

Building inspectors should be regulated

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The Master Builders Association is concerned that some people carrying out the role of a private building inspector or building consultant are not qualified to do so.

Persons or businesses operating as building consultants/inspectors should be regulated in some way; either registered or licensed and should have some minimum level of qualification – ideally a builders registration, or be a suitably qualified building professional.

Building consultants/inspectors perform an important role and are engaged by prospective homeowners, homebuyers and corporate clients for a variety of tasks, including pre-purchase inspections to determine the structural quality of a property; site inspections during and after the construction period of new or renovated homes; home inspections to report on structural or maintenance issues; property inspections for insurance

purposes and pre-renovation inspections to determine the existence of asbestos.

Each of these tasks is important to the person engaging the consultant/inspector who is paid a fee based on the task or the time incurred.

Although many of these building consultants/inspectors are registered builders or qualified architects, building surveyors or engineers, some are not. These individuals may either be a tradesperson or simply someone professing to have building knowledge.

The type of work being carried out by these building consultants/inspectors should not be carried out by unqualified persons. Just like a house should be built by a registered builder, reports on a building's structural integrity and the like should be the domain of qualified persons.

Presently, in WA, anyone can knock on your door or advertise that they are a qualified and experienced building consultant or building inspector. Members of the public would have no idea whether these people are qualified, experienced or competent. In some cases, these 'building consultants' are being asked to assess the structural integrity of a house, the causes of roof leaks, rising damp water damage to walls or cracks in plaster ceilings.

Many of these unqualified 'building

consultants' are out of their depth when it comes to knowledge of the National Construction Code and relevant Australian standards. Writing a detailed report that is sympathetic to the homeowner's opinions is one thing, but being in a position of authority and knowledge to do so is another.

Although we are mindful not to add to the burden of red tape on small businesses, we are strongly of the view that there needs to be some form of regulation of building consultants/inspectors. Their numbers have grown, and more homebuyers appear to be using them for professional advice, sometimes as a third party to reconcile differences with a builder, specialist contractor or landlord.

Unfortunately, ill-informed opinions and reports from these consultants/inspectors can in fact exacerbate an existing difference of opinion into a protracted dispute.

With such a large investment of personal funds and energies committed to your home, you should ensure that if you do engage a building consultant, he or she is either a registered builder, architect, building surveyor or engineer. Of course, if the problem relates to plumbing, electrical or painting then these licenced/registered trades are more than capable to make an assessment.



Don't take the risk and engage an unqualified person regardless of what they might call themselves. Always check their credentials before engaging them.

Master Builders has a panel of qualified building consultants that regularly carry out independent inspections of new and existing properties. Check out our website (www.mbawa.com) for their details.

Master Builders has asked the Minister for Commerce to register or licence building consultants in WA. The risks associated with using an incompetent person are simply not worth taking.