

SUBMISSION ON THE DRAFT INSPECTION POLICY

This submission is written by Master Builders South Australia (MBA SA) summarising concerns we have with the draft *Council Inspection Policies* (herein referred to as the *draft policy*) issued by the State Planning Commission. Below is a description of the relevant part within the draft policy MBA SA wish to provide comment on.

APPENDIX 2 – MANDATORY INSPECTION POLICIES

Table 1. Domestic dwellings

Timing of inspection	Minimum number of inspections for each relevant building	Proportion of developments in council area to be inspected
<p>During construction or on completion</p> <p>(a) Except where clause (b) applies, inspection must be carried out any time during construction.</p> <p>(b) If the building work involves:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) passive and active fire safety elements and the building is located in a medium or high bushfire risk area; or (ii) balustrades; or (iii) performance solutions <p>a council may give consideration to carrying out an inspection on completion.</p> <p>An inspection on completion must be carried out within 1 business day of receipt of the completed Statement of Compliance.</p>	At least one inspection of each relevant building.	66%

WHAT THE DRAFT POLICY REQUIRES

The table above outlines the minimum number of council inspections required during the construction of a class 1a building. Under the draft policy, a council shall inspect a minimum two thirds of approved class 1a buildings constructed within their jurisdiction. Of that 66%, the council is required to perform a minimum one inspection, either being during construction or post. A council may exercise its rights to perform more inspections, especially in instances where construction involves the installation of balustrades, performance solutions or building within a bushfire zone.

WHAT IS UNCLEAR

The draft policy requires a minimum one inspection performed on each relevant building. Should a Development Application have more than one proposed building, it is unclear whether one inspection is required for the application as a whole or for each individual structure nominated within that application. This ambiguity relates not only to Table 1 but also the remaining tables listed in the appendix.

MBA SA CONCERNS

The current Development Regulations 2008 requires a person must give council notice one business day after completing a *roof framing supervisor's* checklist. Furthermore, once the checklist has been received by council, the person must not conceal the building for a further two clear days to allow council the opportunity to inspect the roof framing. In these instances, councils are required to inspect a minimum 66% of frames completed by a licensed contractor and 90% of frames where the building work is managed by a person who is not a building work contractor.

These requirements do not exist under the draft policy, it is possible councils may set their own inspection policies that exclude performing wall and roof framing audits. Points of inspection are dictated entirely by council.

WHY ARE FRAME INSPECTIONS IMPORTANT?

When analysing legislation it is important to understand its origins. On Tuesday 2 April 2002, roof framing within the Riverside Golf Club suffered a catastrophic failure due to poor construction methods. As a result of the collapse, two women sustained fatal injuries. Several emergency services workers placed themselves at considerable risk to enter the building and determine whether there were any survivors. A coroner's report determined failures occurred in the management of the construction and the governance of the project. In summary, neither the builder nor the architect, engineer, software designer, truss manufacturer, roof contractor, roof tiler or Local Government authority took any responsibility for the overall integrity of the roof structure. The resultant investigations discovered numerous existing roof frames needed rectification, specifically those constructed with pre-manufacture roof trusses, indicating systematic failure within the industry. A Minister's Taskforce was established to overview the coroner's report and comment on the findings. They made numerous recommendations including increasing building audits (performed by councils) and the introduction of a "supervisor's checklist" for accountability. The recommendations were adopted into law and, as a consequence, the standard of construction significantly improved in the following decade. Legislation, as it currently stands, has played a pivotal role in lifting construction standards through continual education and monitoring. If we remove what works, we run the risk of endangering lives once again.

"Those who cannot remember the past are deemed to repeat it" George Santayana, Italian philosopher, 1905

MBA SA PROPOSAL

As it is currently written, the draft policy is open to interpretation and may lead to consternation. A big concern is the potential lack of consistency between local jurisdictions should the draft policy become law. A council audit could include any of the following stages (where applicable) during construction

- commencement
- footing trenches
- footing reinforcement

- wall and roof frames
- wet areas
- brickwork
- fire wall (common wall)
- swimming pool barrier
- final

Councils may require notification at each stage or, to meet the minimum requirements, any one of their choice. The draft policy is an opportunity to remove ambiguity and create certainty, ultimately helping builders better plan. The Building Confidence Report (herein referred to as *the report*), considered by many to be the most important report ever written on building construction in this country, was established to improve public confidence and bring certainty to the industry. Outlining 24 recommendations, the report establishes best practices and benchmark levels to achieve nationally. It appears, however, that some recommendations shown in the report have been discounted by the State Planning Commission.

The report advises mandating inspections at five points during construction, including frames. Many domestic dwellings in this state are constructed using frames for integral support, yet Table 1 does not mandate frame audits. This is at odds with the advice provided by Peter Shergold and Bronwyn Weir, authors of the report. It is a bold move by the State Planning Commission to annul legislation that improves building standards and enhances public trust, a key objective within the report.

All things considered, Master Builders SA would encourage the state government to maintain current legislative requirements specific to framing. Our view is based on meeting national expectation levels and to provide consistency between councils. Having a clear and concise state inspection policy is one way to ensure we do not repeat defective building work of days gone by.