Professional Engineers Register - (NPER).

For the purposes of section 24(1)(c) of the Act, it is a condition for registration as a certifying engineer that the applicant for registration has had at least 3 years practical experience in the design of and supervision of the construction of structural engineering works for buildings, including -

- (a) at least 12 months practical experience in the design of structural engineering works for buildings; and
- (b) at least 12 months practical experience in the supervision of the construction of structural engineering works for buildings.

**A certifying engineer (structural) may certify the design and/or construction of all classes of buildings or structures and component elements, in accordance with the structural provisions of the Building Code of Australia.**

4. Certifying Engineer (Hydraulic) Qualifications

Either —

- (a) a degree or other educational qualification, required for membership of Engineers Australia as a professional engineer eligible to use the post

11  
nominals MIEAust; or

- (b) a certificate of registration as a building services engineer on the National Professional Engineers Register (NPER).

#### Experience

**Note:** The following experience requirement does not apply to an applicant who holds a certificate of registration as a building services engineer on the National Professional Engineers Register - (NPER).

For the purposes of section 24(1)(c) of the Act, it is a condition for registration as a certifying engineer (hydraulic) that the applicant for registration has had at least 3 years practical experience in the design of and supervision of the construction of building hydraulic services, including -

- (a) at least 12 months practical experience in the design of building hydraulic services; and
- (b) at least 12 months practical experience in the supervision of the construction of building hydraulic services.

**A certifying engineer (hydraulic) may certify the design and/or construction of plumbing and draining works and hydraulic fire services servicing buildings or structures of all classes, including plumbing and drainage works (including on-site sewerage treatment systems), fire hydrants, fire hose reels and fire sprinklers/suppression systems, in accordance with the provisions of the Building Code of Australia and Building Regulations (4).**

#### 5. Certifying Engineer (Mechanical) Qualification

Either —

- (a) a degree or other educational qualification, required for membership of Engineers Australia as a professional engineer eligible to use the post nominals MIEAust; or
- (b) a certificate of registration as a mechanical engineer on the National Professional Engineers Register — (NPER).

Experience

**Note:** The following experience requirement does not apply to an applicant who holds a certificate of registration as a mechanical engineer on the National Professional Engineers Register - (NPER).

For the purposes of section 24(1)(c) of the Act, it is a condition for registration as a certifying engineer (mechanical) that the applicant for registration has had at least 3 years practical experience in the design of and supervision of the construction of mechanical services in buildings, including -

- (a) at least 12 months practical experience in the design of mechanical services in buildings; and
- (b) at least 12 months practical experience in the supervision of the construction of mechanical services in buildings.

**A certifying engineer (mechanical) may certify the design and/or construction of mechanical systems servicing buildings or structures of all classes, including lift systems and air handling/ventilation systems, in accordance with the provisions of the Building Code of Australia.**

## 6. Certifying Plumber &amp; Drainer

Qualifications

For the purposes of section 24(1)(c) of the Act, it is a condition for registration as a certifying plumber that the applicant for registration holds an advanced tradesman's licence in both plumbing and draining issued under the Plumbers and Drainers Licensing Act.

**A certifying plumber & drainer may certify the design and/or construction of plumbing and drainage works in all classes of buildings, in accordance with the provisions of Building Regulations (4) (ASNZ3500); certify the construction of hydraulic fire services ie. fire hydrants and fire hose reels, in accordance with the approved design and ASNZ3500.**

## 7. Certifying Plumber &amp; Drainer (Design)

Qualifications

For the purposes of section 24(1)(c) of the Act, it is a condition for registration as a certifying plumber and drainer (design) that the applicant for registration has had at least 5 years practical experience in the design of

plumbing and drainage systems and of on-site sewage disposal systems.

**A certifying plumber and drainer (design) may certify the design of plumbing and drainage works in all classes of buildings, in accordance with the provisions of the Building Code of Australia and Building Regulations (4).**

8. Certifying Architect

Qualifications

For the purposes of section 24(1)(c) of the Act, it is a condition for registration as a certifying architect that the applicant for registration -

- (a) is registered as an architect under the *Architects Act*; and
- (b) has had at least 4 years practical experience in building surveying work in relation to all classes of buildings.

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**Please note the following:**

A period of practical experience may only be taken into account in relation to a category of building practitioner if the period commenced after the applicant held a qualification determined by the Board under section 14(1)(a) of the Act in relation to that category".

A reference to "the Act" means *the Building Act 1993*.