

Continuing Professional Development

PROPOSED ADDITIONAL AMENDMENTS TO NT *ARCHITECTS ACT*

“STANDARD” PROVISIONS THAT ARE GENERALLY INCLUDED IN OTHER NT LEGISLATION REGULATING PROFESSIONAL/OCCUPATIONAL PRACTICE, BUT ARE LACKING IN THE CURRENT *ARCHITECTS ACT*

All registered architects should be required to participate regularly in continuing professional development (CPD) that is relevant to their scope of practice. This involves maintaining, developing, updating and enhancing their knowledge, skills and performance.

The purpose of the Architects Act is to provide consumer protection by allowing only those with recognised qualifications to call themselves an architect. Consumers know that a registered architect is a person with an accredited tertiary qualification to the equivalent of a Master’s degree, has at least 3,000 hours of supervised experience, and is examined for competence. Consumer protection will be strengthened by requiring that person to keep up to date with current practices, codes and standards, particularly those related to safety, by imposing mandatory CPD.

Other professionals and paraprofessionals in the NT are required to undertake CPD under legislation, and there appears to be no reason why this should not be expanded to Architects. This would also bring the NT into line with other Australian jurisdictions, such as NSW, Victoria and Queensland.

Section 5 of the Act – Functions of the Board, can be amended to provide the Board with the power to regulate the professional conduct and practice of architects, architectural partnerships and architectural companies.

Professional Indemnity Insurance

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Currently, registered architects (other than certifying architects registered under the Building Act) are not required to hold professional indemnity insurance. This is inconsistent with other jurisdictions across Australia. While good business practice, and encouraged by the Institute, many practitioners may not hold professional indemnity cover. This leaves them and their clients vulnerable if the need arises for them to compensate clients for injury, loss or damage due to a breach of duty in the conduct of their profession.

Mistakes can and do happen and every time a professional gives advice or offers a service for a fee, they and their clients are potentially vulnerable.

Other professionals in the NT have the requirement to hold professional indemnity cover, and there appears to be no reason why this should not be expanded to Architects. This would also bring the NT into line with other Australian jurisdictions, such as NSW, Victoria and Queensland.

A new section can be inserted in the Act to provide that a person must not carry out work as an architect unless that person is covered by the required insurance, and also provide that this does not apply to persons employed by or working under the supervision of a person who is registered as an architect under this Act and who is covered by the required insurance. The required insurance should be similar in nature to what is required in other jurisdictions.

Code of Conduct

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Compliance with a code of conduct by registered architects should be made mandatory in the NT as it is in other jurisdictions. Architects who are Institute members commit themselves to the attainment of high standards in architecture, and through its practice to maintain general wellbeing by upholding commonly agreed values of: ethical behaviour; equality of opportunity; social justice; aspiration to excellence, and competent professional performance.

Mandatory compliance with a code of conduct will ensure that there is an expectation that registered architects will conduct themselves in a professional manner that consumers have a right to expect when working with a professional. The code should clearly set out the obligations to the general public, clients, colleagues and within the profession and should be consistent with codes of conduct operating in other jurisdictions.

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