

Before the Building Practitioners Board

	BPB Complaint No. CB26461
Licensed Building Practitioner:	Matthew Ashton (the Respondent)
Licence Number:	BP128341
Licence Held:	Carpentry

Decision of the Board in Respect of the Conduct of a Licensed Building Practitioner Under section 315 of the Building Act 2004

Complaint or Board Inquiry	Complaint
Hearing Type:	On the Papers
Hearing and Draft Decision Date:	24 May 2024
Finalised Draft Decision Date:	30 July 2024
Board Members Present:	

Mrs J Clark, Barrister and Solicitor, Legal Member (Presiding)
Mr D Fabish, LBP, Carpentry and Site AoP 2
Ms K Reynolds, Construction Manager

Procedure:

The matter was considered by the Building Practitioners Board (the Board) under the provisions of Part 4 of the Building Act 2004 (the Act), the Building Practitioners (Complaints and Disciplinary Procedures) Regulations 2008 (the Complaints Regulations) and the Board's Complaints and Inquiry Procedures.

Disciplinary Finding:

The Respondent **has** committed a disciplinary offence under section 317(1)(da)(ii) of the Act.

The Respondent is fined \$1,000 and ordered to pay costs of \$500. A record of the disciplinary offending will be recorded on the Public Register for a period of three years.

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Summary of the Board’s Decision

- [1] The Respondent failed to provide a record of work on completion of restricted building work. He is fined \$1,000 and ordered to pay costs of \$500.

The Charges

- [2] Under regulation 10 of the Complaints Regulations, the Board must, on receipt of the Registrar’s Report, decide whether to proceed no further with the complaint because regulation 9 of the Complaints Regulations applies. Having received the report, the Board decided that regulation 9 applied to some but not to all of the allegations.

Regulation 10 Decision

- [3] In this matter, the disciplinary charges the Board resolved to further investigate¹ were that the Respondent may, in relation to building work [OMITTED], Auckland, have failed, without good reason, in respect of a building consent that relates to restricted building work that he or she is to carry out or supervise, or has carried out or supervised, (as the case may be), to provide the persons specified in section 88(2) with a record of work, on completion of the restricted building work, in accordance with section 88(1) of the Act contrary to section 317(1)(da)(ii) of the Act.

Regulation 9 Decisions

- [4] The complaint to the Board also contained allegations that the Respondent had:
- (a) carried out or supervised building work in a negligent or incompetent manner (s 317(1)(b) of the Act);
 - (b) breached the code of ethics prescribed under section 314A of the Act (s 317(1)(g) of the Act); and
 - (c) conducted himself or herself in a manner that brings, or is likely to bring, the regime under this Act for licensed building practitioners into disrepute (s 317(1)(i) of the Act).
- [5] With regard to the allegations made, the Board decided that regulations 9(a) and 9(f)(ii) of the Complaints Regulations applied. They provide:

Complaint not warranting further investigation

A complaint does not warrant further investigation if—

- (a) it does not come within the grounds for discipline.*
- (f) the investigation of it is—*
 - (ii) unnecessary.*

Code of Ethics

- [6] The Complainant alleged breaches of the Code of Ethics on the basis that the Respondent did not provide a “spend report” and alleged missing funds. The Code of ethics came into force on 25 October 2022 and relates only to conduct after that date. The alleged conduct took place prior to the Code coming into force. Accordingly, regulation 9(a) applies. The complaint does not come within the grounds for discipline.

¹ The resolution was made following the Board’s consideration of a report prepared by the Registrar in accordance with regulation 10 of the Complaints Regulations.

Workmanship and disreputable conduct

- [7] In considering whether the investigation of a complaint is necessary, the Board must consider the directions of the courts regarding the threshold for matters to be dealt with as a disciplinary matter. In short, the conduct has to fall seriously short of expected standards of conduct.²
- [8] The allegations of negligent or incompetent building work were primarily snag list items. The matters raised as alleged disreputable conduct were acting “*irresponsibly in regards to Council inspections*”, comments made to a supplier and the failure to provide the “spend report”.
- [9] The Board has decided that the matters raised did not reach the seriousness threshold as outlined in the court decisions. Accordingly, Regulation 9(f)(ii) applies, and the matter does not warrant further investigation.
- [10] The Complainant and Respondent should note that if new compellable evidence that was not available at the time the decision not to proceed was made, a further complaint may be made, or the Board may decide to initiate a Board Inquiry into the matter.

Draft Decision Process

- [11] The Board’s jurisdiction is that of an inquiry. Complaints are not prosecuted before the Board. Rather, it is for the Board to carry out any further investigation that it considers necessary prior to it making a decision.
- [12] Ordinarily, the Board makes a decision having held a hearing.³ The Board may, however, depart from its normal procedures if it considers doing so would achieve the purposes of the Act, and it is not contrary to the interests of natural justice to do so.⁴
- [13] In this instance, the Board has decided that a formal hearing is not necessary. The Board considers that there is sufficient evidence before it to allow it to make a decision on the papers. There may, however, be further evidence in relation to the matter that the Board was not aware of. To that end, this decision is a draft Board decision. The Respondent will be provided with an opportunity to comment on the draft findings and to present further evidence prior to the Board making a final decision. If the Respondent requests an in-person hearing, or the Board directs that one is required, this decision will be set aside a hearing will be scheduled.

² *Collie v Nursing Council of New Zealand* [2001] NZAR 74

³ Regulation 10 of the Complaints Regulations.

⁴ Under Clause 27 of Schedule 3 the Board may regulate its own procedure and it has summary jurisdiction, which allows for a degree of flexibility in how it deals with matters: *Castles v Standards Committee No.* [2013] NZHC 2289, *Orlov v National Standards Committee 1* [2013] NZHC 1955

Evidence

[14] The Board must be satisfied on the balance of probabilities that the disciplinary offences alleged have been committed⁵. Under section 322 of the Act, the Board has relaxed rules of evidence which allow it to receive evidence that may not be admissible in a court of law.

Failure to Provide a Record of Work

- [15] A Licensed Building Practitioner must provide a record of work for any restricted building work that they have carried out or supervised to the owner and the Territorial Authority on completion of their restricted building work.⁶
- [16] There is a statutory requirement under section 88(1) of the Building Act 2004 for a licensed building practitioner to provide a record of work to the owner and the territorial authority on completion of restricted building work⁷ unless there is a good reason for it not to be provided.⁸

Did the Respondent carry out or supervise restricted building work

[17] This project was the conversion of an existing dwelling into two units. The Respondent carried out or supervised building work related to walls, columns and beams, and bracing. This was restricted building work as it relates to the primary structure of a house.⁹

Was the restricted building work complete

- [18] The work was undertaken between February 2021 and approximately March 2022, when the Respondent stated he *“considered his part finished”*.
- [19] In this instance, completion occurred in late March 2022 when the Respondent’s engagement in the building work came to an end. The completion date applies notwithstanding that all of the intended work had not been completed as the Respondent did not return and carry out any further restricted building work.

Has the Respondent provided a record of work

[20] The Respondent provided a record of work dated 22 November 2023 to the homeowner on that same date and to the investigator on 11 April 2024. The Council file was obtained on 30 January 2024. It did not contain a record of work from the Respondent.

⁵ *Z v Dental Complaints Assessment Committee* [2009] 1 NZLR 1

⁶ Section 88(1) of the Act.

⁷ Restricted Building Work is defined by the Building (Definition of Restricted Building Work) Order 2011

⁸ Section 317(1)(da)(ii) of the Act

⁹ Section 5 Building (Definition of Restricted Building Work) Order 2011.

Was there a good reason

- [21] The Complainant’s complaint was that the Respondent had failed to provide a “full” record of work and that one provided after 10 months was only “partial”.
- [22] The Respondent said in his written response to the investigator that his record of work was partial because he could not contact the other Licensed Building Practitioner involved in the project for him to fill out his sections. He stated that he “*was unsure how to continue with this*”. The Respondent suggested that even though he did not carry out or supervise those parts of the work, he was waiting on the other Licensed Building Practitioner to fill out on the record of work and that he was, if necessary, prepared as main contractor “*to accept those pieces of work*” The inference was that he would provide a “full” record of work in his own name. The Respondent further commented that he had never come across a situation like this before.
- [23] The Board notes that section 88 of the Act states, “*Each licensed building practitioner who carries out ... or supervises restricted building work ...must ...provide ...a record of work ...*”. The use of the word “each” makes it clear that every licensed building practitioner who carries out restricted building work must complete a record of work for the work they did or supervised. This is so that there is a complete record of all the licensed persons who have been involved in the restricted building work. As such, even if there is more than one licensed building practitioner carrying out restricted building work, they must both provide a record of work. Their records of work should delineate what each did.
- [24] It must also be noted that the reference to supervision in the context of records of work is to the supervision of persons who are not authorised to carry out restricted building work, i.e., non-licensed persons. A licensed building practitioner does not require supervision by virtue of their own licence – they are authorised to carry out restricted building work. Even if one practitioner were to consider that they were in overall charge of a building site and of the work being carried out under a building consent (such as where they hold a Site Licence), the wording “each licenced person...” in section 88 cannot be ignored.
- [25] In the present case, the Respondent did not and should not provide a record of work in respect of work carried out or supervised by another Licensed Building Practitioner. He has correctly provided a record of work only for the work he is responsible for. This is not a “partial” record of work.
- [26] The issue, however, is the length of time it took the Respondent to provide that record of work. The statutory obligation is to provide it on completion. In this case, that occurred in approximately March 2022, and the record of work was not provided until November 2023.
- [27] No good reason for that delay has been given by the Respondent.

Did the Respondent fail to provide a record of work

[28] The Respondent's restricted building work was complete by late March 2022, and a record of work was not provided until November 2023. As such, he has failed to meet his statutory obligation to provide a record of work on completion of his restricted building work.

Board's Decision

[29] The Respondent **has** failed to provide a record of work on completion of restricted building work.

Penalty, Costs and Publication

[30] Having found that one or more of the grounds in section 317 applies, the Board must, under section 318 of the Actⁱ, consider the appropriate disciplinary penalty, whether the Respondent should be ordered to pay any costs and whether the decision should be published.

[31] The matter was dealt with on the papers. Included was information relevant to penalty, costs, and publication. The Board has decided to make indicative orders and give the Respondent an opportunity to provide further evidence or submissions relevant to the indicative orders.

Penalty

[32] The Board has the discretion to impose a range of penalties.ⁱⁱ Exercising that discretion and determining the appropriate penalty requires that the Board balance various factors, including the seriousness of the conduct and any mitigating or aggravating factors present.¹⁰ It is not a formulaic exercise, but there are established underlying principles that the Board should take into consideration. They include:¹¹

- (a) protection of the public and consideration of the purposes of the Act;¹²
- (b) deterring other Licensed Building Practitioners from similar offending;¹³
- (c) setting and enforcing a high standard of conduct for the industry;¹⁴
- (d) penalising wrongdoing;¹⁵ and
- (e) rehabilitation (where appropriate).¹⁶

¹⁰ *Ellis v Auckland Standards Committee* 5 [2019] NZHC 1384 at [21]; cited with approval in *National Standards Committee (No1) of the New Zealand Law Society v Gardiner-Hopkins* [2022] NZHC 1709 at [48]

¹¹ Cited with approval in *Robinson v Complaints Assessment Committee of Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand* [2022] NZCA 350 at [28] and [29]

¹² Section 3 Building Act

¹³ *Roberts v A Professional Conduct Committee of the Nursing Council of New Zealand* [2012] NZHC 3354

¹⁴ *Dentice v Valuers Registration Board* [1992] 1 NZLR 720 (HC) at 724

¹⁵ *Patel v Complaints Assessment Committee* HC Auckland CIV-2007-404-1818, 13 August 2007 at p 27

¹⁶ *Roberts v A Professional Conduct Committee of the Nursing Council of New Zealand* [2012] NZHC 3354; *Shousha v A Professional Conduct Committee* [2022] NZHC 1457

- [33] Overall, the Board should assess the conduct against the range of penalty options available in section 318 of the Act, reserving the maximum penalty for the worst cases¹⁷ and applying the least restrictive penalty available for the particular offending.¹⁸ In all, the Board should be looking to impose a fair, reasonable, and proportionate penalty¹⁹ that is consistent with other penalties imposed by the Board for comparable offending.²⁰
- [34] In general, when determining the appropriate penalty, the Board adopts a starting point based on the principles outlined above prior to it considering any aggravating and/or mitigating factors present.²¹
- [35] Record of work matters are at the lower end of the disciplinary scale. The Board's normal starting point for a failure to provide a record of work is a fine of \$1,500, an amount which it considers will deter others from such behaviour.
- [36] There are no aggravating factors present. It is a mitigating factor that the Respondent did eventually provide the record of work to the homeowner. As such, the Board reduces the penalty by \$500 to a fine of \$1,000.

Costs

- [37] Under section 318(4) of the Act, the Board may require the Respondent to pay the costs and expenses of, and incidental to, the inquiry by the Board. The rationale is that other Licensed Building Practitioners should not be left to carry the financial burden of an investigation and hearing.²²
- [38] The courts have indicated that 50% of the total reasonable costs should be taken as a starting point in disciplinary proceedings²³. The starting point can then be adjusted up or down, having regard to the particular circumstances of each case²⁴.
- [39] The Board has adopted an approach to costs that uses a scale based on 50% of the average costs of different categories of hearings, simple, moderate and complex. The current matter was simple. Adjustments are then made.
- [40] Based on the above, the Board's costs order is that the Respondent is to pay the sum of \$500 toward the costs of and incidental to the Board's inquiry.

¹⁷ *Roberts v A Professional Conduct Committee of the Nursing Council of New Zealand* [2012] NZHC 3354

¹⁸ *Patel v Complaints Assessment Committee* HC Auckland CIV-2007-404-1818

¹⁹ *Roberts v A Professional Conduct Committee of the Nursing Council of New Zealand* [2012] NZHC 3354

²⁰ *Roberts v A Professional Conduct Committee of the Nursing Council of New Zealand* [2012] NZHC 3354

²¹ In *Lochhead v Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment* 3 November [2016] NZDC 21288 the District Court recommended that the Board adopt the approach set out in the Sentencing Act 2002.

²² *Collie v Nursing Council of New Zealand* [2001] NZAR 74

²³ *Kenneth Michael Daniels v Complaints Committee 2 of the Wellington District Law Society* CIV-2011-485-000227 8 August 2011

²⁴ *Cooray v The Preliminary Proceedings Committee* HC, Wellington, AP23/94, 14 September 1995, *Macdonald v Professional Conduct Committee*, HC, Auckland, CIV 2009-404-1516, 10 July 2009, *Owen v Wynyard* HC, Auckland, CIV-2009-404-005245, 25 February 2010.

Publication

- [41] As a consequence of its decision, the Respondent's name and the disciplinary outcomes will be recorded in the public Register maintained as part of the Licensed Building Practitioners' scheme as is required by the Act,²⁵ and he will be named in this decision which will be available on the Board's website. The Board is also able, under section 318(5) of the Act, to order further publication.
- [42] Within New Zealand, there is a principle of open justice and open reporting, which is enshrined in the Bill of Rights Act 1990.²⁶ Further, as a general principle, publication may be required where the Board perceives a need for the public and/or the profession to know of the findings of a disciplinary hearing, and the courts have stated that an adverse finding in a disciplinary case usually requires that the name of the practitioner be published.²⁷
- [43] Based on the above, the Board will not order any publication over and above the record on the Register, the Respondent being named in this decision, and the publication of the decision on the Board's website.
- [44] The Respondent should note, however, that as the Board has not made any form of suppression order, other entities, such as the media or the Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment, may publish under the principles of open justice reporting.

Section 318 Order

- [45] For the reasons set out above, the Board directs that:
- Penalty:** Pursuant to section 318(1)(f) of the Building Act 2004, the Respondent is ordered to pay a fine of \$1,000.
- Costs:** Pursuant to section 318(4) of the Act, the Respondent is ordered to pay costs of \$500 (GST included) towards the costs of, and incidental to, the inquiry of the Board.
- Publication:** The Registrar shall record the Board's action in the Register of Licensed Building Practitioners in accordance with section 301(I)(iii) of the Act.
- In terms of section 318(5) of the Act, the Respondent will be named in this decision, which will be published on the Board's website.**
- [46] The Respondent should note that the Board may, under section 319 of the Act, suspend or cancel a licensed building practitioner's licence if fines or costs imposed as a result of disciplinary action are not paid.

²⁵ Refer sections 298, 299 and 301 of the Act

²⁶ Section 14 of the Act

²⁷ Kewene v Professional Conduct Committee of the Dental Council [2013] NZAR 1055

Submissions on Draft Decision

- [47] The Board invites the Respondent to:
- (a) provide further evidence for the Board to consider; and/or
 - (b) make written submissions on the Board’s findings. Submissions may be on the substantive findings and/or on the findings on penalty, costs and publication.
- [48] Submissions and/or further evidence must be filed with the Board by no later than the close of business on 29 July 2024.
- [49] If submissions are received, then the Board will meet and consider those submissions.
- [50] The Board may, on receipt of any of the material received, give notice that an in-person hearing is required prior to it making a final decision. Alternatively, the Board may proceed to make a final decision which will be issued in writing.
- [51] If no submissions or further evidence is received within the time frame specified, then this decision will become final.

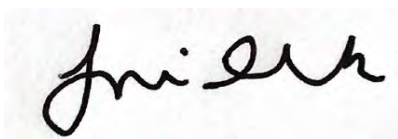
Request for In-Person Hearing

- [52] If the Respondent, having received and considered the Board’s Draft Decision, considers that an in-person hearing is required then one will be scheduled, and a notice of hearing will be issued.
- [53] A request for an in-person hearing must be made in writing to the Board Officer no later than the close of business on 29 July 2024.
- [54] If a hearing is requested, this Draft Decision, including the Board’s indicative position on penalty, costs and publication, will be set aside.

Right of Appeal

- [55] The right to appeal Board decisions is provided for in section 330(2) of the Actⁱⁱⁱ.

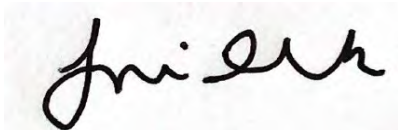
Signed and dated this 8th day of July 2024.



Mrs J Clark
Presiding Member

This decision and the order herein were made final on 30 July 2024 on the basis that no further submissions were received.

Signed and dated this 14th day of August 2024.



Mrs J Clark
Presiding Member

ⁱ Section 318 of the Act

- (1) *In any case to which section 317 applies, the Board may*
- (a) *do both of the following things:*
 - (i) *cancel the person’s licensing, and direct the Registrar to remove the person’s name from the register; and*
 - (ii) *order that the person may not apply to be relicensed before the expiry of a specified period:*
 - (b) *suspend the person’s licensing for a period of no more than 12 months or until the person meets specified conditions relating to the licensing (but, in any case, not for a period of more than 12 months) and direct the Registrar to record the suspension in the register:*
 - (c) *restrict the type of building work or building inspection work that the person may carry out or supervise under the person’s licensing class or classes and direct the Registrar to record the restriction in the register:*
 - (d) *order that the person be censured:*
 - (e) *order that the person undertake training specified in the order:*
 - (f) *order that the person pay a fine not exceeding \$10,000.*
- (2) *The Board may take only one type of action in subsection 1(a) to (d) in relation to a case, except that it may impose a fine under subsection (1)(f) in addition to taking the action under subsection (1)(b) or (d).*
- (3) *No fine may be imposed under subsection (1)(f) in relation to an act or omission that constitutes an offence for which the person has been convicted by a court.*
- (4) *In any case to which section 317 applies, the Board may order that the person must pay the costs and expenses of, and incidental to, the inquiry by the Board.*
- (5) *In addition to requiring the Registrar to notify in the register an action taken by the Board under this section, the Board may publicly notify the action in any other way it thinks fit.”*

ⁱⁱ Section 318 Disciplinary Penalties

- (1) *In any case to which section 317 applies, the Board may—*
- (a) *do both of the following things:*
 - (i) *cancel the person’s licensing and direct the Registrar to remove the person’s name from the register; and*
 - (ii) *order that the person may not apply to be relicensed before the expiry of a specified period:*

- (b) *suspend the person’s licensing for a period of no more than 12 months or until the person meets specified conditions relating to the licensing (but, in any case, not for a period of more than 12 months) and direct the Registrar to record the suspension in the register:*
- (c) *restrict the type of building work or building inspection work that the person may carry out or supervise under the person’s licensing class or classes and direct the Registrar to record the restriction in the register:*
- (d) *order that the person be censured:*
- (e) *order that the person undertake training specified in the order:*
- (f) *order that the person pay a fine not exceeding \$10,000.*
- (2) *The Board may take only 1 type of action in subsection (1)(a) to (d) in relation to a case, except that it may impose a fine under subsection (1)(f) in addition to taking the action under subsection (1)(b) or (d).*
- (3) *No fine may be imposed under subsection (1)(f) in relation to an act or omission that constitutes an offence for which the person has been convicted by a court.*
- (4) *In any case to which [section 317](#) applies, the Board may order that the person must pay the costs and expenses of, and incidental to, the inquiry by the Board.*
- (5) *In addition to requiring the Registrar to notify in the register an action taken by the Board under this section, the Board may publicly notify the action in any other way it thinks fit.*

iii **Section 330 Right of appeal**

- (2) *A person may appeal to a District Court against any decision of the Board—*
 - (b) *to take any action referred to in section 318.*

Section 331 Time in which appeal must be brought

An appeal must be lodged—

- (a) *within 20 working days after notice of the decision or action is communicated to the appellant; or*
- (b) *within any further time that the appeal authority allows on application made before or after the period expires.*