

Before the Building Practitioners Board

	BPB Complaint No. CB26183
Licensed Building Practitioner:	Paul McLaughlin (the Respondent)
Licence Number:	BP114471
Licence(s) Held:	Carpentry and Foundations

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:	22 May 2023
Reissued Final Decision Date:	2 November 2023

Board Members Present:

- Mr M Orange, Chair, Barrister (Presiding)
- Mrs F Pearson-Green, Deputy Chair, LBP, Design AoP 2
- Mr D Fabish, LBP, Carpentry and Site AoP 2

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 \$1,500 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 (foundations). He is fined \$1,500 and ordered to pay costs of \$500. The disciplinary finding will be recorded on the public Register for a period of three years.

Background to the Reissued Decision

- [2] In December 2022, the Board received a complaint alleging the Respondent had failed to provide a record of work on completion of restricted building work.
- [3] In May 2023, the Board decided that it would issue a Draft Decision upholding the complaint. The Respondent was invited to make submissions on it or to seek a hearing. The Respondent made submissions on 5 July 2023. He set out the reasons why he did not believe he had committed a disciplinary offence.
- [4] On the basis of the submission, the Draft Decision was set aside, and a hearing was scheduled. A Notice of Proceeding was issued. In it, the Board noted that if it had misinterpreted the Respondent’s submission or if the Respondent did not want to proceed to a hearing, he could request that the Board revert to the Draft Decision.

- [5] On 1 November 2023, after the Board had issued the Notice of Proceeding, the Respondent emailed stating, “I accept the draft decision, and wish to no longer proceed with the hearing”.
- [6] Given the statement, the Board has decided to reissue the Draft Decision.

The Charges

- [7] The prescribed investigation and hearing procedure is inquisitorial, not adversarial. There is no requirement for a complainant to prove the allegations. The Board sets the charges and decides what evidence is required.¹
- [8] In this matter, the disciplinary charges the Board resolved to further investigate² were that the Respondent may, in relation to building work at [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.

Draft Decision Process

- [9] 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.
- [10] 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
- [11] In this instance, the Board decided that a formal hearing was not necessary. The Board considered that there was sufficient evidence before it to allow it to make a decision on the papers. It noted, however, that there may have been further evidence in relation to the matter that the Board was not aware of. To that end, it issued a Draft Decision. The Respondent was provided with an opportunity to comment on the draft findings and to present further evidence prior to the Board making a final decision. The Board further noted that if the Respondent requested an in-person hearing, then the Draft Decision would be set aside, and a hearing would be scheduled.

¹ 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. The evidentiary standard is the balance of probabilities, *Z v Dental Complaints Assessment Committee* [2009] 1 NZLR 1.

² 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.

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

[12] 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

[13] 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

[14] 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

[15] The complaint related to the construction of a new multi-unit dwelling. It was three storeys high, but its total height was within the 10-metre height limit that applies to restricted building work.

[16] The Respondent did not carry out all of the elements of the build. There was some evidence that he may have supervised carpentry elements of the build around the middle of 2020, which was after the date on which he obtained a Carpentry Licence (18 February 2020). The evidence was not, however, definitive and was not strong enough to make an on the papers draft decision. If the matter proceeds to an in-person hearing, then the Board may further investigate those aspects of the restricted building work.

[17] The Respondent did accept that he had carried work on some of the foundations under his Foundation Licence. Specifically, he stated that in October 2018 he took over the construction of the rib-raft foundation on the top level of two of the units.

Was the restricted building work complete

[18] The Respondent stated that the rib-raft floor was poured in December 2018. That was the completion date. A record of work was due then or soon thereafter.

Has the Respondent provided a record of work

[19] The Respondent has not provided a record of work to the owner, who has now complained about its non-provision.

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

[20] The Board obtained the Territorial Authority property file in March 2023. It did not contain a record of work from the Respondent.

Was there a good reason

[21] The Respondent noted that, in July 2020, he noted that neither the Council nor the engineer had inspected the foundation prior to the floor being poured. On that basis, he stated that he was not comfortable with providing a record of work.

[22] A record of work is not to be equated or confused with signing off on work. It is not the equivalent of a producer statement. It is not a statement as to the quality or compliance of restricted building work. It is, put simply, a statement of who did or supervised what in the way of restricted building work. Given that, the lack of inspections was not a good reason not to provide a record of work.

Board's Decision

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

Penalty, Costs and Publication

[24] 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.

[25] The matter was dealt with on the papers. The Board made an indicative order in its Draft Decision. It has since received submissions and has made a final decision as regards penalty, costs and publication.

Penalty

[26] 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.⁹ It is not a formulaic exercise, but there are established underlying principles that the Board should take into consideration. They include:¹⁰

- (a) protection of the public and consideration of the purposes of the Act;¹¹
- (b) deterring other Licensed Building Practitioners from similar offending;¹²
- (c) setting and enforcing a high standard of conduct for the industry;¹³

⁹ *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]

¹⁰ Cited with approval in *Robinson v Complaints Assessment Committee of Teaching Council of Aotearoa New Zealand* [2022] NZCA 350 at [28] and [29]

¹¹ Section 3 Building Act

¹² *Roberts v A Professional Conduct Committee of the Nursing Council of New Zealand* [2012] NZHC 3354

¹³ *Dentice v Valuers Registration Board* [1992] 1 NZLR 720 (HC) at 724

- (d) penalising wrongdoing;¹⁴ and
- (e) rehabilitation (where appropriate).¹⁵

[27] 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 cases¹⁶ and applying the least restrictive penalty available for the particular offending.¹⁷ In all, the Board should be looking to impose a fair, reasonable, and proportionate penalty¹⁸ that is consistent with other penalties imposed by the Board for comparable offending.¹⁹

[28] 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.²⁰

[29] 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. There are no aggravating nor mitigating factors present. As such, the Board sees no reason to depart from the starting point.

Costs

[30] 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.²¹

[31] The courts have indicated that 50% of the total reasonable costs should be taken as a starting point in disciplinary proceedings²². The starting point can then be adjusted up or down, having regard to the particular circumstances of each case²³.

[32] 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.

¹⁴ *Patel v Complaints Assessment Committee* HC Auckland CIV-2007-404-1818, 13 August 2007 at p 27

¹⁵ *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

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

¹⁷ *Patel v Complaints Assessment Committee* HC Auckland CIV-2007-404-1818

¹⁸ *Roberts v A Professional Conduct Committee of the Nursing Council of New Zealand* [2012] NZHC 3354

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

²⁰ 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.

²¹ *Collie v Nursing Council of New Zealand* [2001] NZAR 74

²² *Kenneth Michael Daniels v Complaints Committee 2 of the Wellington District Law Society* CIV-2011-485-000227 8 August 2011

²³ *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.

[33] 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.

Publication

[34] 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,²⁴ 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.

[35] Within New Zealand, there is a principle of open justice and open reporting, which is enshrined in the Bill of Rights Act 1990.²⁵ 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.²⁶

[36] Based on the above, the Board will not order further publication.

Section 318 Order

[37] 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 \$1,500.

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, there will not be action taken to publicly notify the Board's action, except for the note in the Register and the Respondent being named in this decision.

[38] 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.

²⁴ Refer sections 298, 299 and 301 of the Act

²⁵ Section 14 of the Act

²⁶ Kewene v Professional Conduct Committee of the Dental Council [2013] NZAR 1055

Right of Appeal

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

Signed and dated this 6th day of November 2023.



Mr M Orange
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:*

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- (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.*