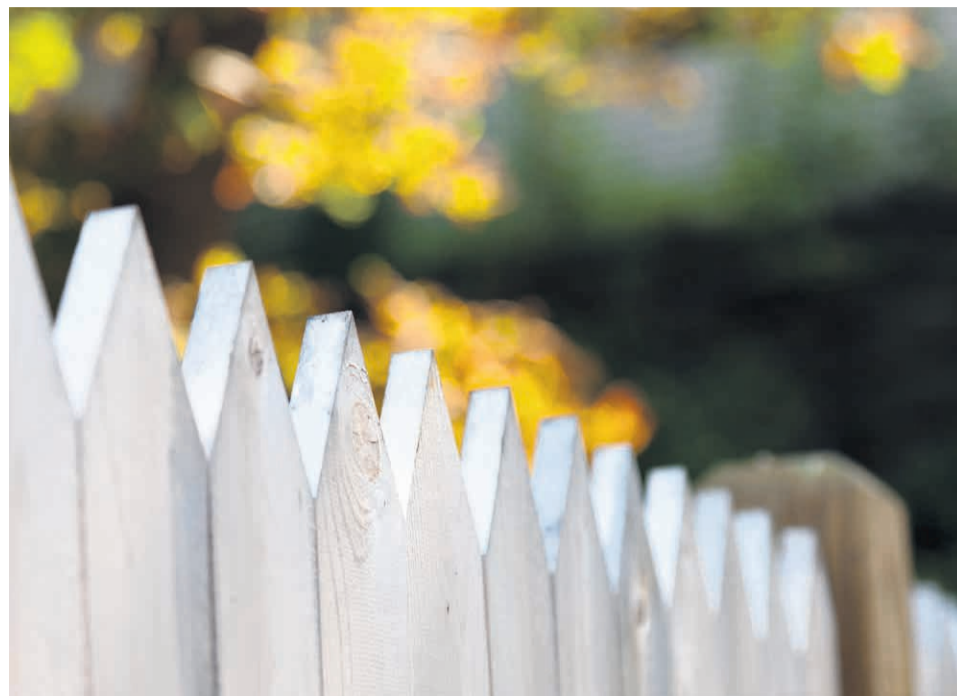


MASTER BUILDERS

ROMINA DE SANTIS, technical adviser at Master Builders WA, answers your questions about home building



THE QUESTION

I have not had the best relationship with my neighbour and did not support the additions and alterations to their home that included a parapet wall along the boundary. This was all approved, and I understand the plans complied with the requirements for planning and building. They were owner-builders for the work, and the construction steadily progressed over the last 12 months. Now I see they have their home on the market. The parapet wall is not finished on my side. Is it my responsibility to finish the wall on my side? I thought it was their wall and I could not use it. I would like to put a fence along the wall to cover it up, but the wall would still be visible over the fence.

THE ANSWER

Installing a parapet wall enables neighbours to omit the dividing fence. It is built on or very close to a boundary, thus making it difficult to maintain a fence installed against it.

I understand if the wall has been left unfinished you would want to cover it up, but the wall should not be left in a condition that the building looks unfinished on your side. A boundary wall must have fair finish.

This is a requirement of part six of the Building Act 2011. As the adjoining property owner, you cannot request the wall to be finished in a specific way, and you need to obtain permission to paint the wall or use the wall in any way, as it is the neighbouring property, not a shared-ownership dividing fence.

It is difficult when the relationship between neighbours is strained to discuss these matters directly, so I suggest you contact your council's building department.

They can usually discuss the obligations under the Building Act with them, and failing action with this, the council can issue a building order instructing compliance of the building with these requirements that would likely have been part of the building permit issued for the building work.

You must allow access to your property for any works necessary to be completed.

The upside of a parapet wall is that you are not responsible for its maintenance.

However, you must consider the location of sprinklers and the height of soil against the fence where you have garden beds so that you do not cause moisture issues for the building.

For more information about building, visit the Master Builders A-Z Building Information Directory at www.mbawa.com. If you have any questions about home building or purchase issues, email romina@mbawa.com

NATIONAL RECONCILIATION WEEK

Master Builders director Michael McLean explains what National Reconciliation Week means to the building industry.

NATIONAL Reconciliation Week commenced in 1996 and spans May 27 through to June 3. This week is all about raising awareness of the significant contribution Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have made and continue to make to our history, culture and achievements.

It is an exciting opportunity for us, as Australians, to embrace and celebrate the world's oldest living culture – not by two or three thousand years, but by tens of thousands of years.

This year's theme is 'Don't Keep History A Mystery', which invites us to learn, share and grow together by exploring our past and engaging in our First Peoples' heritage and culture.

It recognises that from an often tragic shared history, through a lens of hope and aspiration, we can see the resilience and humour transformed into success amongst many contemporary indigenous Australians.

Throughout this week there are lots of opportunities to celebrate the relationships and respect that have evolved between the wider Australian community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Today, National Reconciliation Week is celebrated by communities, businesses and individuals at thousands of events across Australia. You can find out more by visiting www.reconciliation.org.au/national-reconciliation-week.

There are many indigenous tradespeople, labourers, apprentices, professional staff and businesses that work in the building industry. The McGowan Government established an Aboriginal Procurement Policy in its State Budget this year. From July 1 2018, the WA government will award one per cent of its procurement contracts to registered Aboriginal businesses. This percentage will rise to two per cent in 2019/20 and three per cent in 2020/21. Three per cent is aligned with the Aboriginal population demographic across our state.

Several builders such as Georgiou, Cockram, BGC and Perkins as well as group training organisations like Skill Hire, are already providing meaningful training and employment opportunities for indigenous

apprentices, employees and businesses.

From a housing perspective, there are many challenges ahead in finding affordable housing options for some indigenous people.

On our last census night, Aboriginal people represented close to one-third of those experiencing homelessness. Another disturbing statistic is that Aboriginal people comprise 41 per cent of those receiving support from homelessness agencies.

More and more businesses are now entering into Reconciliation Action Plans (RAP). Reconciliation Action Plans are designed to foster respectful relationships which lead to positive social and economic opportunities for all Australians. These plans support workplaces to increase equality and develop sustainable employment and business opportunities for indigenous Australians.

LandCorp is one government agency with a RAP which operates in the building industry. The Cbus superannuation scheme, which has over 131,000 employer members and over 762,000 employee members, is one of the private sector businesses.

Cbus and other like-minded businesses aspire to make a difference through their Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP) by promoting:

- Cultural awareness to improve their understandings of Aboriginal cultures.
- Capacity building to facilitate an inclusive, resilient and diverse workforce through engaging with Aboriginal communities, colleagues and suppliers.
- Aboriginal employment opportunities.
- Economic participation to create properly paid, sustainable employment and service delivery.
- Financial security by working with Aboriginal workers to achieve a dignified retirement.

Contact James Back at Reconciliation Western Australia on 9389 4090 to discuss how you might establish a RAP or become involved in National Reconciliation Week.



IMAGE: RECONCILIATION WESTERN AUSTRALIA