

Let us know your staff members name's & we will send the next edition directly to them

✓



website

Please pass around your office.

✓

# PRO ACT. NEWS

January 2016

365 Mitcham Road,  
Mitcham, Vic. 3132  
Tel: (03) 9872 3364  
E-mail: [dwardsworth@proactconsult.com.au](mailto:dwardsworth@proactconsult.com.au)  
[www.proactconsult.com.au](http://www.proactconsult.com.au)

Floods to Melbourne's north (and loss of life), Black Christmas fires to Melbourne's west (near Ballarat) and the Great Ocean Road (thankfully, no loss of life, but with total loss of 116 houses and expected fire damage to 300 more). So, so many Black Saturday lessons have been learned, and Victoria is to be congratulated – the result being nil deaths due to the recent fires.

We offer sympathy to Yarloop, WA, where as houses, 142 structure and 2 deaths were lost.

The danger from the floods and fires is not over, nor has the economic loss been capped yet. Loss of

## NEW LESSONS LEARNT FROM WYE RIVER

Real success, according to Victoria's Emergency Management Commissioner Craig Lapsley. First, (touch wood) no one was killed or seriously injured so far, despite the speed and intensity and erratic behaviour. Second, despite houses lost, the core community and infrastructure remain, plus 2/3 of the houses. Third – authorities capacity to provide community information and warnings. Also the Fire Ready app which I and all of you should have on your phone.

Fourth, credit goes to the Wye River community itself, who built their own fire plan as to how to face the emergency/evacuation.

*(Credit The Age 28.12.15)*

## NEW STAFF MEMBER WELCOMED

Late last year, we welcomed Rory Thompson to our ranks. He has recently qualified and comes to us after 10 years on a building site. He is continuing his studies part time, and when with us he is usually the first person you meet in the office.

Rory Thompson

ProAct. Christmas

## **HIGH RISE TOWER FIRE ALERT**

We witnessed on TV the horror of the fireworks on New Year's Eve which caused a 20<sup>th</sup> floor fire which tore up the 63 storey luxury hotel in Dubai. It is the fear of all readers, and may have parallels to the Melbourne Docklands fire mid last year.

Meanwhile, in parallel, a Melbourne push condemns the far too many high rise dog box apartments as creating future slums, with the hint that modern cheap/flammable claddings are exacerbating potential fire risk.

Then added to this, is the subtle conversion to Class 3 "overseas housing" where a tent is sub let in a lounge room or on a balcony to overseas students or backpackers.

## **CONGRATULATIONS OUR INSPECTOR MARCUS**

In the current edition of THE AUSTRALIAN BUILDING SURVEYOR (the official magazine of the Australian Institute of Building Surveyors) the featured member is Marcus, our Inspector for eastern and southern areas. It is great for fellow members to get to know Marcus better, and to realize his sound building background.

Congratulations Marcus on your professionalism.

## **POSTHUMOUS RECOGNITION**

Thirty years ago, Ash Wednesday ravaged the Great Ocean Road by fire. Local Building Surveyor and colleague Ray Hamill wrote an insightful and clever report to the state government. After Ray's death mid last year, his report became public, to the acclaim of the "Bushfire Building Council of Australia". (BBCA PO Box 474, Eltham Vic. 3095).

At Christmas, the BBCA made their Innovation Awards, the top award going to Emergency Management Victoria. It's Chief Craig Lapsley accepted the award, for the brilliant Blackwood Community Fire Refuge + Fire Station.

Congratulations to Ray's wife Kerrie, who attended the prestigious award ceremony, as this top award was given the title.....

### **The Ray Hamill Innovation of the Year**

No wonder Ray was made a Life Member of the AIBS several years ago.

## **NEW YEAR RESOLUTIONS**

You might hear it from me first. Or you heard it from your industry organization during December. Also you might have forgotten the new Building Regulations being flagged by the VBA. Following are some of the changes.

- ❖ Detail + education to the changes to come in the next few months.
- ❖ Builders to re-register every 5 years, after on-site checks and CPD.
- ❖ New body “Domestic Building Resolution Victoria” with emphasis on resolution.
- ❖ Experienced Building Inspectors are presently being recruited.
- ❖ Obligation on the Building Practitioner to ensure that there is a building permit, and the builders work complies.
- ❖ Owner-builders will only be allowed to complete one home every 5 (five) years and must pass competency assessment.
- ❖ Owner-builders only use registered tradespeople.

## **DONT GET DECKED** **BEACHSIDE**

Congratulations to Robert Caulfield of Archicentre for notifying holiday towns local newspapers. He said that a timber deck or balcony with 1 or 3 occupants on it, might not stand up to 15-20 revellers at Christmas or New Year. Also including

### **NEWS FROM CANBERRA**

**Announced at the AIBS conference, the NCC 2016 will run to 2019, a 3 year cycle (rather than the present annual changes).**

**Further to my comments above (“High Rise Tower Fire Alert”), the ABCB is aiming to clarify Class 2 (flats) and Class 3 apartments/hotels/boarding houses.**

**There may even be a change in head/ceiling heights. Planning Minister Wynne wants 2.7m not 2.4m in tiny apartments.**

### **NEW RULE ALREADY OBSERVED BY PROACT**

The 2016 rule will be prohibition on the builder appointing a building surveyor. As now, the builder or the drafts person or architect can offer professional suggestions that their client chooses us and our professionalism. The key, as happens now, is that the owner completes and signs the form called the OWNERS APPOINTMENT, which is one of our 3 application forms. (see the last page of this newsletter).

## **CRYSTAL CLEAN**

First clean-air deal. Air pollution caused by home lawnmowers and wood heaters will be scaled back now when Australia signs up to its first clean-air agreement. The national plan will introduce new emissions standards. New wood heaters, a significant contributor to pollution levels during winter, will also now be subject to new emissions and efficiency standards.

Regulations for both areas will be aligned with air quality control levels already in place in the United States.

Environment Minister Greg Hunt said creating a National Clean Air Agreement had been a key priority for the Turnbull Government by 2017.

*Credit Herald-Sun*

# TAXI VS UBER; NCC VS AIRBNB

Victoria's planning department told The Age last week that the design quality and internal amenity of apartments has become an issue of public significance. International accommodation booking service Airbnb rents "rooms" as small as a balcony, or a tent within the lounge. It is Airbnb choosing the accommodation style; not the government.

Meanwhile encouraging higher density and "20 minutes neighbourhoods" in the leafy low density but car dominated suburbs, for example in Melbourne's east.

So new housing density increases are again being targeted, eg like Toorak Rd, Kooyong, which until a few years ago led the highest density lists. Planning Minister Wynne must find a way to house an extra 100,000 people every year (at least to the forecast year 2050).

The 1980's group, Save our Suburbs has already run the SOS flag to the top of the flagpole.

*The "20 minute suburb" is housing where you can walk to shops, doctors, cafes and entertainment in less than a 20 minute walk. The concept has been "on the books" for 40 years.*

## WHO MAKES BUILDING REGULATIONS?

Here is another unusual way to create "housing". Last November in a little publicized decision, strata office tenants could find their neighbours are LIVING in the office next door after VCAT - Planning Tribunal decided that the owner's corporation cannot ban the residential use of commercial buildings.

(The Age 11/11/15)

Whole floors in a Kingsway South Melbourne office are very different to previous unofficial uses in which immigrant families live behind packing crates in factories in the western suburbs or chefs or night club workers fall asleep in a rear store room in the eastern suburbs.

In the weeks following the decision, real estate agents were over-run with similar requests, particularly as sale prices doubled, and there were seemingly nil town planning constraints.

Meanwhile, Building Surveyors struggle with the conversion of Class 5 to Class 2 or Class 3 residential.

## WE RELY ON WATCHDOGS

Building practitioners need a dozen pairs of eyes to keep up with all that under their watch.

The inspector-general of Emergency Management is Tony Pearce. He monitors the progress of the Black Saturday Royal Commission recommendations. Given the worries of the current fire season, it is a surprise to learn that key Black Saturday recommendations have not been implemented by either Liberal or Labour state governments. Look out for coming bush fire protection standards for new schools, aged care centres and hospitals in high-risk bush fire areas.

(Reference 2010 Black Saturday Royal Commission. The Age 9.10.15)

## **CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

The better members of a profession are those who get together and share knowledge. As well as the broad-stream organizations (for architects, engineers, etc) there are the more smaller more specific ones which attract a very narrow membership range.

One example is the BUILDING INSPECTORS GROUP of about a dozen regular attendees. This group is for STATUTORY building inspectors, and meets regularly at the Ringwood Coach and Horses Hotel (contact Jeff Van Hoven, 0418 349 333 Hon Secretary or Ainslie Kendrick. Hon Sec of the AIBS sub group EFBSI on 9872 3364).

Another is the Forensic Engineering Society of Australian Inc. Which last November met at Hawthorns Geebung Polo Club Hotel (Contact Ian M Eilenberg. Hon Sec, 0419 358 449).

## **WORLD ORGANISATION OF BUILDING OFFICIALS UPDATE**

WOBO is active, and its secretary has moved from USA (National Fire Protection Association) to Hong Kong, and our secretary/treasurer Raymond Chan. Office bearers are:

Past President: George Miller  
becomes WOBO President  
Vice President: Mickey Reiss  
Immediate Past President Imad Elrubi  
and Imm Past Vice president Tim Ward  
have both resigned.

Check the WOBO website which is now the major communication to members.

Thank you to Founding President Omkar Nath Channan for this update.

## **MORT MITCHELL** **Mort Mitchell Marks a Milestone**

This milestone is the **78** year mile post (Or thereabouts). Mort was previously National President, Master Builders Association; previously ground breaking Mr. "Spaceline Homes"; and the "darling" of VCAT building list members.

He is one of the few people I know who has both allowed himself to learn something new every day, but gone out of his way to teach somebody something new every day.

No wonder he received a Gold Past presidents Medal from the MBA in December, and Life Membership of the Australian Soc of Building Consultants just before that.

Our congratulations on a fine Act 1. Now for Act 2, his business card is to read ARTICULATE ADVOCATE.

# TOWNS DESTROYED

We are approaching the anniversary of Black Saturday. Then Marysville was lost with a large death toll. Marysville is clawing its way back as a town 7 years later. Now in January – the same number of buildings were destroyed in southern West Australia.

In September 1776 during the American Revolution, The Great Fire of New York razed up to 1000 houses in Lower Manhattan.

In November 1872, the Great Boston fire destroyed 26 hectares of the city's downtown area, including 776 buildings and much of the financial district. At least 30 people died.

In April 1906, the earthquake and subsequent fire that struck the wooden city of San Francisco reduced 15 square kilometres to rubble and made 250,000 people homeless.

The most cataclysmic conflagration was The Great Fire of London. The blaze, which started in a Pudding Lane bakery on 2 September 1666, was fanned by a fierce wind and fed by close-set wooden houses in the streets of Europe's most populous capital.

Five days later, it had left a smoking, heap, with four-fifths of the city, 13,200 houses, 84 churches and 44 company halls razed. About 200,000 people were left homeless. The genius architect Christopher Wren emerged from the disaster as a hero.

Few buildings survived the destruction and street layouts were virtually obliterated. Wren and John Evelyn set to surveying for a more ordered city. But the people started rebuilding largely on the wayward medieval street patterns.

Officials surveyed the property line trail of coloured ash, and declared something like "I am the building surveyor. This is your entitlement our laws require boundary fire walls, and nil projections which might hasten cross road fire mischiefs". (or words to that effect. **Our profession was born**, then after 2 September 1666.

*Credit royalauto.com.au Dec 2015/JAN 2016-01-10 1. An artist's impression of the Great Fire of London. Picture: GETTY*

## COUNCIL CAUGHT IN POLITICAL CORRECTNESS

Imagine the scene. Christmas nativity scene in Cincinnati, USA. Three metres high! Traditional figures replaced by Zombie versions. Complaints!!

Clever and diplomatic response by the authorities? Yes; the demolition order stated the 3m manger (which was housing the zombies) was actually what violated local zoning building laws, not the offensive way in which the biblical scene was depicted.

**BUILDERS + DRAFTS /**  
**ARCHITECTS PEOPLE**  
**download this “Owners Fact Sheet”.**  
**Protect yourselves!**

Be prepared for the adoption of legislation forbidding a builder appointing a building surveyor.

Sidestep the actual deed, but still give your clients professional information to guide them toward your preference.

Here is the 3 step solution which will protect you in

**STEP 1**

Fully explain who building surveyors are; what we do; and how we are charged with protecting the owner.

**STEP 2**

Invite the owner to research OUR website [www.proactconsult.com.au](http://www.proactconsult.com.au) and that of our competitors. Also inform them of the website of building surveyor/builder/draftspersons enforcement , noting that we have not appeared in our 24 years existence. Invite the owner to examine our Facebook site “proact building surveyors” to see the more personable side of our profile. Invite the owner to chat

**STEP 3**

Include the attached Owner Fact Sheet and owners Letter of Appointment.

(Readers have our permission to print off as many sets as they wish. Subject to change when the actual Regulation is known).

**HELP LINE**

We look forward to hearing from you. Happy Lunar Year of the Monkey.

*Drew, Ainslie, Gaye, Rory and Di*

*Subscribe to ProAct News or Froggy Friday [dwadsworth@proactconsult](mailto:dwadsworth@proactconsult). To keep in touch with our view of the world. If you no longer wish this, please reply “unsubscribe”.*

## **CRYSTAL BALL**

1. *To save energy, we did away with room wall vents (cobweb blocked, painted over, etc). Now we have a severe problem of condensation, and the ABCB is upset and investigating.*

*The ABCB had a non-mandatory Handbook and YouTube clip. My colleagues in the Australian Society of Building Consultants are regularly called in to devise ways to overcome. The NCC said it is not clear whether the cause is a) our regulations or b) that for any number of reasons, occupants are not opening windows.*

2. *Despite strong child safety rules for pools and spas, babies still die. Often being blasé turns to intense campaigning.*

*Grieving young parents want the state government to compile a state wide pool/spa register with annual inspections; even more hefty fines; rented property 3 month inspections by the rental estate agent; compulsory subsidised toddler swimming lessons.*

3. *Electricians warn of ticking time bombs being the older cabling in homes OR modern “Infinity” cables made overseas and purchased cheaply which have been installed since 2013 in 40,000 buildings (or 2408 km of unaccounted for cable). The ACCC (Australian Comp + Consum. Commission) is tracking purchases at Mitre 10, Home Timber/Hardware and*