



## **Industry calls for practical licensing system**

Public feedback is calling for a licensing system which fits with existing occupational roles, links design and construction and improves the integration of elements on a building site.

The discussion document *Licensing of Building Practitioners: Discussing the Options* was released for public consultation in August 2004 and attracted a total of 208 written responses when submissions closed on 30 November.

Submitters came from a range of backgrounds including designers, architects, engineers, residential and commercial builders and tradespeople, professional industry groups, territorial authorities and product manufacturers.

The licensing system is one of a package of changes introduced by the Building Act 2004 to improve control of and encourage better practices in design and construction.

It introduces the concept of restricted work – work so critical that if done badly it has the potential to cause significant harm to people or cause costly property damage.

From 30 November 2009 all restricted work must be carried out or supervised by a licensed building practitioner.

The discussion document asked two questions – what work should be restricted and which trades should be licensed?

### **Restricted work**

#### *Proposal*

Five categories of restricted work – foundations, framing, roofing, cladding and exterior openings such as doors and windows.

Submissions said:

- this definition of restricted work was correct
- installation of specified systems such as sprinkler systems and heating, ventilation and air conditioning should be included
- licence classes should follow occupational lines rather than restricted work categories.

### **Design classes**

#### *Proposal*

A licensing system based on two categories of design licence - Design 1 for low technical complexity and Design 2 for more technically complex work.

Submissions said:

- design classes should be based on existing industry standards
- even basic designs often include some complex elements
- overall coordination of design work is critical
- stronger links between design and construction are vital
- the roles of designers and building consent authorities need to be clarified
- opinion was split on whether two or three design classes are more appropriate.

### **Construction classes**

#### *Proposal*

Construction licences divided by building type into residential/light commercial and commercial; unlimited residential/light commercial and commercial site supervisor licences; and five specialist trade building licences broadly aligned with restricted work categories.

Submissions said:

- construction classes should fit with the way industry is organised.
- the majority of problems occur at building interfaces and the role of building site supervisor will be critical to address this problem.

#### Specialist trades

- Some specialist trades such as cladding and roofing should be licensed.
- A single licence class will suit some specialist trades while others will require multiple licence classes.

### **Supervision**

Under the licensing system, all restricted work must be either carried out or supervised by a licensed building practitioner.

Submissions said supervision needs to be defined more precisely.

### **Self-certification**

Licensed building practitioners will be expected to know the limits of their own competence and to sign off their work to acknowledge they have carried out or supervised the restricted work to the appropriate standard.

Submissions said:

- a degree of self-certification is necessary to avoid an unmanageably high number of licences
- self-certification must be carefully defined.

**Cost/benefit**

Submissions said:

- the system should be simple to administer.
- licensing will increase costs for licensed building practitioners and clients
- these costs will be balanced by improved design and construction work.

**Industry consultation essential**

Department of Building and Housing Manager Occupational Licensing Virginia Burton says this input has been invaluable to the continuing development of the licensing system.

'It is essential all those affected by licensing of building practitioners have an opportunity to have input into the development of the licensing system and understand and support the final licence classes.'

She says submissions and other consultation with industry has shifted thinking from the model proposed in the discussion document to a list of classes which align more closely with the way industry is currently organised.

Final classes will be announced in June after further consultation with industry including key groups and education and training organisations.

For more detailed information about the submissions go to the Who will be licensed? page of the [www.builders.govt.nz](http://www.builders.govt.nz) website.