

ARCHITECTS IDENTIFIED ON-LINE

A new on-line service just launched by the New Zealand Registered Architects Board (NZRAB) will assist real estate agents in identifying properties for sale that have been designed by a registered architect.

By logging on to the board's website, www.nzrab.org.nz, real estate agents can check that a person described in marketing or advertising material as an 'architect' actually has the right to do so.

Some real estate agents have come under fire from NZRAB for inaccurately describing a listed property as being architecturally-designed when in fact, the NZRAB says, the person who has designed the house is not a qualified architect.

Just as no-one who pulls out teeth can put up a shingle that says 'dentist', under the Registered Architects Act 2005, nobody except a registered architect is permitted to offer or provide building design services and call him or herself an architect.

In a letter to the Real Estate Institute of New Zealand Inc (REINZ), NZRAB chief executive Paul Jackman said that regularly real estate advertisements name a person as the architect that designed the house being sold 'when in reality, the person named isn't, or wasn't an architect'.

The Architects' Board is concerned that such advertising misleads potential buyers and suggests that it 'threatens the interests of architects in that it degrades the 'brand'.'

NZRAB chairman Ron Pynenburg says claiming a property was designed by an architect can push up its price

or create a false expectation about quality which is unfair on buyers.

One of the reasons sometimes given for making such a claim is that sellers can't work out if the designers' names on the plans or in the council records were, or were not architects.

With the board's new service, the problem is resolved.

'The NZRAB website now has a 'find a former architect' facility which lists the names of former architects back to 1964 when registration first became compulsory,' Mr Pynenburg says. 'This is in addition to the long-standing online New Zealand Architects Register which lists all current architects.'

Real estate agents, writers of advertising copy, newspapers and potential buyers can now instantly check if a person whose name is on a buildings plans or in the council records is, or was, an architect, Mr Pynenburg says.

REINZ president Mike Elford congratulated the NZRAB on its initiative and said it would be helpful both to the real estate industry and

the public.

'I certainly do not believe it is the intention of real estate agents on behalf of sellers to deceive or mislead by describing a property as architecturally designed. From a lay person's point of view there is little apparent difference in whether a property has been the work of an architect, an architectural designer or an animator.

'I have recently engaged the services of an architect in Dunedin and am delighted with his work. I'm in no doubt that I have had excellent value in using a registered architect.

'But the NZRAB is quite right when it says it has a 'brand' problem, and I don't think it can lay that at the door of real estate professionals. There is an educational job to be done as to who can be described as an architect or when a building is architecturally-designed,' Mr Elford says. 'I'm sure the NZRAB's website will go a long way towards that and I would certainly encourage our members to make use of it.'

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