

Board Marks 50th Anniversary

History

The Engineering Associates Act was eventually passed into law on 1 April 1961 after a very lengthy and at times controversial development period in the late fifties and early sixties, to create the statutory credential for the registration of technician engineers. The first Board Meeting was held on 22 August 1962 and the Board Members attending that first meeting comprised;

C J M Choat (Chair); H V Doran; P D Edwards; I R Robinson; W A Scott; E R Simpson; C J Tustin.

Also in attendance were;

Hon W S Goosman Minister of Works; J T G Gilkinson Commissioner of Works; L E Earle Acting Registrar.

Hon W S Goosman opened the meeting and congratulated the Board on a long delayed victory after protracted efforts which had commenced as far back as 1954 and had been carried on against considerable opposition. He made particular mention of the stalwart support afforded by Mr F M Hanson, late Commissioner of Works. He assured the Board that the future development of New Zealand would present ample scope for the activities of Engineering Associates embracing emerging industries such as natural gas, iron and steel and aluminium.

The Commissioner of Works Mr J T Gilkinson assured the Chairman and Board Members that the Ministry of Works would be standing behind the Board.

The Chairman opened discussion by advising that a programme of work for the Board should be immediately established for the first registrations from 1 April 1963.

It is noted that the Board agreed for the first full year's expenditure of £2,600.

An Awards Ceremony for the first recipients of the Certificate of Registration as an Engineering Associate was held at Government Buildings on 30 April 1963. The first certificates were presented by the Hon W S Goosman to:-

N A Ashby; R J Ball; A Berry; F F Bielby; A W Blair; B D Burns; J L Caigney; J B Campbell; S S Chadwick; R G Colvin; J B Goldie; J L Gordon; R T Higgs; J R P Lee; A H J McDonnell; A McDowell; D McFarquhar; C H McKeitch; P D McNeil; A T Parsons; C E Sundbye; A C Whiting; G G Wood.

Fiftieth Anniversary

To mark the 50th anniversary of that first Board Meeting of the EARB on 22 August 2012, a function was held at The Grand Hall at Parliament hosted by the Hon Maurice Williamson, Minister for Building & Construction. About 50 guests attended including representatives from the Building & Housing Group of the Ministry of Business Innovation & Employment, the Associations recognized under the Engineering Associates Act, and members from other Occupational Licensing Boards. There were about 22 current REAs, as well as previous and present EARB Board Members.

Board Chair

The Board Chair, Dr Robin Dunlop welcomed everyone and mentioned that it was a significant occasion for any statutory Board to achieve. He briefly outlined the history behind the establishment of the REA credential and its development over the ensuing years with registrations reaching a peak of 3261 in 1989. The number subsequently declined through the demise of the Government Departments in the nineties, and the change of NZCE to independent tertiary provider certificates & diplomas & the number of REAs is now less than half that peak figure.

Industry has over the years a tendency to remove the middle management tier from their structures, relying on top management to hold the qualifications & experience and the trades to assume more responsibility at the work face. The latter was further complicated by the fragmentation of the trades apprenticeship system.

The previously recognised training & understanding of the middle group to interpret the professional chartered engineer's designs to supervise their implementation & installation to ensure the desired result is now very scarce. The economics of employing highly educated (& expensive) university graduates to try to bridge this middle ground is unproductive.

The challenge for this Board and indeed the country is to re-establish a productive arrangement in industry whereby the accepted delegation of duties is better structured to achieve improvements in more economic employment of skills appropriate to the tasks. Over the last year or so, the gap left by the demise of the NZCE has been partially closed, but it still requires a major shift in attitudes to accept that Level 6 & 7 diplomas are an attractive occupational goal coupled with many years of practical experience. To assist in guiding graduates onto the appropriate training and experience pathway the Board is preparing a programme for their mentoring and experience assessment leading to formal REA registration.

The problems in mining and cool stores, and now the huge task facing Canterbury although not directly attributable to the current shortage of middle group technicians & technologists, is going to be all the more difficult to rectify without a larger number of people with these skills than appears to be currently available. The Board recognises these problems and is anxious to work with employers to try to assist in improving the situation and to reinforce the advantages of peer review and the recognition of ongoing knowledge and professional development

Hon M Williamson

The Hon M Williamson, then addressed the gathering;

Good afternoon and thank you for inviting me to speak to you today. It's quite an achievement to have reached your 50 year anniversary. I'm aware that you've got over 1500 members and that's surely a testament to both the great need for the skills of senior engineering technologists, and of the benefits of registration.

It tells customers that they can depend that the work done by your members will be up to standard – and that type of quality assurance of practitioners is something I've been working on hard in other parts of the building and construction sector.

If a customer gets work done by a Registered Engineering Associate, they can take comfort in knowing that the engineer will have met appropriate academic and practical engineering standards. In short, they can trust that they're in the hands of

an expert. And your skills are in demand. Your board's own annual report has noted a shortage of experienced engineering technologists.

We're here to celebrate 50 years. And in that time, I'm sure your members have seen and been part of many changes. One change you might be wondering about is the absorption of the Department of Building and Housing into the new Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment, and how that will affect the building sector.

Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment

I can assure you that my interest in your area remains unchanged. My portfolio responsibilities are unaffected by the new Ministry.

The Government remains committed to its goals for the building and construction sector, including the Canterbury earthquake recovery.

What has changed is that the importance of the building sector to New Zealand's economic and social health has been recognised.

The driving goal of this change is to develop a single dedicated business-facing ministry which will strengthen policy capability, improve the regulatory environment, bring together business-facing services, and improve the Government's own internal co-ordination.

The Ministry's investigation of the CTV Building collapse

Also high on the agenda are the Canterbury earthquake investigations and the rebuild of Christchurch. Following the 22 February 2011 earthquake, the former Department of Building and Housing commissioned a series of technical investigations to look at the performance of four relatively modern multi-story buildings in the central business district that had serious structural failures. These included the CTV Building.

The Royal Commission is conducting its own investigation into the CTV Building's collapse and is using the Ministry's investigation reports as one source of information.

Accountabilities for building work and Building Code compliance

Discussions at the Royal Commission have highlighted the importance of the skills and accountability of designers, engineers and others involved in building and construction.

The Building Amendment Act 2012 more clearly signals and reinforces accountabilities for building work and Building Code compliance of all the parties involved in construction projects. It also introduces the framework for a risk-based approach to building consent and inspection requirements, so that these are aligned to the risk and consequences of building defects and the skills and capabilities of those doing the work.

For the residential sector, this means that consenting for simple and low-risk houses built by licensed building practitioners will be streamlined.

For commercial buildings, risk-based consenting will be based on a risk profile.

The expectation is that there will be earlier identification and consideration of project risks, greater accountability by designers, documented means of managing those project risks, and transparency on liability. However, risk based consenting will not be introduced until the sector is ready and the drafting of regulations will be informed by lessons learnt from the Canterbury earthquake recovery.

GeoBuild

Another exciting transformation hitting the sector is GeoBuild. The GeoBuild strategy will mean all location information is available from one website, which could considerably reduce construction costs.

For example, Mainzeal says it took 6 months to collect the information it needed to build its head office in Auckland. If that information was more readily available it would cut the time and cost of building.

GeoBuild contributes directly to the new results-driven focus for the public service announced by the Prime Minister, and for my stated priorities for the building and construction sector, which include delivering better, smarter public services for less cost.

Finally

Once again I thank you for giving me the opportunity to part of this event today. I congratulate you on reaching this milestone and the contribution you have made to the sector.

Enjoy the rest of your anniversary.

Mr David Millard (current REA)

At the invitation of the Board Chair, David Millard reviewed his experience as a REA in the position of CEO of a dynamic specialist electrical and mechanical equipment supply company. He stressed the importance of the technician group in their organization to be able to provide the specialist knowledge associated with the application, installation and subsequent servicing of their equipment. Much of the ongoing knowledge and personal development that is so essential in the field of modern technology is provided by their overseas suppliers and the experience gained within NZ is used to the best advantage with continued training.

Mr Millard stressed the importance of the credential to their business, and that they are actively working with the tertiary providers and training facilitators to ensure that the technician group continues to be appropriately recognized in today's environment.

Mr John L Gordon

John Gordon was asked by the Chair to recall the experiences many years ago when applying for the new registration and receiving his Certificate of Registration (No 9) at the first presentation ceremony 30 April 1963. Mr Gordon was able to produce that Certificate and recounted how as an ex marine engineer he became a lubricants engineer with an oil company. His expertise was in working closely with the new pulp and paper industries in the central North Island to solve their lubricating and servicing problems with the new expensive and highly complicated production machinery.

Over the subsequent years until his retirement, the REA proved to be an important element of his career. John congratulated the Board in achieving this milestone and expressed his thanks for the opportunity to provide a brief outline of his practical use of the credential over many years.

Conclusion

Dr Dunlop concluded the formalities by thanking the Minister for both hosting the function and his interesting address. Thanks were also conveyed to David Millard and to John Gordon for their insights into their experiences with having the REA credential.