



building today

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE REGISTERED MASTER BUILDERS FEDERATION

Change enveloping NZ construction industry

- Health and Safety system takes shape
- Apprentice of the Year attracts 100
- Why all builders need a good physio!
- Business management writer joins BT

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inside this issue

RMBF News	4-8
Legislative changes are a potential sea change; Why all builders need a good physio!	
Industry News	10-18
New H&S system takes shape; PM opens affordable homes plant; Awards galore	
People	19
New appointments	
Weathertightness	20-21
How it all comes together on-site	
Back in Time	22
Find out what made the headlines way back when . . .	
Products	23
New insulated weatherproofing system	
BCITO News	25
Applying for Apprenticeship Reboot Grants	
Columnists	26-30
New business column; Material evidence; Igloo construction; Fixed price contracts	
Building Consents	31
Monthly building consents by region	

building today

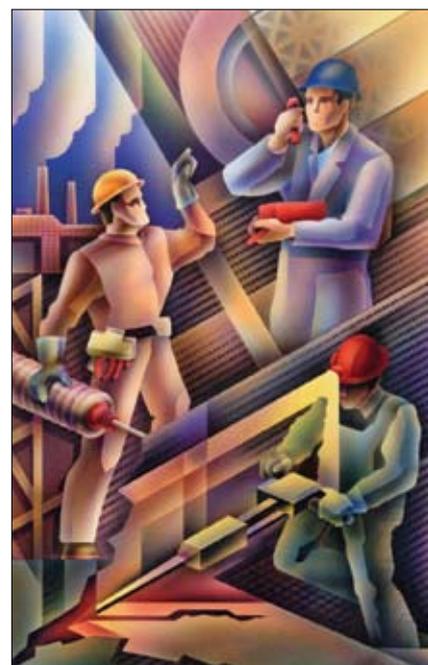
Change is enveloping the construction industry at present — from new legislation and amendments to consenting system improvements to a cost of materials investigation by the Government.

So perhaps it's a good thing that the theme for the RMBF's annual conference this year is "Keep Calm and Carry On".

Government intervention on a number of construction-related issues was ongoing as this month's *Building Today* was going to press, so that, combined with updates coming out of the RMBF Conference in Dunedin should ensure there's plenty of juicy news forthcoming in the next few months.

We'll be sure to keep you up to date with all the latest developments as they occur.

Andrew Darlington
Editor



cover story 4

Publisher:

Taurean Publications Ltd
P O Box 35 343,
Browns Bay, Auckland 0753

Editor/Advertising Manager:

Andrew Darlington
Ph: 09 478 4888 Mob: 021 90 11 56 Fax: 09 478 4588
E-mail: andrew@buildingtoday.co.nz

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chief's chat

by ceo warwick quinn

Changes are a potential sea change



The Building Act Amendment No. 4 is part way through its second reading. It has been through the Select Committee and is back in the House, but still has the Committee of the Whole House stage and third reading to go.

However, once it has passed these steps, all of the consumer protection mechanisms will have regulations developed to put them in place.

I have written about the affects before so will not repeat myself, other than to say watch this space as we will have to respond by providing you with the correct information and documentation.

Running in parallel with these changes are a number of other important things: the review of Joint and Several Liability being undertaken by the Law Commission, and the development of a National On-line Consenting System (NOCS).

There is also, of course, the Building Act No. 3 Amendments that were passed over a year ago, some of which are waiting to be enacted, such as risk-based consenting.

All of these changes are culminating in a potential sea change that we have been waiting for for a very long time. It will be over to the Government and Building Consent Authorities to be bold and embrace these so

we can get on and construct houses as quickly as we can.

I always find it interesting that the highest risk properties (for example, hotels, office buildings etc) have very little real oversight by BCAs, and they rely on producer statements and quality peer reviews by the private sector. Yet they are all over the lowest risk buildings like a rash. Historical, I guess.

Housing affordability is a hot topic at the moment, and is looming to be a big election issue. The Government is responding by speeding up the resource consent process, launching the Housing Accord initiative, and investigating the cost of materials.

And the Reserve Bank is looking at loan-to-value ratios for first home buyers, all in an effort to slow the rapid growth in property values, particularly in Auckland.

What they shouldn't forget are the Building Act changes. They have the potential to have quite an impact on affordability.

One in every five homes sold is a new home. The trouble is it takes too long for the new home market to respond to a pick-up in demand, so up go prices for existing homes.

Imagine if one in every three homes sold was a new home and they took a shorter time to build as there was less "government" in the process by way of consent paperwork and inspections, and more self certification by construction companies.

Fixing new problems with old solutions

There is nothing more frustrating for a building company than time delays — just look at the Christchurch situation — and that is just the consents. Then there is the wait for the inspections to start and the CCCs to be completed.

We are trying to fix new problems with old solutions, and it is failing. The mouse can only run so fast on its wee wheel. It is time to bring in the changes the Building Act Amendments promised — and fast, before it is too late.

About 80% of NZ homes are low risk — they do not need mountains of paper work, 15 inspections and so on.

We have LBPs now, consumers will have further protections when the No. 4 Amendment is passed, New Zealand has home warranties and many quality building companies that stand behind their work.

It is time to introduce risk-based consenting, self certification and other things so the consumer can have an affordable home at no greater risk than today's process.

I always find it interesting that the highest risk properties (for example, hotels, office buildings etc) have very little real oversight by BCAs, and

they rely on producer statements and quality peer reviews by the private sector.

Yet they are all over the lowest risk buildings like a rash. Historical, I guess.

All builders need a good physiotherapist

By RMBF president

David Fabish

The construction industry is, without a doubt, a physically challenging environment in which to work.

There is a plethora of information about health and safety available, but not much is spoken about the toll on the body of the people working physically on the coalface.

There is a certain accepted inevitability that builders' knee and back problems are not unusual for those of us who pull on a toolbelt and go to work every day.

You can almost pick the older contractors who, although fit and wiry, often walk with a gait or limp that they aren't even aware of.

A bloke I know was just like this. He'd had knee and back problems for as long as he could remember and accepted this as normal, even though he would often have to rest up all weekend just to get through the following week's work.

Various pills would help ease the pain, and it all became simply a part of life.

When one hip started causing continual pain he became more worried because he knew other builders who had had hip replacements. They confirmed that this was how the problem started for them, and that a replacement hip operation would probably be only a couple of years away.

This was the last straw so he went to his doctor, who hadn't been able to do much about the knee problems to date — who then referred him to a physiotherapist.

While good at getting regular health checks, this was



only the second time he'd actually been to a physio in the 30 years he'd worked in the industry.

Within a few minutes the physiotherapist diagnosed that his whole body was twisted, probably as a result of continual lifting and twisting over the years.

After a couple of months of treatment, sessions and more stretching and strengthening exercises at home, a quite remarkable outcome occurred.

Not only did the hip feel better, but also, first, one knee then the other responded, repositioning themselves correctly and, slowly but surely, the pain reduced and eventually disappeared.

Apparently the hip and knee problems were a result of a twisted upper body and back and, over time, the body had compensated for the loss of correct alignment.

Apparently it is rare to ever need two hips replaced, as a twisted upper body, which is the common problem, will normally only affect one hip.

The key it seems is to be aware of keeping your body aligned and your upper core and back straight at all times. This can be practised when walking, as posture is important, and also walking with a heel-to-toe

movement instead of being flat-footed helps.

Lifting correctly is essential, and it is important to teach the younger members of our industry this.

You may have guessed by now that the bloke in the story is actually me. It was a big lesson about how important it is for people in our industry to engage more with physiotherapists and doctors at the first sign of a problem.

My physio Anita Walsh has some great words of wisdom to offer.

"If something hurts we then move in a different way — and that's not the right way. The brain becomes used to that pattern of moving, and further injuries can occur. The brain has to be retrained — it's not automatic."

A big role of physiotherapy is helping people to move correctly so they don't get those secondary consequences.

When a person is under the care of a physiotherapist, he or she should expect to have an exercise or stretching programme as part of the treatment. This can be done at home or in the gym.

"If a patient hasn't been doing that programme or has forgotten what to do, they should book in for a biomechanical assessment," Ms Walsh says.

"We need constant reminders and reinforcement. Become a friend to your physio.

"We get warrants of fitness on our cars, but we don't on our bodies, until they break down," she says.

"So get a warrant of fitness on your body — they are much more precious than our cars."

I have followed Anita's advice and get an assessment every six months — and I have never felt better.

RMBF Head Office: PO Box 1796, Wellington

Ph: 04 385 8999 or 0800 762 328 Fax: 04 385 8995

www.masterbuilder.org.nz

Registered Master Builders Association Managers:

Ashburton: Kimberley Sexton 027 299 8086
Auckland: Ali Glover 09 477 2724
Canterbury: Stacey Gibb 03 343 9804
Gisborne: Katrina Duncan 06 863 3675
Gore: Jacque Lloyd 03 208 9240
Hawke's Bay: TBA

Manawatu: Kathy Curtis 027 483 1184
Marlborough: Richard Morris 03 574 1152
Nelson: Karen Lane 021 749 091
Otago: Karen Hamilton 027 682 4662
Rotorua: Fiona Gordon 07 332 3625
South Canterbury: Trish Harris 03 684 5005

Southland: Jenny Pascoe 027 432 8065
Taranaki: Gary Lord 027 448 2332
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Tauranga: Lani Christensen 07 577 0628
Waikato: Colleen Walker 07 850 6037
Wairarapa: Angeline Colquhoun 06 378 8008

Wanganui: Garth Barlow 06 345 4172
Wellington: Zoe Husband 04 381 2850
West Coast: TBA
Whakatane: Holly Riini 07 307 2663

RMBF Regional Service Team:

Wally Walters: Auckland South, Coromandel, Gisborne
027 480 4055
Grant Hayes: Auckland, Northland 027 285 9516
Bob Bringans: Tauranga, Waikato, Rotorua, Whakatane, Taupo
027 496 1050

Peter Philipson (NZ Regional Service Manager): Wellington
(South, Central), North Kapiti, Waikanae, Otaki, Manawatu,
Taranaki, Wanganui 027 484 6207
Skip Kotuhi: Wellington (North), Wairarapa, Hawke's Bay,
Nelson, Marlborough 027 457 4146

Ian Gould (South Island Manager): Ashburton, South
Canterbury, Otago, Gore 027 435 7397
Glen Campbell: Canterbury, West Coast, Southland
027 472 2226

Winning show home in high demand

Llyall Dix of Abode Design & Build was ecstatic when his company was announced as the winner of the James Hardie Show Home Award at the Registered Master Builders PlaceMakers 2012 House of the Year.

Mr Dix believes winning the award was recognition of a lot of hard work by a lot of people, and this special home has been extremely popular among his clients.

"We've built seven homes from the same plan as the home that won this award," he says.

"We definitely find that when we build a really great show home, we tend to build a lot of versions of that home. It's like anything — if customers can see something and play with it, they will often end up wanting to buy it."

He says his clients love the fact that this home has won a House of the Year award.

"This home gained a lot of publicity from House of the Year, which has absolutely impacted how popular this design has been. Today, there are a lot of builders out there, and people are looking for something a bit different. Winning a House of the Year award makes homes stand out."

Mr Dix believes that it was trying something a bit different that ultimately won him the award.

"When we bought this site and designed the home, my wife and I really thought about how we could make it suit our own lifestyle," he says.

"It's a typical family home, but we put a lot of features into it so people can see just what you can do with a new house. That way, when people come through, they can see all the possibilities that come with a new home."

The judges praised the winning New Plymouth home, saying it is a true reflection of all that the builder wanted to deliver to fulfil his clients' aspirations.

"Ample living areas and connections to the outdoors tick all the boxes for discerning folk looking to build," they said.

"Stylish use of robust exterior products, integration of technology and high spec fixtures and fittings throughout are the perfect mix for taking a client on the journey of building their dream home."

Mr Dix says entering House of the Year is a great way of benchmarking yourself against other businesses.

"Anyone who is thinking of entering the competition should do



Abode Design & Build won the James Hardie Show Home Award with this entry in the Registered Master Builders PlaceMakers 2012 House of the Year competition.



The team at Abode Design & Build with their award.

it — it really makes you think about how your business is running and the people involved.

"In entering House of the Year, you set yourself up against the best in the country. We're not just builders, we're in business too.

"The competition gives you the opportunity to look at your company as a whole, and see whether you measure up to the standards you set yourself."

The Awards are made possible through the support of PlaceMakers, James Hardie, GIB, Nulook, MBIE, Future-Proof Building, Carters, ITM, Plumbing World, Resene and Westpac.

For more information about the competition, visit the Registered Master Builders web site at www.masterbuilder.org.nz.

Waiheke Island home accommodates the elements to deliver luxury outdoor living

Bryce Ardern of Lite-House Ltd won the Outdoor Living Award for his Waiheke Island home at the Registered Master Builders PlaceMakers 2012 House of the Year competition, and he says there is nothing like the feeling of coming out on top.

"It is such an honour to be a Gold Reserve winner, and you are in prestigious company when competing in the nationals with the best homes in the country," he says.

"As we were working with a very sloping site, this was quite a challenging build. Being part of a project like this, from starting with a blank canvas to design, build and aesthetics was extremely satisfying.

"The harder the build, the harder it is to achieve excellence in your finish. We were elated to win a House of the Year award."

Bryce believes the many outdoor living areas that cater to the Waiheke Island weather made it stand out from others in the category.

"The views are to the west which has exposure to the cold south-westerly winds, so all rooms open up to a protected northern court. Another enclosed outdoor area connects this inner court to the western views, allowing the stunning vistas but providing the required protection," he says.

The judges agreed, hailing the home as achieving its goal of providing respite from the changeable weather patterns of its location.

"With the kitchen as a hub, the outdoor spaces in this property provide sunny, sheltered areas for family use or for more formal entertaining," they said.

"With multiple options for heating outside, the indoor/outdoor dining area with glazed roof and BBQ set up is particularly special. It can be completely insulated from the elements, while another outdoor area is more open in the sunny, northern location."

Mr Ardern believes winning a House of the Year award strengthens his brand and reputation as a high-quality builder.

"House of the Year is a great competition to be involved in as it allows us, as a company, to gauge our performance against our peers in the most widely recognised and acclaimed home building competition," he says.



Lite-House Ltd won the Outdoor Living Award for this Waiheke Island home in the Registered Master Builders PlaceMakers 2012 House of the Year competition.



RMBF chief executive Warwick Quinn (left) and Bryce Ardern of Lite-House Ltd.

"If New Zealand builders are serious about their building quality and want to be recognised for it, they should get involved in the competition. You have nothing to lose and everything to gain."

The Awards are made possible through the support of PlaceMakers, James Hardie, GIB, Nulook, MBIE, Future-Proof Building, Carters, ITM, Plumbing World, Resene and Westpac.

For more information about the competition, visit the Registered Master Builders web site at www.masterbuilder.org.nz.

100 carpentry apprentices ready to contend

Entries for the Registered Master Builders Carters 2013 Apprentice of the Year competition have closed, with 100 apprentices from all over New Zealand ready to contend for the title and a share of more than \$100,000 worth of prizes.

Regional judging kicks off at the end of June, with judging panels reviewing all written entries and interviewing all entrants.

Up to 10 finalists in each of the nine regions will then be selected to compete for the top spot in their region.

Apprentice of the Year entry numbers have increased from 96 entrants in 2012 to 100 this year, at the same time as the Building and Construction Industry Training Organisation (BCITO) has seen a 22% increase in apprenticeship sign ups.

BCITO chief executive Ruma Karaitiana says the construction industry is thriving, and Apprentice of the Year is a great opportunity for up and coming apprentices who want to stand out from their peers and make their mark on the industry.

"It's an incredibly exciting time to be a part of the construction industry, and apprentices who go the extra mile are really appreciated when it comes to progressing through their career," Mr Karaitiana says.

"Apprentice of the Year is one way for apprentices to prove their value to employers and others in the business."

RMBF chief executive Warwick Quinn says Apprentice of the Year is a fantastic endeavour for recognising excellence in carpentry apprentices.

"The competition is such a good opportunity for us to celebrate our industry and everyone who contributes to it. We are very much looking forward to seeing what talent comes forward at this year's Apprentice of the Year," Mr Quinn says.

Each regional winner will score themselves a \$2000 study grant or \$2000 worth of products from Carters, along with a place at a specially designed Outward Bound course and a range of products and tools.

Winners from each region will also win travel and accommodation to the Apprentice of the Year national competition in Auckland in October, and the Registered

Master Builders 2013 House of the Year National Awards Gala Dinner.

Apprentices, employers and those young people aspiring to be a part of the construction industry are encouraged to join the Facebook page at www.facebook.com/apprenticeoftheyear.

The Apprentice of the Year competition is made possible thanks to principal sponsor Carters, the Registered Master Builders Federation, the Building and Construction Industry Training Organisation (BCITO), and supporting sponsor the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE).

• **Regional event dates are:**

Bay of Plenty/East Coast: Gisborne, August 23

Central South Island: Christchurch, August 28

Auckland and Northern: Takapuna, Auckland, September 4

Waikato: Hamilton, September 5

Upper South Island: Nelson, September 5

Central North Island: Palmerston North, September 6

Wellington and Wairarapa: Wellington, September 6

Southern: Dunedin, September 13



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133mm wide groove spacing
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The designer says



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New health and safety system takes shape

In December this year, the new stand-alone Crown agency WorkSafe New Zealand will assume oversight of the workplace health and safety system.

It is a significant step towards better health and safety outcomes for this country.

Meanwhile, the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment's Health and Safety Group has begun laying the groundwork for the new agency.

Group deputy chief executive Lesley Haines says changes need to be made throughout the system to achieve the vision of safer and healthier workplaces in New Zealand.

"Our workplaces are currently not safe enough, and it is not only the regulator but also every business, every employer, every worker who must step up their focus on health and safety," Ms Haines says.

"We have been working for some time to develop a more visible, targeted and effective approach to our work. In July we began operating a new inspectorate model designed to meet those objectives.

"The biggest change we're making is to put more focus on proactively identifying potential harm-causing practices before people get hurt, rather than just reacting to events.

"Our inspectors will be spending more time out and about in workplaces — the implementation of our proactive identification approach will mean inspectors will undertake significantly more workplace assessments.

"Over time the number of inspectors will increase, so that will amplify the effect.

'Firmer regulatory stance to be expected'

"Inspectors will focus on the sectors where we know the most deaths and other serious harm is happening — the areas where we know our intervention can make a significant impact — and, where required, businesses should expect a firmer regulatory stance from our inspectors.

"At least 80% of our workplace assessments will be targeted to industries outlined in the Health and Safety National Action Agenda 2010-2013.

"For 2013/14, we will concentrate on safer forestry harvesting, safe use of machinery in manufacturing, preventing falls from height in construction, quad bike safety and the Canterbury rebuild.

"Our hazardous substances focus will be automotive spray painting, and the boat building and metal finishing industries," Ms Haines says.

"We'll make that degree of focus possible by triaging all complaints against detailed criteria. We will still investigate accidents, but we will not respond in person to everything.

"Our specialist investigations team will ensure that our investigations are of a consistently high standard.

"Duty holders are responsible for workplace health and safety, and are required to do their own analysis of any incidents.

"In some cases, we will expect duty holders to report to us on what went wrong, what's been done about it, and how they will ensure it won't happen again. Inspectors will check these reports for completeness, and there'll be support and guidance along the way," she says.

Focus on highest risk areas

"This is a new approach for New Zealand, and it will free up our resources to maintain focus on the highest risk areas, on system-wide analysis and planning, and improving the consistency and quality of our work.

"There will be a lot of value too, for duty holders in examining their own health and safety practices, and taking more direct responsibility.

"These are significant changes that are designed to improve our contribution. New Zealand's workplace health and safety record has to be turned around, and it will take all of us pulling in the same direction to do that."

For more information go to www.business.govt.nz/healthandsafety.

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Geyser wins big at prestigious New Zealand architecture awards

Parnell's landmark building "Geyser" has won two categories at the 2013 New Zealand Architecture Awards, the official programme of the New Zealand Institute of Architects.

The annual awards, which honour the best architecture in the country, were held at the Viaduct Events Centre in Auckland recently.

Auckland's Geyser, New Zealand's first 6-green star design rated building, took out the Commercial and Sustainable Design categories. The three-storey commercial space, with 24 offices and six retail spaces, is 80% tenanted.

Designed by Pattersons and owned by Samson Corporation, Geyser has leading-edge sustainable features and glacier-like design.

"We are honoured Geyser has been recognised. The missing piece in sustainability is about quality, beauty

and permanence, because without this, no building can be truly sustainable. For me, this award recognises Geyser's success as a great place to be," architect Andrew Patterson says.

Samson Corporation general manager Marco Creemers says it's an amazing achievement and great recognition for the team involved.

"Geyser is not only a stunning building to look at, it's a very quiet and fresh environment to work in," he says.

"It gives you a great sense of pride to know you're using less energy — no air-conditioning, a car stacking system and well thought-out lighting. You're also saving water with rain harvesting, and reducing onsite waste with the Hungry Bin systems.

"Geyser is what the future is all about — common sense with panache."

Geyser, which also won the NZIA Commercial Architecture Award and Resene Colour Award last

year, joins a long list of Samson Corporation properties that have taken away international and national awards.

Ironbank on Karangahape Road, Auckland, took out the 2010 New Zealand Institute of Architects' award for the year's best building, and won the commercial, sustainable architecture, Resene Colour, and urban design awards.

Buildings Axis, Anvil, Site 3, D72, Cumulus, and two Richmond Road properties in Ponsonby have also won numerous awards over the past 15 years.

The New Zealand Architecture Awards is the annual official awards programme of the New Zealand Institute of Architects, established to determine the best architectural projects submitted each year.

All award-winners will have been visited by the jury, which comprises architects who each have a strong record of designing accomplished buildings.



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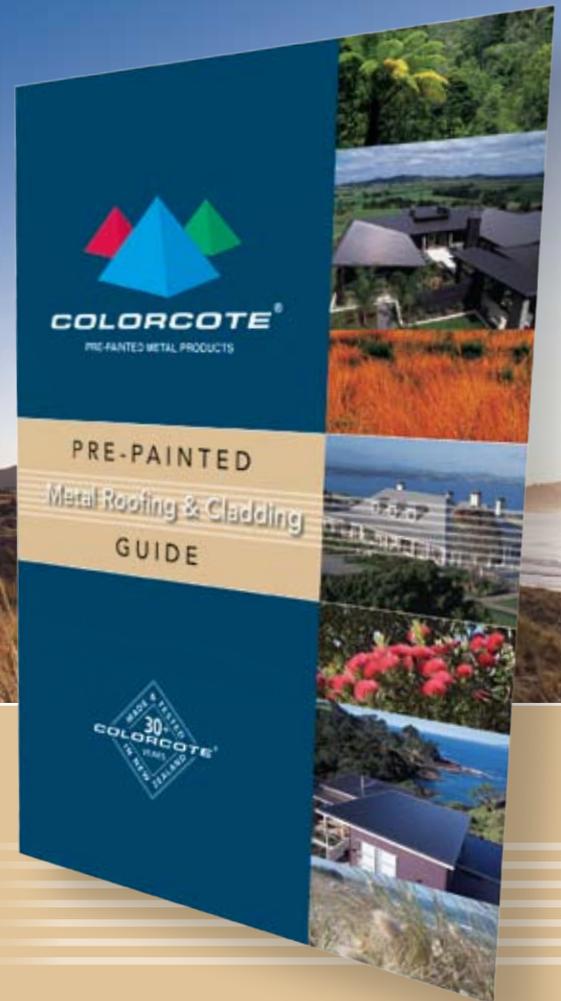
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Forsyth Barr Stadium tops steel awards

New Zealand's structural steel industry celebrated outstanding steel construction projects at the biennial Excellence in Steel Construction Awards hosted by Steel Construction New Zealand (SCNZ) in Tauranga recently.

The awards, which were presented at a gala dinner during the Metals Industry Conference, recognise steel structures built by SCNZ member companies.

Grayson Engineering secured the premier award in the Over \$3 million category for Dunedin's Forsyth Barr Stadium.

Grayson's commitment to excellence and engineering innovation helped it overcome considerable time pressures to successfully deliver this prominent and multi-faceted project in time for the Rugby World Cup.

"The Forsyth Barr Stadium was a stand-out project that won ahead of some other notable projects," SCNZ manager Alistair Fussell says.

"However, the judges were so impressed by the exceptional standard of entries in this category that they also awarded a Judges Merit award to MJH Engineering for the Wellington Indoor Community Sports Centre."

RedSteel won the \$0.5 - \$1.5 million category for its part in delivering another Rugby World Cup-related venue — The Cloud, the novel lightweight steel and fabric structure built on Auckland's Queen's Wharf as part of "Party Central".

"We're delighted the awards attracted entries of such a high calibre," Mr Fussell says.

"The bar has been set very high, and it's a credit to our local structural steel industry that New Zealand produces work of this scale and quality."

The independent judging panel assessed entries based on the steel constructor's commitment to best practice, teamwork, sustainability, safety management and innovation.

The awards were presented by SCNZ vice-chairman Peter Donohue, group product manager of Steel & Tube Ltd.



From left: Caltec manager Andre Beets, Grayson Engineering commercial manager Colin Berger, Grayson Engineering general manager David Moore and SCNZ vice-chairman Peter Donohue.



From left: MJH Engineering project manager Mark Shirtliff, MJH Engineering managing director Malcolm Hammond and SCNZ vice-chairman Peter Donohue.



RedSteel managing director Bob Howley (left) and SCNZ vice-chairman Peter Donohue.

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Drilling students trained for Christchurch rebuild win awards

Three drilling students who took part in a special programme to train drillers to help with the Christchurch rebuild have received Awards of Excellence by the New Zealand Drillers Federation.

Two of the three are now working on the Christchurch rebuild, with the third working in Motueka.

NZ Drillers Federation president Iain Haycock says while they had planned to only present one award, they could not choose between the three winners.

"The calibre of the group was exceptional, and all three of the students demonstrated a level of competence that made it too difficult to select just one. It is unusual to be in that position," Mr Haycock says.

The three students are Jimmy Brown from Rotorua, John Makakea from Auckland and Mike Walls from Motueka.

Mr Brown is now the driller operator for McMillan Drilling Ltd in Christchurch, Mr Makakea is the driller for LandTest's sonic rig in Christchurch, and Mr Walls is working for CW Drilling and Investigation Ltd in Motueka.

The men were part of a group who completed a special 14-week drilling programme in 2012 through Tai Poutini Polytechnic (TPP) rather than the polytechnic's regular 24-week drilling programme.

The polytechnic designed the training programme in response to the need for drilling personnel in



From left: New Zealand Drilling Federation president Iain Haycock, Jimmy Brown, John Makakea, Mike Walls and New Zealand Drilling Federation councillor Ken Mears.

Canterbury, and offered it to students who already had a strong mechanical or practical skill background.

"The students who undertook the special training were already highly skilled in fields like auto engineering, the army and project management," TPP drilling programme leader Michele Cox says.

"Because of their backgrounds they have all progressed fairly quickly in the industry and, as hoped, a lot are working in Canterbury," she says.

Award-winning student Mr Makakea had an army background, and says he was looking for a new

challenge.

"I was spending too much time in front of a computer and wanted to get back into working outside," Mr Makakea says.

"I now work with some really passionate drillers, and am one of two running a sonic drill rig for LandTest. It is a really great industry to get into," he says.

The students completed the National Certificate in Drilling Non-hydrocarbon (Driller's Assistant) (Level 2). TPP's next 24-week drilling programme began last month in Greymouth.

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First BASE-certified building in Christchurch gets underway



Construction is underway on the first new building in Christchurch to be built according to principles that the New Zealand Green Building Council (NZGBC) hopes to become a minimum standard throughout the rebuild.

Knox Plaza at 148 Victoria Street is the first to register to achieve BASE (Building A Sustainable Environment) certification.

It will complement the adjoining Knox Presbyterian Church, with a single storeyed “transparent” building at the front, so that there is a good view of the church.

The main building starts behind Knox Church — in order to give this iconic building its own space on the corner.

The building will boast features including high performance glass, comprehensive recycling facilities, heat recovery and extensive use of natural light — features that cost a slight premium to developers in the building process, but deliver significant financial and social benefits in just a few years.

Building owner John Ryder says planning and developing the building along BASE guidelines was a simple decision.

“We had an exciting chance to build something innovative and remarkable, and we grabbed it,” he says.

“We’re very pleased to have so easily come up with something that is sensitive to the needs of the city and our obligations to the environment, as well as provide something operationally efficient for the tenant.”

The NZGBC, which developed the BASE tool with the Christchurch City Council, says BASE is a green



building certification scheme that will be achievable for project teams in the city and provide great benefits for the long-term.

Christchurch mayor Bob Parker launched the BASE tool in November as an opportunity to meet the demand for a “greener” city, which came through the Share an Idea campaign during the development of the Draft Central City Plan.

“By improving the environmental design and performance of our buildings, our community will benefit by living in a sustainable city. We are pleased to be working with the NZGBC to ensure our city goes green,” Mr Parker says.

Legacy, an industry campaign supported by the city council to showcase and promote sustainable building in Christchurch, was also launched recently. Mr Ryder is one of the Legacy campaign’s founding supporters.

Two further Christchurch projects have registered for development using BASE, which has already had significant support from local industry, and sits alongside the NZGBC’s best practice Green Star building assessment tool, which aims to set leadership standards for green building across New Zealand.



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PM opens affordable homes plant

P rime Minister John Key has opened eHome Global's new plant for manufacturing conventional (timber framed) affordable homes and apartments last month.

The Kumeu, Auckland, facility is the first in New Zealand to use European concepts and equipment to produce conventional New Zealand apartments and homes in a factory.

As a result of the manufacturing standards and the quality materials used, the homes produced are more durable, and have reduced whole of life costs than traditional houses.

As well, a significant proportion of the 55-strong work force at eHome Global was selected and trained in a highly successful partnership with the Salvation Army.

The opening was also attended by Auckland City Council deputy mayor Penny Hulse.

eHome Global is well equipped to deliver low rise (three and four storeyed) apartments which will blend



eHome Global chief executive Marsh Hudson explains a feature of the new manufacturing facility to Prime Minister John Key.

closely with the Auckland Council's plan for a compact Auckland city — which parallels most European cities where residents often live in low rise apartments and

travel to work on public transport.

The privately owned eHome Global facility currently has commitments for its next year of production.

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New chief for Construction Industry Council

New Zealand Green Building Council chief executive Alex Cutler has been elected Chair of the 36-member Construction Industry Council, a pan-industry grouping that represents most of the country's building trade organisations.

She succeeds Pieter Burghout, a foundation member of the organisation, who is resigning as BRANZ Ltd chief executive to take up the position of Canterbury operations general manager with Fletcher Building.

Ms Cutler says the industry is currently faced with a number of issues. Among them are housing affordability, a review of the Standards setting process, the materials construction markets inquiry, security of payment in the event of building company liquidations, a gathering crisis in respect of skills



New Construction Industry Council chair Alex Cutler.

availability for the Christchurch rebuild and the projected surge in Auckland house building.

"The council's aim is to be a conduit for exchanges between the industry and the public sector on these issues in a bid to find solutions which advance government and consumer objectives, while enhancing the commercial vitality of the industry," Ms Cutler says.

Boom and bust

"Boom and bust economic cycles lie at the heart of a number of problems the industry faces, with a potential large upturn on the way.

"This lends some urgency to resolving these issues in a manner that sets a good platform for future stability of the building and construction sector."

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Weathertight Remediation: An

Article 7: Leaky Buildings: How it comes together on-site

By builder **Harry Dillon**

This is the seventh article in a series based on a number of workshops on weathertight remediation for builders which the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment – Building and Housing group has been running at centres all over New Zealand.

In previous articles, we have mostly looked at pre-start considerations. In this article we will be looking at some of what builders need to think about when we are underway on site.

Re-cladding projects are like renovations on steroids — there are very few aspects of the house that won't be affected.

It is a very stressful time for the home owner. All they typically get at the end of it is the house they thought they bought in the first place, and all they have to show for it is usually a bigger mortgage.

It is not just the home owner who is effectively the client. Their funder has a vested interest in restoring value in their collateral. The territorial authority, along with the Government, may also be contributing if the



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introduction for builders

client is participating in the Financial Assistance Package scheme.

On multi-unit sites, a body corporate will be involved, and usually an elected building committee will represent all of the owners.

Whether the building occupants are going or staying can make a significant difference to the operation and efficiency of a project.

Some owners may not have the desire or the means to vacate their home. If they are vacating, will they be taking their chattels, too, as there may be insurance implications for them remaining?

It is also much more efficient if household items don't have to be moved or protected during the repair process.

Second generation repairs

As has already been seen in Canada, where they have been dealing with a similar problem for 20 years, we are already carrying out second generation repairs in New Zealand.

As we all know, we builders carry significant latent liability for our work. Therefore it is critical to minimise any risks and consequences of future failures. Getting the repair done right is simply the best way to achieve this.

Working with suitably experienced professionals is critical. A builder should expect a designer to provide details that are timely, that work and are appropriate.

The law is getting much clearer on this. If the builder comes up with his own detail or builds something that is on the plans that they know will possibly fail, who is liable if it does?

Builders, myself included, are not exactly well known for their paperwork, but good record keeping helps variation management, and really helps resolve current or future potential disputes.

In addition, documenting all the damage discovered with location-specific photographs builds a historical record of what was found. Quality control systems and good site supervision can assist in catching even minor errors or omissions in the rebuild process that could otherwise

accumulate and contribute to future building failures.

Discovering as much damage as early as possible allows budgetary implications and design clarifications to be dealt with right at the start. This is especially important if the damage is worse than initially assessed.

On every project I have been involved with, there is at least some degree of non-compliant work discovered in the original structure. How is this dealt with?

Other things to consider include the temporary bracing that may be required as the removal of bracing (either external or internal) or removal of cladding to allow for concrete nib installation may affect the integrity of the structure.

A fundamental question for most remediation projects is what timber to leave in, treat insitu or replace. There are many types of timber rot and ways of testing for them. Visual and strand tests, for example, have their uses but also their limitations.

The only way to be absolutely certain of its type and history is a lab test.

Some rots are visually hard to detect, and timber sampling of what appears to be sound wood (even if only as a datum) can help prevent the consequences of leaving structurally unsound timber behind.

Having suitably qualified and experienced experts to interpret and instruct not only helps with compliance, but could also potentially help narrow a builder's

related latent risks.

If builders have doubts about what has been instructed they can simply get testing carried out themselves as an inexpensive form of insurance.

As with risks on any type of project, understanding the risk is key to managing it.

Wrap Up:

Our penultimate article goes back to basic first principles of weathertight design to get a better remediation solution.

Suggested follow up areas for more information:

- Building and Housing web site: www.dbh.govt.nz/ws-info-for-building-professionals

- The Building and Housing publications

- Guide to Remediation Design

- Guide to the Diagnosis of Leaky Buildings

- Dealing with Timber in Leaky Buildings

- Code Watch Issue 1: October 2011

- **The author:** Harry Dillon has been involved with the repair of more than 300 homes as a builder over the past 10 years. This article represents Harry's views which may not necessarily be the same as the Department's.

TRAINING EFFECTIVE PROJECT MANAGEMENT

Registered builders, qualified engineers, qualified electricians and qualified architects all require specific knowledge, skills and techniques. BUT do we have qualified project managers?

Design and construction needs the right qualification training, tools, expertise and experience to do a good job to the right spec.

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back in time

BT's Back in Time

Welcome to Back in Time, where we delve into our magazine archives and discover what was making news way back when . . .

20 years ago:

- The New Zealand Master Builders Federation was seeking urgent meetings with the Government to request that it act to free up timber supplies.

There had been no let-up in the crisis over continually increasing timber prices and shortage of timber for domestic use, the reason for which was unclear at the time.

However, it was thought that congestion occurring somewhere along the supply chain might be resulting in the New Zealand domestic market being substantially under-supplied.

15 years ago:

- The need for a revamp of the structure of the Registered Master Builders Federation was raised in a discussion paper which suggested that the existence of 22 associations "appears something of an extravagance".

Written by Taranaki Registered Master Builders Association secretary Ken Martin, the paper was to be considered by the RMBF's marketing committee as part of an overall strategic planning exercise.

Mr Martin asked whether 22 separate associations were "a luxury we can afford", pointing out that most served very small memberships.

He said options included amalgamating associations on a regional basis or operating from one office in Wellington, although amalgamation would not correct "what is essentially an outmoded system which has served us well but has been overtaken by modern demands".

He said the rapidly-changing, electronically-driven world had made available previously undreamed of tools — "couriers and fastpost could deliver overnight to virtually anywhere in the country, and fax machines spat out messages within seconds, whether the recipient was in Invercargill or Kaitiāia".

10 years ago:

- The RMBF supported the Government's move to strengthen the role of the regulator within the construction industry. Chief executive Chris Preston said the Federation felt it was important to have a regulator that was able to push the pause button if something in the industry appeared to be going astray — as was the case with the leaky buildings crisis.

5 years ago:

- Open Polytechnic tutor Leigh Thomson posed the question concerning leaky buildings litigation, asking whether statutory insurance — of the type that operated in Queensland, Australia — was the answer to avoiding legal battles surrounding weathertightness issues.

New system set to tackle big building issues

Product demand expected to create new niche

A New Zealand company has launched the first insulated weatherproofing system in Australasia, specifically designed to tackle our biggest building industry issues — cold and leaky homes.

The revolutionary Aridon system, unveiled at a concept home in Palmerston North recently, turns traditional ideas about insulation inside out — literally.

The rigid water-resistant panels interlock together on the outside of a building's frame to form a seamless blanket of insulation and weatherproofing.

This does away with the need for traditional building wrap, cavity battens, insulation and tapes/sealants. External cladding is then placed over this insulated, weatherproof layer.

Demand for the product is expected to create a new market niche, especially among leaky home owners and those affected by the Christchurch earthquakes.

Aridon enables people to remain living in their homes, warm and dry, while they are re-clad, among a myriad of other benefits.

The product also has the potential to significantly speed up the construction of new residences by four to six weeks.

The product is the brainchild of Palmerston North-based structural engineer Stephen Pinkney and product

developer Christina Gomes, who carefully studied the underlying issues causing cold and leaky homes in New Zealand when developing and patenting their product especially for the Australasian market.

"New Zealanders deserve a better quality of insulation and Aridon turns the traditional idea of insulating and weatherproofing houses firmly on its head," Mr Pinkney says.

"Our product can typically be installed on a simple 200sq m dwelling within two days. This speed of construction, coupled with the insulated rigid sheathing and temporary weather protection benefits, means building teams can complete houses faster than ever before, with significantly less waste.

"This allows people to get their homes delivered on time and with a much reduced risk of weather interruptions and delays," he says.

The product's benefits have already generated interest from a number of architects and home owners who are looking for cost-effective, high-performing insulation and weatherproofing solutions.

Aridon panels are made from high density, water repellent expanded polystyrene. If, by chance, any water does get beyond the exterior cladding, Aridon is designed to ensure it drains below the building's foundations, keeping the building frame completely dry, even in extreme weather.

The system also has a series of custom-designed

auxiliary components, such as window flashings, which ensure parts of the building that are prone to leaking have a secondary line of defence.

Ms Gomes says because the Aridon panels lock together to provide a seamless insulating air barrier, they significantly improve the air quality within a building, reducing the risk of respiratory illnesses such as asthma.

She says the product's superior insulation R-values also maintain a stable warm temperature inside the home which will reduce a household's energy requirements and power bills.

100% recyclable

"New Zealanders have put up with cold, leaky houses for far too long. Aridon will help keep families cool in summer, warm in winter, and dry all year round," Ms Gomes says.

"The panels are 100% recyclable, and have a guaranteed insulation life of 50 years."

The system complies with the relevant New Zealand Building Code (NZBC) requirements.

It is an alternative building solution compliant with the performance requirements of NZBC E2 External Moisture for up to Extra High wind zones and NZBC H1 Energy Efficiency.

For more information visit www.aridon.co.nz.



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Building a difference for everyone

By Lifemark Ambassador
Graeme Sinclair

In my opinion, building a home has to be one of the most equally frustrating and rewarding experiences.

Ultimately, you have the opportunity to build your own home to meet your needs instead of moving into someone else's idea of perfect — but it does come with many challenges.

From a client perspective, managing your own expectations of the dream and then communicating this to your designer and builder can be an exercise in diplomacy and patience.

Like any client, when building our most recent home we had very specific ideas about what we needed for our family. We were lucky to have a builder who understood some of our more specific needs around accessibility, not just for myself as a chariot driver, but for the whole family.

Ultimately, our builder was chosen as they knew the ins and outs of the Lifemark Design Standards, making the communication process between us as the client, and our builders, a cinch — we were both talking the same language.

Many of the Lifemark Design Standards are just plain common sense and, in all honesty, cost us no more to incorporate.

Not having to explain in detail to our builder why we



Lifemark Ambassador Graeme Sinclair.

wanted 810mm clear access doorways, level threshold entry and the odd extra nog in the wall for grab rails made the whole process easier.

The ease of incorporating such features at the beginning of the project was highlighted by a previous renovation project which had cost us \$250k to adapt our old home to meet accessibility needs, not to mention that, overall, it was a painful and frustrating process for all those concerned.

Even before I was an Ambassador for Lifemark, I knew that incorporating such features into our new home was going to be a benefit for my whole family.

Working with an accredited Lifemark partner to build our home really did remove many of the frustrations that can come with trying to explain why these features were going to make a difference to how we

lived.

Our builder immediately understood our requirements, and was able to suggest other features that made the whole home a place for all our family and friends to congregate and live in comfortably.

Frankly, working with a Lifemark-accredited builder was the difference between a maddening experience that would test the bonds of any marriage, and one that was an exciting and enjoyable journey for myself and my whole family.

Simply, as a client I would recommend working with a Lifemark-accredited builder to all those considering building a home.

So make sure you're the builder they look up, and we might see you out fishing with me soon! For more information, go to www.lifemark.co.nz.

Make your business stand out from the crowd

In 2011, 74% of new homes were designed for clients over 50 years of age. 85% of those designs included specific design features that will accommodate those clients as they age.

(*source: eboss 2011 survey)

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Applying for Apprenticeship Reboot Grants

From Tuesday, June 4, apprentices and their employers became eligible to apply for the Government re-boot grants.

As apprentices need to be in training for 90 days before applying, this marks 90 days from March 6 when the scheme was first introduced.

Although this is a Government (Tertiary Education Commission, or TEC) initiative, the BCITO will assist apprentices and employers to apply.

However, apprentices and employers will need to physically apply and sign the TEC application form before sending it in to the BCITO. Here is how to proceed:

1

The BCITO will email apprentices and employers as they become eligible, with a copy of the TEC application form and a copy of the TEC instruction sheet which explains what they need to do.

2

For apprentices without an email address, the BCITO will send a text advising to visit the TEC web site to download and print the application form.

3

For employers without an email address, the BCITO will send the form and TEC information sheet by post.

4

The application form and information is available now from the TEC web site at www.tec.govt.nz/Learners-Organisations/Learners/Learn-about/Apprenticeships/

5

Both parties need to read the TEC information sheet fully to ensure you are eligible to apply.

6

The employer and apprentice both need to complete their section on the same application form and send it back to the BCITO. This can be sent by email (scanned), post or fax.

7

The BCITO then reports back to TEC once a month on who it has received an application form from.

8

TEC will then do their checking and pay the BCITO. This may take some time. The BCITO will then distribute the money to the apprentice and employer into the bank account nominated on the form.

9

Applicants who are unsuccessful will be notified by the BCITO.

Some important points to note:

- It is important that both the employer and apprentice fill in their section of the same application form. Applications from only one party will not be processed.

- Payments must go directly to the employer and apprentice into their own separate bank accounts.

Both payments cannot be made into the same account. The BCITO will also ask for a bank deposit slip or copy of a statement to confirm account numbers.

- The notification, verification and payment process runs on a monthly reporting cycle between the BCITO and TEC. It could take up to 12 weeks to receive payment, depending on when in the cycle an application is made.

If you have any questions in relation to Government Reboot Grants, please visit www.bcito.org.nz or call 0800 422 486.



**I reckon I was a good builder.
But I wasn't qualified...**

If you are in a similar position to Peter, you may be eligible for the BCITO's Experience Recognition Process. To become a **qualified professional**, call the BCITO on 0800 422 486 to discuss your circumstances.

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Paperwork — don't hide it in a file!

In his first article, new *Building Today* columnist **Terry Sage** introduces his company and outlines his upcoming columns in which he'll give you some practical tips to help run your business.

Welcome to what I hope will be an ongoing feature in *Building Today*.

Why do I hope it will be ongoing? Well, it's good for the ego seeing your name in print, and a great opener — "What do you do?" "I'm a writer . . ."

But besides making me feel better, I am hoping to share with you endless tips on business coaching and some case studies from actual clients.

Now I know you think you are very special, and what you face is absolutely unique to you. But trust me when I say most businesses, construction or otherwise, are very similar in their wants, needs and concerns when it comes to the business side of their business.

This being the first of, hopefully, many articles, perhaps I should start with an introduction of myself and my company, Trades Coaching New Zealand.

I am, in fact, one of you. By that I mean a qualified carpenter and joiner by trade — however, many people say I don't look like one.

This has always concerned me, as I have never been sure which way to take that — do I look better or worse than a builder? Is being a builder a good look? I am

sure it is, in which case I wish I did look like you.

Anyway, I've had 16 years on the tools — 12 of which were telling other people what to do with their tools — then a string of other businesses until after a short and hugely satisfying bout of semi-retirement (well, not really, I just had no idea what to do next) I started a company called Business Coaching New Zealand.



Terry Sage

That was nearly eight years ago and is still going great guns, with more than 100 clients past and present. It was while coaching a well-known and respected Northland construction firm that the owner said "you should take this concept to the construction industry".

I thought I had under the Business Coaching New Zealand banner, but after further talks we came up with the idea that players in the construction industry would relate better to one of their own, rather than a stuffy ex-banker or accountant (apologies to all non-stuffy ex-bankers or accountants).

So Trades Coaching New Zealand was introduced to the unsuspecting construction industry. What is it? Well, it's Business Coaching New Zealand with a different name and different company colours, and the reason it can be the same is because business coaching is all about the business side of any business.

For instance, if we were coaching an engineer we would not tell them how to use a lathe, or if it were an optician, how to fix an eye.

Likewise, for any tradesperson we do not show you how to lay a drain, swing a hammer or paint a wall. What we do do, and do extremely well, is help you with all the other stuff that goes on somewhere in your office or perhaps the kitchen table.

The majority of trades companies throughout our land are owned and operated by tradesmen and women — and this not earth shattering news, I'm sure. However, most of the owners would have had the best possible training for their trade but very little training in how to run a business — yet run a business you do, and quite successfully.

With the help of a Trades Coaching New Zealand coach who not only understands your industry but has been trained in the art of business coaching, we will show you that a construction company is more than building.

And that the paperwork side is not something to fear or hide in a file but, in fact, is the part of the business that can make you more profit than the build itself.

If you are now thinking that if you don't build there is no money coming in, so in your company paperwork takes second place, well, you'd be right — sort of.

Yes, we have to build, but if we can build and run an efficient, streamlined, well managed and — wait for it — profitable business, would you think again?

Stay with me over the next couple of months and read the case studies I present, and I bet there will be many out there in construction land that say "yep, I know that feeling".

Next month: Planning, and why you need to write a plan even though you know what you want.

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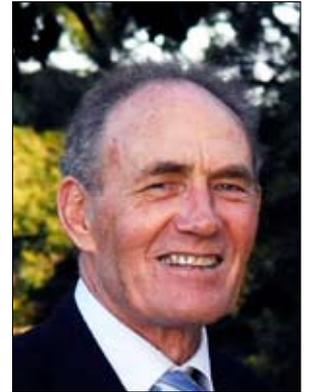
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THE BUSINESS SIDE OF CONSTRUCTION

Material evidence

Architect **Don Bunting** notes that of real concern is that today's technology is in danger of becoming more intelligent than those who use it.



During my time at the Auckland School of Architecture in the 1960s, three of the key study topics were Building Materials, Building Construction and Building Techniques.

As I recall, each required three years of study. The Building Materials course required students to develop and display a detailed understanding of materials science, with a particular focus on materials in use, including their relationship with other materials in the context of New Zealand climatic and geotechnical conditions.

Building Construction involved the physical process of building on and off site. Building Techniques covered the often complex process of site management, delivery of materials and elements to the site, and their installation into a construction project.

Having no direct knowledge of current university courses, I am loathe to be too precise. However, I note that the Auckland School of Architecture course in Year 1 allocates only 10 points of a required 360 total points for a Degree to:

Structural concepts and construction principles relating to light timber, steel, concrete and other typical construction materials for domestic scale buildings. In depth investigations of structural systems, building envelopes and detailing. Application of principles to design studio projects.

Assuming the other two years of the initial Bachelor of Architecture degree offer similar topics, that is still only 30 points out of a total of 360, or 8% — and nothing at all, it seems, about materials science.

Even so, university training is only a small part of the whole. I wonder how much mentoring our young designers receive once they leave university and take on their first job in a design office?

How much interaction is there on site with, hopefully, experienced tradespeople and building contractors?

How much interaction is, in fact, possible within the current atmosphere of distrust and apportioning of blame which seems to be occurring at the construction coalface?

And with many design firms now having little or nothing to do with the on-site construction process, this avenue of shared knowledge and experience is

slowly being cut off completely.

Of similar concern is a reduction in the amount of technical expertise within product manufacturing and supply organisations.

Once you could contact any of the larger material supply companies and speak, if not to a materials scientist, then at least to someone having in-depth knowledge and understanding of their company's products.

It seems we have learned little, if anything, from the recent weathertightness debacle. And if one more commentator uses as an excuse that well-worn phrase “a systemic failure”, I'll be forced to use an even older Anglo-Saxon phrase in response.

Adding to this concern is a growing reliance on a range of simplistic MBIE acceptable solutions, containing what might at best be described as barely adequate details and specifications, and lacking little connection to the real world of branded products and systems.

The result is a one size fits all solution to what should be a carefully considered and craft-like approach to the proper use of materials.

It can also lead to a pick and mix approach to detailing — picking and mixing what seems to fit without any real depth of thought.

And could anyone today design and construct a house without using sealants? It's what used to be called “positive detailing”, forcing you to think about and understand how materials and climate interact.

It seems we have learned little, if anything, from the recent weathertightness debacle. And if one more commentator uses as an excuse that well-worn phrase “a systemic failure”, I'll be forced to use an even older Anglo-Saxon phrase in response.

There is nothing “systemic” about an increasing lack of

knowledge of, and appreciation for, the application of even the most basic of building materials — timber, concrete, metals and glass — let alone knowledge of some of the more recent “super products”.

Yes, many new building materials are offering designers and builders new ways of designing and building, but it does concern me that most may have little knowledge or understanding of what these new wonder products are made of, and how they will respond to climate and use over the next 50-plus years.

Not only are we in danger of losing sight of the original art and science of keeping moisture out of our buildings, but those responsible — designers, legislators, approving authorities, contractors and sub-trades — now know less and less about the materials being employed.

Then there is the increasing reliance on technology. Of real concern is that today's technology is in danger of becoming more intelligent than those using it.

This is not a new phenomenon. Even back in the days of the first calculators, you needed to have your brain in gear to cross check the result those little calculators magically produced, at least to make sure that the decimal point was in the right place.

However, today we are heading full speed towards a future where a building information model will contain all data necessary to design and construct a building project.

Impressive looking details will be spat out at the press of a mouse button with no need for human intervention.

I am certain there are those within the industry who have a real knowledge and understanding of material use, and there are many buildings being created that will stand the test of time.

But even with the natural desire of our media to highlight the negative — as the old saying goes, “if it bleeds it leads” — the problems of the 1990s are showing no signs of going away.



Igloos R Us

Dr Kerry Rodgers prepares to chill out for the winter

With winter and snow now upon us, there is a chance some of us may be able to escape to Whakapapa or Mt Hutt. If you are taking the family, here is a project to keep them busy, appropriate resource and building consents notwithstanding.

It may help if you are a card-carrying Licensed Building Practitioner. You never know who you may meet on the snowy slopes these days.

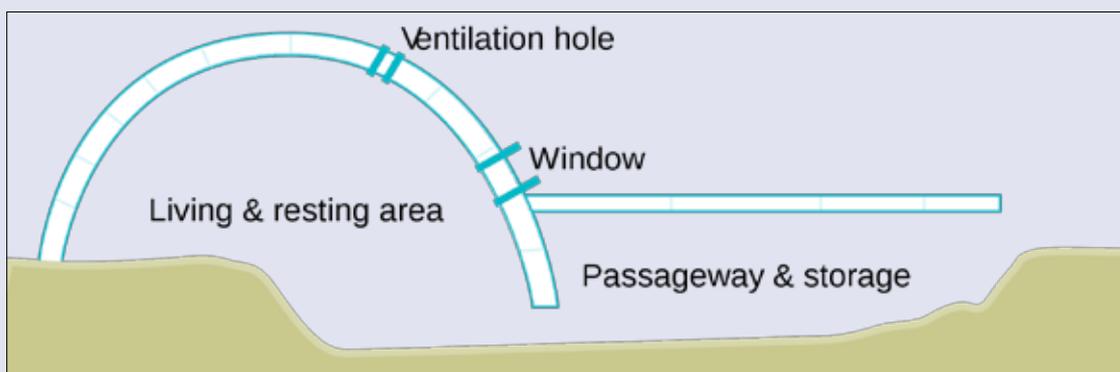
Inuits built their igloos of any suitable material, but to the outside world the term is generally taken to mean a shelter built of snow. There were three traditional types: small, medium and large. Large could have up to five rooms and house 20 or so people. Beginning igloo builders are advised to think small.



As with all structures, you need the right materials. The snow must be well compacted to possess enough structural strength. But it must also be sufficiently yielding to be able to be worked easily. Wind-blown snow whose ice-crystals have become interlocked is the bees knees.

Put on gloves, and cut and trim a number of blocks using a long thin knife. The video (see YouTube reference at bottom of opposite page) shows the best size.

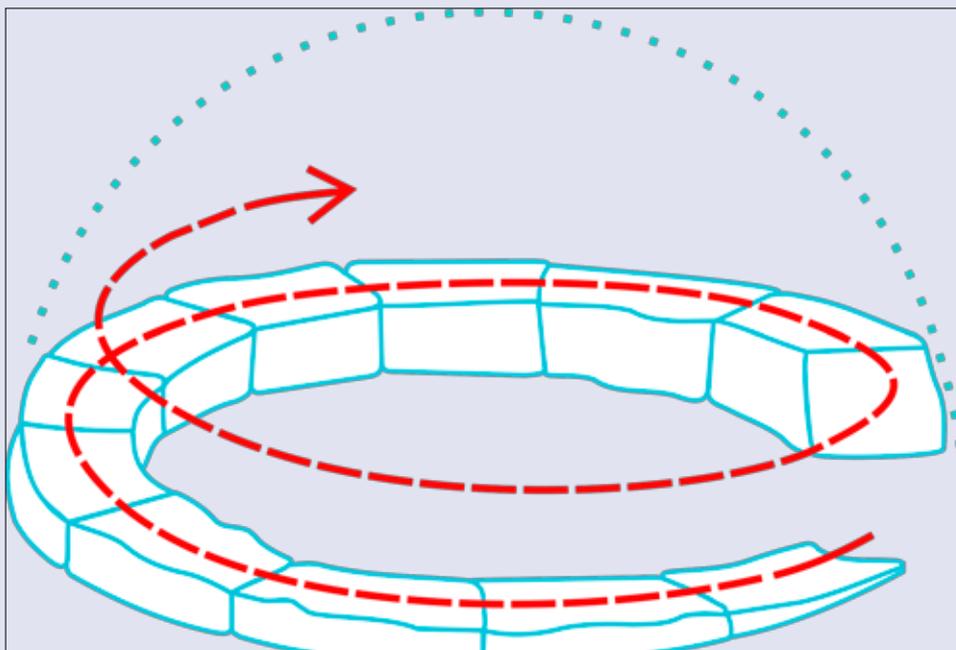
The hole the blocks come from should now be opened up to provide the lower half of the igloo. Decide on the entrance location — away from the prevailing wind is probably best — and dig a short channel into the snow from this point. This will be the entrance passage and will keep the heat in and the wind out.



Architecturally, an igloo is unique. Its dome is raised out of independent blocks leaning on each other and cut to fit in place, without using additional supports during construction.

Stack the blocks in a circle around the hollow in a spiral, in which each block becomes progressively taller. As each is stacked on earlier ones it needs to be pushed down firmly. The pressure causes the snow to melt where the blocks touch. The moisture refreezes and welds the blocks together.

As successive layers build up, fill any residual holes with snow pushed in hard. This provides both mortar and a draught excluder. Continue until the dome is complete. Smooth the exterior with additional snow pushed firmly onto the surface.



An igloo built correctly will support the weight of a person standing on its roof. And in the traditional igloo, heat from the oil lamp causes the interior to melt slightly. The melting and refreezing builds up a layer of ice on the inner side of the dome that contributes to the strength of the igloo.

The sophisticated builder may wish to provide a window. This can be done using a single block of ice inserted in place of one of the snow blocks — after construction is completed. Ice blocks are not easy to come by adjacent to a ski field, and this is perhaps best left for igloos built on the flats, as in Central Otago.

Similarly, igloo builders need to think ahead as to door flaps. A deer or goat skin is ideal. Beds can be made of raised packed snow covered in sheep skins. The higher the beds the more they are warmed by the hot air trapped under the dome roof.

Snow is an excellent insulator. Like expanded polystyrene it comes with built-in air pockets. As a consequence, igloos are surprisingly warm and comfortable. However, heating comes entirely from body heat, and the inside temperature typically ranges from -7°C to a balmy 16°C .



Before you start it might pay to watch a segment of the 1922 documentary *Nanook of the North*. It shows an experienced Inuit igloo builder at work, demonstrating the use of an ivory knife to cut and trim snow blocks, the stacking of the blocks and how to make and install a window.

It is available on YouTube: www.youtube.com/watch?v=oEEOK6e1nLE&feature=related. Note, it is not recommended that would-be builders lick their ice-cold metal knives as Allakariallak does his walrus ivory blade.

His igloo, by the way, took about one hour to construct, and could accommodate five people.

Myth or reality — is fixed price the more economic method of contracting?

Timothy Bates of Auckland law firm Legal Vision discusses the merits and drawbacks of fixed price contracts as opposed to “charge-up” or “costs-plus-margin” contracts.



As a solicitor specialising in construction law, clients often ask me what form of contract they ought to enter into with builders.

The more frequent situation is that the builder is pushing for “charge-up” or “costs-plus-margin” forms of contracting. Typically, the advice given is that a home owner ought to contract on a fixed price basis.

I suppose considering those two opposing contracting forces, one could readily assume that builders are going to do better out of a charge-up contract as they get to charge for actual time worked and work completed, and that fixed price works best for home owners in that they can keep a check on building costs such that they do not escalate.

But experience establishes that such an analysis is far

too simplistic. And is there really such a thing as a fixed price contract these days?

In broad terms, every fixed price contract will include line items tagged out which the builder, for one reason or another, is not able or prepared to allocate a fixed price to. Further, some items may be allocated a prime cost sum and/or a provisional sum.

In the context of a leaky building remediation contract, this might be timber removal and replacement, or a large line item entitled “contingencies”.

But putting to one side that type of building contract, even a relatively simple home renovation that is completed on a fixed price is likely to have its value change just on the normal variations that a builder may claim for during the course of construction.

For example, it is not unheard of for a builder to identify borer while renovating a 1950s state house or, for that matter, to identify failings of a concrete tile roof that needs to be remedied in the course of renovating the rest of a state house.

Both these changes to the scope of work are, in normal circumstances, going to be treated as a variation which will have a cost implication by increasing the value of the fixed price contract.

So in essence, I am not so sure any contract is truly fixed, and that those demanding a fixed price contract are potentially fooling themselves.

Arguments against contracting on a charge-up basis

The typical arguments I have heard in court or in negotiation are usually twofold:

- A competitive tender is the only way to get a true and fair market price for the building works, and
- If a builder is not held to a fixed price no adequate restraint is put on at least his cost of labour.

In response to the former, that argument seems to discount that it is still possible through tender to get a very distorted cost of building.

You may have a contractor coming in low who is attempting to buy a job or, alternatively, you may have a contractor with so much work on he can afford to miss the job and, thus, prices at a level which

guarantees him a grand profit, on the off chance that he wins the contract.

If it happens to be those two contractors pricing one particular contract, those two prices are not providing you with the realistic cost of building.

Further, in response to the latter, this criticism of charge up seems to completely discount the need for a builder to service all his other contracts/clients, which would normally work against him unnecessarily prolonging a building contract.

There is also the not inconsiderable matter of a builder’s reputation that he no doubt strives to maintain. Just as an opening batsman is only as good as his last innings, so is a builder’s reputation only as good as his last job.

Over-charging the labour on a historic job will not stand him in good stead for winning the next contract.

It is also important not to totally dismiss the importance of estimates that would normally be required with a charge-up form of contracting.

Assuming sufficient detail was provided, the home owner could easily hold the contractor (generally) to that estimate, and where there was significant cost overrun, the contractor would have to substantiate his reasons for exceeding line items as estimated.

As touched upon in my May 2013 article, the personalities on both sides of the contract will ultimately determine the form of contract that is entered into. One form of contracting does not necessarily fit each set of circumstances and the individuals involved.

It follows that it is not as simple as saying charge-up only serves the builder’s interests, and fixed price is the only form of contract that serves the home owner’s interests.

There are so many other variables that will ultimately determine which contract is the best fit for a particular scope of works.

Note: This article is not intended to be legal advice (nor a substitute for legal advice). No responsibility or liability is accepted by Legal Vision or *Building Today* to anyone who relies on the information contained in this article.

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Principal: Timothy Bates LLB (Hons)

UNIT C
19 BLAKE STREET
PONSONBY 1011

PO BOX 147423
PONSONBY
AUCKLAND

PHONE (09) 360 2415
FAX (09) 360 2417
EMAIL tim@legalvision.co.nz

Building Consents Information

For All Authorisations, May 2013

Dwellings	\$714,440,000
Domestic Outbuildings	\$11,931,000
Total Residential	\$726,371,000
Non-residential	\$433,860,000
Total All Buildings	\$1,160,231,000
Non-building Construction	\$19,174,000
Total Authorisations	\$1,179,405,000

Number of new dwellings consented

	May 2013	Apr 2013	May 2012	May 2013	Apr 2013	May 2012
Far North District	12	11	8	Horowhenua District	9	2
Whangarei District	26	37	20	Kapiti Coast District	14	71
Kaipara District	15	4	11	Porirua City	14	11
Rodney District	108	69	53	Upper Hutt City	7	8
North Shore City	107	63	40	Lower Hutt City	21	16
Waitakere City	49	81	46	Wellington City	33	115
Auckland City	192	85	113	Masterton District	4	7
Manukau City	85	69	61	Carterton District	6	5
Papakura District	54	42	20	South Wairarapa District	3	5
Franklin District	51	30	35	Tasman District	29	21
Thames-Coromandel District	13	14	14	Nelson City	21	30
Hauraki District	5	5	6	Marlborough District	17	17
Waikato District	24	31	31	Kaikoura District	3	3
Matamata-Piako District	12	10	4	Buller District	6	9
Hamilton City	123	82	72	Grey District	2	3
Waipa District	28	32	18	Westland District	4	0
Otorohanga District	1	5	1	Hurunui District	12	11
South Waikato District	4	1	0	Waimakariri District	103	80
Waitomo District	1	1	0	Christchurch City	172	146
Taupo District	11	13	12	Selwyn District	157	111
Western Bay of Plenty District	19	35	19	Ashburton District	16	19
Tauranga City	67	45	43	Timaru District	24	16
Rotorua District	5	17	4	Mackenzie District	6	4
Whakatane District	7	9	3	Waimate District	1	7
Kawerau District	1	0	0	Chatham Islands Territory	0	0
Opotiki District	1	1	0	Waitaki District	8	4
Gisborne District	8	16	20	Central Otago District	15	11
Wairoa District	1	0	0	Queenstown-Lakes District	48	35
Hastings District	17	14	13	Dunedin City	32	61
Napier City	15	7	17	Clutha District	0	4
Central Hawke's Bay District	4	4	2	Southland District	7	4
New Plymouth District	37	22	25	Gore District	0	5
Stratford District	0	1	3	Invercargill City	10	7
South Taranaki District	2	10	5	Area Outside TA	0	0
Ruapehu District	3	5	5			
Wanganui District	24	10	10	Total	1971	1755
Rangitikei District	0	3	0			1372
Manawatu District	6	6	16			
Palmerston North City	27	13	12			
Tararua District	2	4	0			

- Based on 2006 census areas
- Each dwelling unit in a housing project is counted separately
- Figures in these tables may differ from published statistics

Source: Statistics New Zealand

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