



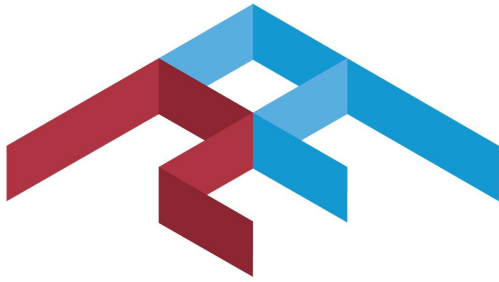
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PRO ACT. NEWS July 2015

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Renew or Retire?

For many Building Surveyors and Building Inspectors, the general Professional Indemnity Insurance renewal date at the end of the financial year, often is a tipping point as to whether they renew, or retire quietly. We have lost colleagues to fatigue and death this year, along with the older ones falling from ladders.

We salute our colleagues and competitors who might be retiring. We already have a critical shortage of Building Surveyors and Statutory Building Inspectors. Fortunately for you, our clients, here are all too young to even think about retiring!!!

Readers are invited to get their names known in my office, in case for any reason their usual Building Surveyor "closes up shop" down the track. Also, anecdotally, these days, Victoria is building 1.5 times what it was, but still with the same number of Building Surveyors. Readers should appoint us, or at least request "Froggy Friday".

Victoria is cementing its status as a population magnet. This population increase wants a variety of housing, including that which Pro Act clients specialize in. Here are some mind blowing statistics to show why we want more buildings (year to June. ABS)...

95700	growth in Melbourne population
11,200	net migration from Sydney to Melbourne
4,000	net migration form other states to Melbourne.

Whilst hopes fade for young home owners, at least our builders will provide homes. That is if those young people are strong enough to lift bearers and joists and help our builders to build.

Pro Act News asks politicians on their winter break, and builders who are chasing the northern sunshine, to think and plan ways to train the building sector.

Remember the terrible VAGO Report?

The Victorian Auditor General's Office report into building control spelt the demise of the Building Commission. At the end of May, Vago issued its next report critical of Victoria's consumer protection framework for building construction.

Notwithstanding that Victoria seems to have more "nanny state" regulations than many parts of the developed world, the consumer protection (and include builders as being "consumers" of this state), are badly let down by the overflowing suite of building regulations.

Pro Act News supports two documents – Vago's May report, and the Australian Institute of Building Survivors' report to VBA.

Regulations under attack.

Now the “messengers”



A frightening assault on two Council inspectors on an isolated rural property has shaken an industry facing an increasingly combative environment. Council inspectors injured in the savage attack are both known to Pro Act, and are very diplomatic and experienced people.

They were on site for a planned inspection of a shed which potentially does not comply with regulations, then allegedly attacked with a metal pole. The pair escaped but, having lost their car keys during the assault, had to flee by foot through the bush. With no mobile phone reception, one of the men had to leave behind his more badly injured colleague until he found the nearest neighbour and phoned police.

Victorian Municipal Building Surveyors Group President, Ashley Hansen said, “They were just out there doing their job”. He put it down to a societal shift, with less respect being shown to authorities. Planning Enforcement Officers Association President, Doug Taylor, said not a week went by without one of the association’s 170 members being abused or threatened.

Drew & Fran relaxing on the Canadian Rocky Mountaineer Train



Readers also work outside of Victoria

It is great news that the helpful VBA’s Guide to Standards and Tolerances 2015, has been adopted in other states, and in New Zealand also. For years it has been a key industry document. Builders and building owners can access an easy-to-use version of the Guide on a smartphone or tablet.

Building Regs for free, but talk is not cheap

We all wish to be correct. We all want to be professional. The recent national government initiative to make Building Regulations free and online, was a terrific initiative.

Not so cheap, is the Annual Australian Building Codes Board National Conference for designers, regulators, builders and all of the building professions. Whilst early-bird discounts have closed, do try and register online. ASAP.

Planning rules stall housing growth

We see the headline often, “Red tape slows boom”. Cumbersome planning overlays and Victoria’s “culture of objecting” are stalling housing growth and adding to costs for homebuyers, the Property Council of Australia’s latest planning assessment has found. The report found both Victoria and South Australia had showed initiative in “getting things done”, but was heavily critical of Victoria’s “third party appeal rights”, which it said were more entrenched than in any other state or territory.

The Council’s chief executive, Ken Morrison, said planning needed to be recognized as a tool to drive economic growth and address housing affordability.

Herald Sun June 5, 2015

Vale Ray Hamill

Friend and veteran Building Surveyor Ray Hamill was well known along the Surf Coast area, and I boarded with him 40 years ago. He has passed away following a long battle with illness.

The VBA and AIBS both saluted his professionalism. Also he was "our man" on the Surf Coast. Ray was best known for the work he did to help victims of the Ash Wednesday fires rebuild their communities. Ray was an inspiring and passionate advocate for building surveying. The AIBS recognized his contribution to the profession by awarding him a Life Fellow award. He was a strong member of the World Organization of Building Officials.



It used to be so easy!!

Building materials after the Second World War were the best (and only), materials available. Then products were stamped; timber with the mill number and stress grade colour, and other materials with the code mark or Australian Standards logo.

Now it is not so easy. Builders are unwittingly buying cheaper replicas, and we all have to be on guard constantly.

Now fears have arisen about a cladding used in good faith in the 23 storey Lacrosse building in Docklands. (The same material was used near us at the Mitcham village 11 storey apartments). All such materials are the subject of a VBA audit letter to 20,000 builders, architects and us.



**Froggy
enjoying the
Weir in
Bath UK.
Thanks to
our Jackie
for the
photo**

It sounds simple, doesn't it?

A resident builds something illegal, e.g. garage, al fresco, etc., and is served with Council Orders/Notices. You are told, all you need is "1507 Certification".

There are subtle differences in the Council terms which sound the same, but are very different. Approve to Building Surveyor satisfaction, certify, certify inspection, Reg. 1507 compliance. The latter, full Regulation 1507 certification is much more complex than even a Building Permit (and can involve the complicated Town Planning). At minimum, the following steps are required: Architectural drawings are required (cost possibly \$1000); An engineering report and certification of the design and the building work (possibly \$1000).

Architectural Drawings (4 sets) also specification of all materials, sizes, stress grades, etc. Then, the **site inspection and approval** will generally involve test holes, removal of linings even destruction of slab core. Foundation depth, waterproofing, stumps – size, bracing, need to be checked, along with roof frame – common, truss, cathedral, flat? Then there are – tie downs, downpipes, connection to storm water, grading away from building. Lastly, does it have cooking, bathing, WC, laundry, smoke detectors, unprotected stairs or decks?

In summary, it may be preferable for the client to obey Council and **demolish**.

You should talk to your Building Surveyor about all of this.

We are Here to Help

For my 27 years at Councils, I issued Orders and Notices. For the nearly 25 years since, I have studied the responses to Councils as a private advocate. If readers have built without a Permit, in about 12 of the 78 Councils, "demolish", means demolish, and no advocacy will help.

In many others, I have been able to help achieve worthwhile compromises.

Attached is our Application Form, if readers would like my opinions on likely success.

Latest Trend – "She Shed"

Consider an outbuilding dubbed a "Man Cave". Maybe containing shadow board tools, a work bench and tasteful pictures on the wall. Probably readers would call it "Class 10", although it might be "Class 1a1" if it had a higher grade of billiard table, home theatre and a bar in the corner.

Readers: what class of occupancy is a "She Shed" (supposedly now 60% of all shed sales), containing shadow board tools, a work table and tasteful pictures on the wall? Hint: (helpful or otherwise), uses of those "She Sheds" range from yoga, to "retreat", writing room or wine den. Maybe dustproof out-of-fashion clothes racks or hobby room.

A prize for the best response!

Comparing Oranges and Apples

Advertisements tit-for-tat turf war over apartment design. Building designers have written to Australia's competition watchdog to complain about an advertising campaign by architects which they say undermines the qualifications of designers and draftsmen. The architects have hit back and want a three-storey limit on designs by designers and draftsmen. The ads, "you wouldn't ask a butcher about broccoli, so when it comes to building and renovating, ask an architect". The ads go on to say, "you talk to someone with the degree and the years of experience to bring it to life. An architect. Not a designer, draftsman or your sister's husband's brother who's handy on a computer".

The building designers said the push to allow only architects to design or direct the design of apartment developments over three storeys "fails to recognize that... there is robust framework in place for maintaining the state's design standards". *The Age May 16 2015.*

Buildings to Anticipate the Next Disaster

New Zealand straddles the Pacific Plate boundary

They have an interesting website 'Geonet NZ' that provides up to the minute data on NZ earthquakes. It quotes the Epi-centre, distance from nearest town, depth and magnitude. A Mag 5.8 quake is rated 'severe.'

The New Office or Understand Your Council Helpful Guide

Hot-desking, hubs are the new office vogue. A fresh way of working is catching on in Council circles, according to *The Age* (13 June).

"It gets people up and moving", says Brett Jackson, manager development and compliance services, Cardinia Shire Council. In the new building seven desks are provided for every 10 employees. "It has reduced the cost of floor space and there isn't ever an issue of people wandering around and not finding somewhere to work." Greater reliance on electronic processes has cut stationery costs, reduced waste and led to faster response times. "People are interested in moving away from traditional models of work." Planning for work practices in the new office began 18 months before the move. "We started with baby steps, centralizing things like stationery and getting people to take down family photographs and get used to sitting at other desks. Here no one has their own desk; we can sit next to anybody and we learn much more about what other people are doing."

Building Risk – the major train line through town

After the major explosion of one of the 20 or so 2km long trains which wind through many towns in Canada, provinces are convening planning meetings in preparation. The target is to prevent the eradication of a small town, and prevent multiple deaths and extensive building damage. A train fire in Canada had a similar devastating effect as the loss of Marysville on Black Saturday 6 years ago.

Thank you for the internet whereby a Canadian province can learn from a hamlet destroyed on the other side of the world.

Canadian rail runs right through the centre of many towns. (below)

Builders – build nicely!!

Readers are invited to open www.ccscheme.org.uk Considerate Constructors Scheme. A non-profit making, independent organization founded in 1997 by the construction industry to improve its image. In the United Kingdom, the Code of Considerate Practice seek to improve the image of the construction industry by striving to promote and achieve best practice under the Code. Constructors should ensure sites appear professional and well managed, and give utmost consideration to their impact on neighbours and the public. Constructors should protect and enhance the environment, seeking sustainable solutions, and minimizing waste, the carbon footprint and resources. They

Friendly People Make a City Great

Recent experience is that you need only to look lost in a friendly city, and the residents stop to help you. Back on 1st April, Lord Mayor, Robert Doyle, put his name to a plan for 'friendly Melbourne'; name badges!

The scheme will be compulsory for City of Melbourne employees, who will be given name tags. Cr Doyle said he also wanted other major businesses and community groups to join the scheme. "It would be voluntary at first, but bit by bit, I would like to move to a mandatory scheme of name tags throughout the City of Melbourne."

Great idea? What do readers think? (Now, look at the date of the article.... I got sucked in!!)



Trends

This newsletter likes to be a little provocative. In the past, it has challenged escape routes from roof top bar or cinema conversions, or fire escapes from restaurants and cafes which have burners that are warming diners in the plastic tent covered footpath tables.

Now, I ask health surveyors in Melbourne (Vancouver, London, etc), how the food cleanliness standards are upheld in now becoming ubiquitous food trucks and vans. Definitely a First World problem – the Third World would be simply grateful. Now to simply get Third World shelter is a challenge. Half way between First and Third World is Qatar's capital of Doha. A city with money, but a city in transition from desert (with copious oil and gas), to the "new Dubai". It certainly has impressive buildings, and can host important events. But behind the scenes, its housing of its huge population of cheap foreign workers and human rights record is questionable, if not at a Third World standard.

So to housing in modern Canada. Australia's Town Planners, what do you think of easing the housing crises by what one province calls, "Accessory Suite", which sees full legitimacy and encouragement. They are lauded as an affordable rental housing strategy. And so, the definition of "Accessory Suite": Rooms attached to houses for rent being of a higher standard than a sleepout or converted garage. There, the Town Planners are complaining that these "Accessory Suites" are not being used as rental housing, but as the dwellings' guest room, recreational room, or home office.

Jackie & Froggy's amazing overseas Trip

(p.s we are not sure if she will ever return,
she is having such a good time)



Canal ride along to
the Blackhorse
Trowbridge



Ephesus near the Port
of Kusandasi in Turkey

The New Economic Bedroom

Weary air travelers have a quiet spot to rest their heads.

Helsinki Airport's latest passenger feature is the designer sleeping pod. The size of a large bathtub, complete with a blind to conceal the occupant, a charging port for phones and a luggage compartment under the cocoon's reclining seat are available for use for \$US10. The capsules are a simpler and less costly alternative to the air-side hotels on offer at some airports.

Bloomberg News



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If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter, please reply to this email with a subject line of "Pro Act News Unsubscribe Me". Regardless, we sincerely hope that you remain with us.

Drew, Ainslie, Gaye, Rhonda, Emma, and Di