

John Andrew, Builder.

QBSA Licence 41722

New Homes, Alterations, Additions, Bathrooms, Commercial, Industrial

19<sup>th</sup> September, 2012.

The Research Director.

Transport, Housing and Local Government Committee

Parliament house

Re: QBSA inquiry.

To Whom It May Concern.

I have worked on the Downs for over 25 years from sub-contracting carpentry to running my own building business. I am currently working for a private Certifier where I have been employed for the last five years as a competent person carrying out inspections on a full time basis. I have had the privilege of working with numerous Tradesmen, Builders, Certifiers and QBSA officers on the Darling Downs and have found the standard of building generally to be of high quality.

I would like to address the Terms of Reference.

- I don't believe a balance has been met and have observed that QBSA tends to favour the home owner in dispute mediation. Builders who experience a breakdown in communication with clients which has required Mediation leading to QBSA involvement find, even though the QBSA officer may agree with the builder, the builder is often asked to rectify. Cases I'm familiar with tended to favour the home owner and, on occasion, rectification work ordered without consultation with the Builder. It seems that the BSA assumes builders have sufficient profit margin to cover such rectification work. If the client has made the complaint, his side of the story is the only side taken in to consideration.
- I am aware of a concrete supplier who had agreed to rectify two covered areas slabs only to have the QBSA intervene on the behalf of the home owner and without consulting with the builder or concrete supplier. Arranged quotations, ordered rectification and billed the builder.
- I have also taken a personal interest in an ongoing case in [REDACTED] in a dispute over [REDACTED] expenses with the home owner. This case has escalated to an expensive rectification and licence suspension for the Builder and it appears the BSA officer has not followed protocol. The proper paper trail was not followed, and little or no communication with the Builder was entered into despite Tribunal involvement. The QBSA officer accepting the client's story without listening to the Builder.

- I believe costing of dwellings is more product, labour and litigation driven than QBSA fees and regulations. In saying this however, if the QBSA were to try all avenues of mediation before litigation, fees could be reduced. And less time would be spent in the courts. Compliance with Australian Standards and Building Code of Australia is the price we as a community are going to have to live with if we want a high standard of building.
- My dealings with QBSA officers have been excellent. Sadly however administration staff at counter enquiries, especially during my visits to the Toowoomba office, has been frustrating. Staffs in their response to general enquiries treat the builder, in my opinion, as the enemy; my only phone call to the call centre regarding contracts was brilliantly handled by a well-trained, competent friendly person.
- Road shows etc. don't seem to be working with DVD's and lectures poorly presented. The presentations seem to be targeting builders rather than tradesmen. Tradesmen are unaware of these presentations and, after speaking to contractors on site today, most would be unable to attend a day time function anyway. All agreed that if they were run after hours or weekends, attendance would be greater.
- My inspection of work on the Darling Downs reveals the standard dropping rather than becoming more competent. Lack of awareness in the Australian Standards, BCA etc. means compliance is requiring more work of the Certifiers who must also be educators. As a competent person doing between 1-5 frame inspections a day, I am spending more and more time walking a tradesman through his line of work than ever before. Competent Supervisors are a scarcity, with Standards and BCA information being very hard to source. I recommend better training of QBSA officers at the point of employment. Training in people skills, legal and compliance to start with. It seems ludicrous that a QBSA officer, whose background may only have been supervisory, can audit and oversee a Certifier that has at least 11years of Tertiary Education.
- Arrangements between the board and the general Manager are outside my experience, but I question if the Board Members are chosen to represent a good cross section of the building trade.
- It's questionable that the Home Warranty Scheme is overseen by officers that it employs. These officers, I'm sure, when handling a claim, are also aware of budgetary constraints which must influence their decision making. I wonder if the sub-contractors that have carried out the noncompliant work should be asked back to rectify.....

I once rectified a leaking shower hob, at little expense, when a QBSA officer that was overseeing the claim only commented on the bad choice of floor covering in the bathroom. In this case the builder had returned to New Zealand. Training of tradesmen will reduce claims. And this should be the BSA's focus.

- I have already commented on the decline in the awareness of standards and skills of tradesmen. I consider a point system would mean compulsory attendance to training programs and Webb sites etc. that allow easier access to Australian Standards etc.

Membership with HIA and Master Builders and improve awareness and skills of the tradesmen.

- Two recent occasions where I met with QBSA officers during my inspections in my employment the officers were only concerned with Licence checks. Distance and shortage of staff must be hindering the QBSA. Also tradesmen are travelling further west from coastal regions and these tradesmen certainly do not appear to be as knowledgeable as tradesmen from the Darling Downs. I have observed a lack of auditing and training with these alien tradesmen.
- I believe more training before issuing a licence is needed. Industry groups seem to have sped up the process, taking over from TAFE colleges. I'm not convinced this is a good thing although the material taught at TAFE colleges was sometimes dated. Apprenticeship training groups can only be as good as the tradesmen with whom the apprentice is placed. Last year I visited a job site where the apprentice was awaiting the arrival of his training officer. He seemed concerned about updating his log book; however upon the arrival of the training officer, the apprentice was only questioned regarding whether he was being bullied in any way etc. with no examination of competency of the training he was receiving.
- In my opinion, the training (super shows) the QBSA hold should be more frequent. They should have more relevant content, providing more information for a broader spectrum of tradesmen with the Australian Standards and BCA being more available for all.... Most carpenters I come across cannot read the Truss details

I also consider there should be more info available for consumers. Consumers are often unrealistic in expectations of the role of all contributors from QBSA, Certifiers, Builders and Tradesmen. Recently a school teacher was unsatisfied as she demanded the same paint finish on her walls as her two pack kitchen. This expectation should not have arisen. The QBSA mediated but didn't persuade the client. Litigation was required to resolve this situation with its associated cost benefiting no parties.

- I believe that we are all members of the same team in providing affordable, reliable, competent service and product for the home owner. Unfortunately I consider the QBSA has switched teams and sees us as the enemy. Today people require a user friendly QBSA. We need to work to remove dictator officers of 20years ago, and may they not return.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'J. Anderson'. The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial 'J' and a long, sweeping underline.