



**LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY**  
FOR THE AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

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STANDING COMMITTEE ON ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AND TOURISM  
Mr Jeremy Hanson MLA (Chair), Mr Michael Pettersson MLA, Ms Suzanne  
Orr MLA (Deputy Chair)

## Submission Cover Sheet

Inquiry into Building Quality in the ACT

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ACT Legislative Assembly  
Standing Committee on Economic Development and Tourism

Via email: [LACommitteeEDT@parliament.act.gov.au](mailto:LACommitteeEDT@parliament.act.gov.au)

Dear Committee Secretary,

## INQUIRY INTO BUILDING QUALITY IN THE ACT

I am writing this submission on behalf of the Executive Committee for the Owner's Corporation of [REDACTED] in Narrabundah.

After reading the discussion paper we would like to lend our support to several ideas.

### 1. Building Certification

We believe that building certifiers should be completely independent from the builders and developers, with a preference for government-employed inspectors and certifiers. This would minimise the risk of any real or perceived conflicts of interest and provide greater accountability and transparency. We realise that this may be difficult in a community the size of the ACT, however it would lead to fewer conflicts of interest, real or perceived. Randomising the allocation of the certifiers has the potential to improve the quality of the building work.

The OC of [REDACTED] have/will spend in excess of \$250,000 to rectify issues across the building that would have not been necessary had the building inspectors and certifiers carried out their duties properly. To put this into perspective, our prime example was when we had to replace our driveway due to cracking. During demolition of the driveway, it was discovered that:

- there was no reinforcement in the concrete

- the concrete was only 4 inches deep (not suitable for removal vehicles above 3 tonnes)
- the services (electricity) along the front the building were not the regulation depth; and
- the electrical wiring itself was not within conduit.

The total cost of this rehabilitation was in excess of \$57,000. It is unlikely that these four deficiencies could have been missed by a certifier doing their job to the standard the public would expect.

This is just one example. Others include a lack of a waterproofing membrane in balconies causing cracking, no drainage fall on balconies, and internal ceilings falling down into dwellings due to substandard clips. Each of these represents a failing in inspection and subsequent certification, and the question needs to be asked whether such failings would have happened were the inspectors and certifiers truly independent.

## 2. Demerit System

We believe bringing in a demerit system for builders such as the ones in other states would also be beneficial. This would allow owners with building defects to register their problems and for there to be a known consequence. The potential for a builder or developer to be deregistered if they acquired enough demerit points would be a strong incentive to improve building quality.

Being able to register potentially expensive defects such as poor waterproofing (on balconies and around garage door entrances) and not using solid core doors on external entrances should have consequences for a builder cutting corners to save money and give owners an avenue for rectification.

## 3. Public Register

A public register where potential owners could investigate whether a particular developer or builder has had demerits against them would also assist in preventing future building failures.

We are aware that our developer/builder is still operating in the ACT and we would like to be able to warn future owners that the quality of his work is not up to scratch.

#### 4. Sub-contractors

All work carried out by (licensed and registered) sub-contractors should be recorded by the builder and lodged with the government. This provides the opportunity for builders, inspectors and certifiers to rate the sub-contractor. This has the potential to ensure that the builders have access to the better sub-contractors, improving standards across the industry, and ridding the industry of sub-contractors with poor work standards. This also provides opportunity for the public to source contractors for private work.

#### 5. Building plans

More detailed plans, particularly for electrical and plumbing works should also be required. This would greatly assist the builders and subcontractors doing the work and increase safety for future owners.

We have had power points placed on wet walls without any barrier to the shower fitting on the other side of the wall. A leak in the shower has then flooded the room next door could have had more serious consequences.

In summary, we believe that

1. It would be beneficial for Building Certifiers to be completely independent from the Developers/Builders that they are assessing.
2. A Demerit system for Builders and Developers similar to those in other states would assist in improving building quality.
3. An easily accessible Public Register for potential owners to assess the quality of work for Developers/Builders through the

Demerit system would allow clients to make more informed decisions.

4. The recording of which sub-contractors were used and on which job would improve the quality of the work; and
5. More complete plans to cover all contractors working on sites would be an asset to all involved.

In conclusion, buying a property, particularly one's first property, is a huge commitment and likely to be the single largest financial commitment in a person's life. Some developers and builders show little regard for the hard work and effort that a person has made in saving for the purchase of their home, or for how the poor building standards can undermine a person's lifelong investment.

We believe that 'doing it right the first time costs less than doing it over'. Any additional costs to government in employing inspectors and establishing systems to effectively manage builders and their sub-contractors, would be offset by far fewer complaints that need to be handled by government.

We are happy to discuss any of the points raised in this submission.

Yours faithfully,

A solid black rectangular box used to redact the signature of Vanessa Olley.

Vanessa Olley