

NZRAB Strategic Plan 2009 - 2012

Executive Summary

The New Zealand Registered Architects Board (NZRAB) was created by statute in 2005 and began operations on 1 July 2006.

The NZRAB is now well into a development phase in which its systems and processes are being consolidated and improved. In 2007 the NZRAB set itself the goal of stabilising into a business-as-usual mode of operations by 30 June 2010. Achieving the deliverables identified in this plan during 2009/10 should result in this goal being substantially achieved.

Purpose of the NZRAB

The NZRAB is a statutory entity created by the Registered Architects Act 2005 (the Act) to ensure that Registered Architects are competent and reputable so that the public can rely on them.

The Act describes the NZRAB's functions as being to:

- a) make rules relating to Registered Architects
- b) register architects, issue certificates of registration and assess whether Registered Architects meet the requirements for continued registration
- c) maintain a register
- d) investigate complaints and, if required, discipline Registered Architects
- e) provide information to the public about the registration system for Registered Architects.

A vision for architecture in New Zealand

The NZRAB has also articulated a broader vision of how it contributes to architecture in New Zealand, as follows:

The task of architecture is to lead the way in terms of what the built environment can and should be. This goes beyond designing for function, essential though that is. In so far as architecture articulates the national imagination, it contributes to nation building. If the built environment in New Zealand is the best that it can be, then it contributes to the realisation of this nation's potential.

The New Zealand Registered Architects Board determines who can be Registered Architects. In doing this, the NZRAB is mindful of the broader contribution to New Zealand that, at its best, the profession makes through leadership and a passion for excellence.

Current context

The New Zealand Registered Architects Board was created in response to concerns about the quality of New Zealand's built environment especially in the residential context. Latterly issues of house affordability and the transaction costs facing home builders have come to the fore. The economic downturn in 2008/09 has impacted on the building industry and therefore the environment within which architects work. Increasing unemployment among architects may see the NZRAB's revenues decline.

In addition, the lack of coherence and overall poor quality of much of the built environment in metropolitan New Zealand is an issue for the profession. This reflects society's lack of recognition of the capacity of architects to contribute and architects too often being excluded from decision making in regard to the built environment.

History

The Registered Architects Act 2005 (the Act) came fully into effect on 1 July 2006 when the NZRAB first began registering architects, initially by bringing about 1450 Registered Architects from the previous Architects Education and Registration Board Register onto the NZRAB's Register. At the same time the NZRAB also

- began registering first time applicants.
- developed an enhanced complaints process
- created an online register
- established a national office
- began developing its governance procedures.

During 2007/08, the NZRAB's Board determined a set of benchmarks as to what it intended to achieve in order to reach a business-as-usual mode of operations. The NZRAB has been working towards their realisation, as per the NZRAB Strategic Plan 2007-2010 and its update in 2008, and as reported in the NZRAB's annual reports.

Stakeholders

The NZRAB's key stakeholders include:

- the public
- Registered Architects
- architecture graduates and undergraduates
- the Minister for Building and Construction
- the Department of Building and Housing
- the New Zealand Institute of Architects (NZIA)
- the Institute of Professional Engineers New Zealand (IPENZ)
- the Building Practitioners Board/LBP Scheme Registrar
- other professional registration schemes in the building industry
- other design organisations
- tertiary institutions with accredited programmes in architecture
- NZRAB registration assessors
- international registries and relevant agencies.

Governance

The New Zealand Registered Architects Board is a statutory board. The NZRAB is self funding and fully independent within the constraints set by the Registered Architects Act 2005 and the Registered Architects Rules 2006.

The NZRAB is accountable to the Minister for Building and Construction, the primary expression of that accountability being the NZRAB's *Annual Report*.

The NZRAB Board can have six to eight members. They are appointed by the Governor General on the advice of the Minister for Building and Construction. Half the Board members are nominated by the New Zealand Institute of Architects.

Under the Act, the Board is empowered to delegate its functions as it sees fit and, where permitted, the Board has delegated its powers to the Chief Executive. This is subject to certain restrictions, however, so that decisions about individuals in regard to registration, continuing registration and discipline must be made by the Board itself.

Typically the Board meets four times a year. The Board's minutes can be viewed on the NZRAB website and the NZRAB is subject to the Official Information Act.

To facilitate policy development and operational oversight, the Board operates a number of Committees, the members of which include a mix of Board members and others.¹ These Committees are as follows:

Strategy and Finance Committee

Function: To assist the Chief Executive in developing the annual Strategic Plan and budget and to provide oversight in their implementation.

Registration Committee:

Function: To develop policy and provide oversight of the NZRAB's initial registration procedures.

Continuing Registration Committee

Function: To develop policy and provide oversight of the issuance of annual Certificates of Registration, continuing registration requirements, CPD, and the five-yearly Competence Reviews required by the Act.

International and Standards Committee

Function: To develop policy and provide oversight of the NZRAB's international liaison and, in particular, the development of standards and benchmarks shared with other jurisdictions.

¹ The Act section 56 requires that each Board Committee must include at least two Board members.

Public Protection Committee

Function: To develop policy and provide oversight of the NZRAB's disciplinary procedures. This Committee also appoints Investigating Committees and recommends to the Board appointments to Disciplinary Committees, if required.

The NZRAB employs a three-person secretariat based in Wellington.

The Board currently has in place policies in regard to:

- continuing registration
- finance
- sensitive expenditure
- honoraria.

Resources

The NZRAB is fully funded by Registered Architects and registration applicants on a cost-recovery basis. The NZRAB's assets/resources include:

- a logo
- a website (www.nzrab.govt.nz)
- a register
- an office
- the skills-base of Board members, other committee members, assessors and staff.

Goals

A programme of consolidation and improvement is now well advanced as the NZRAB matures. The Board intends that the organisation will stabilise into a business-as-usual mode of operations by the commencement of the 2010/11 year. To this end, the Board intends that by then the following will be achieved:

REGISTRATION

1. Registration applicants will be well informed as to the requirements for registration
2. Registration applicants will perceive the NZRAB's initial registration procedures and requirements as being efficient and fair.
3. With a high degree of consistency, architects that are newly registered will meet the applicable minimum standards for registration.
4. Newly registered architects will understand their obligations and entitlements as Registered Architects and the role of the NZRAB as it impacts on them.
5. The NZRAB will liaise with associated registration authorities and will be involved in developments affecting the registration of architects both nationally and internationally.

CONTINUED REGISTRATION

6. Architects' registration will be renewed annually, contingent on architects holding current Annual Certificates of Registration.
7. Every five years, or when required, Registered Architects will be reassessed in terms of whether they continue to meet the applicable minimum standards for registration, this being a requirement for ongoing annual registration.
8. Systems and advice will be in place to assist architects accumulate evidence that they still meet the applicable minimum standards for registration for presentation when they undertake five yearly Continuing Registration Competence Reviews.
9. Registered Architects will understand the NZRAB's continuing registration requirements and the role of professional development activities within that.

PROTECTION OF TITLE

10. Those sections of the public that commission building design will understand what Registered Architects are, what services they offer, and what can be expected of them.
11. The media will know that persons who are not Registered Architects but who nonetheless design buildings should not be described as architects or confused with Registered Architects.

REGISTER MAINTENANCE

12. The Register will be compliant with the requirements of the Act and will be convenient for the public to access and use.

PUBLIC PROTECTION

13. All complaints about the conduct of architects will be investigated and resolved in a timely and just manner, taking no longer than 12 months.
14. The outcome of disciplinary procedures, where applicable, will be communicated to the profession to foster best practice.

ADMINISTRATION

15. The NZRAB will operate in an open and transparent manner.
16. A fee structure will be in place by which the NZRAB covers its costs.
17. The NZRAB's governance arrangements will be stable, defensible and well understood by those using them.
18. Good open relationships will be in place with all key stakeholders.
19. Key person risk in terms of the Board Chair, the Deputy Chair and staff will be well managed.
20. A group of well-informed Registered Architects will be available to undertake registration assessments, Competence Reviews and public protection functions.

Issues

The following are descriptions of the issues that the NZRAB currently faces, listed by function.

Functions	Current issues
REGISTRATION: Assess whether persons meet the minimum standards for registration	1. The ability of registration applicants to contribute to the quality of the built environment as a whole may warrant a higher assessment priority, given increased concern about the quality of the built environment as a whole.
CONTINUED REGISTRATION: Assess whether Registered Architects meet the requirements for continued registration	2. Architects are not well informed as to the criteria that the NZRAB will apply for determining continuing competence from 2011 onwards. 3. The current allocation of CPD points does not fully align with NZRAB Policy.
PROTECTION OF TITLE: Protect the title "Registered Architect"	4. Real estate agents continue to advertise houses as having been designed by an architect when this is not the case.
REGISTER MAINTENANCE: Keep and maintain the Register	None.
PUBLIC PROTECTION: Receive, investigate and hear complaints	5. The NZRAB's overall complaints and discipline procedures are so time consuming as to potentially cause a breach of natural justice and are inflexible in terms of when alternative dispute resolution options can be put to the parties. 6. The complaints received almost always involve disputes reflecting poor communications and cost overruns, suggesting that some architects have client management problems. 7. As yet, the Board lacks an understanding of the principles governing penalties, the recovery of costs and the naming of architects found wanting.
COMMUNICATIONS: Provide information to the public about the registration system for Registered Architects	8. Architects and other stakeholders have an ongoing need to be well informed of the NZRAB's policies, procedures and activities (Also, see issues 2 and 6)

GOVERNANCE, ADMINISTRATION and FINANCE	<p>9. The Board has not developed a clear and documented understanding of the skill sets required of its office holders or how it will manage succession planning.</p> <p>10. The NZRAB's current fee structure does not provide for Continuing Registration Competence Reviews and, in some cases, may overcharge in terms of cost recovery for particular services.</p> <p>11. The NZRAB is currently operating deficits that in the longer term are unsustainable.</p> <p>12. The economic downturn may result in a sharp drop in the Board's income.</p> <p>13. The NZRAB is vulnerable to a loss of institutional knowledge, given the small number of people undertaking key roles.</p>
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Deliverables

The table below describes deliverables identified as priorities for 2009/2010. They are in response to the issues previously listed.

Deliverables by function	Timeline
REGISTRATION: Assess whether persons meeting the minimum standards for registration	
1. Review whether applicants' knowledge of urban design is assessed sufficiently for initial registration and whether the provision of training in this aspect of architecture both pre and post graduation is adequate in today's context.	June 2010
CONTINUED REGISTRATION: Assess whether Registered Architects meet the requirements for continued registration	
2. Provide all architects with a comprehensive explanation of the NZRAB's continued competence requirements to assist architects prepare for competence reviews in 2011.	June 2010
3. Work with the NZIA to ensure that the allocation of CPD points and associated advice to architects are consistent with NZRAB Policy.	June 2010
PROTECTION OF TITLE: Protect the title "Registered Architect"	
4. Ensure that all reports received of the title 'Registered Architect' or 'architect' being used wrongly are investigated and an appropriate response provided.	Ongoing

REGISTER MAINTENANCE: Keep and maintain the Register	
None.	
PUBLIC PROTECTION: Receive, investigate and hear complaints	
5. Reform the complaints and discipline requirements of the Registered Architects Rules 2006 to ensure that where possible complaints are resolved within 12 months and earlier use is made of alternative dispute resolution options.	June 2010
6. Publish a resource explaining to architects ways they can improve their communications with their clients.	June 2010
7. Investigate principles in regard to penalties, the recovery of costs and naming architects found wanting.	June 2010
COMMUNICATIONS: Provide information to the public about the registration system for Registered Architects	
8. Continue providing Registered Architects and other stakeholders with regular electronic newsletters to foster their understanding of the NZRAB's policies and procedures. (See deliverables 2 and 6)	Ongoing
GOVERNANCE, ADMINISTRATION and FINANCE:	
9. Identify the skill sets required of the NZRAB's office holders and plan for managing succession.	June 2010
10. Obtain and communicate final promulgation of fee and rule changes in regard to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • competence reviews • abolition of the voluntary suspension fee • a simplified Pathway 4 qualification equivalence procedure • a half year fee for annual Certificates of Registration. 	June 2010
11. Decide on an annual basis whether the NZRAB's current fees provide the income necessary to ensure the NZRAB's financial viability, the benchmark for this assessment being that the Board has net current assets that are at least 25 per cent of the NZRAB's budgeted expenditure.	June 2010

12. If required, adjust spending to offset as far as practicable any drop in the Board's income due to the economic downturn.	June 2010
13. Develop an office manual to describe office procedures, to help mitigate key person risk.	June 2010