

BUILDINGTODAY

THE OFFICIAL MAGAZINE OF THE REGISTERED MASTER BUILDERS ASSOCIATION



VOLUME 31 NUMBER 2

MARCH 2021

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Columnist Don Bunting signs off:
The difficulty of providing affordable housing

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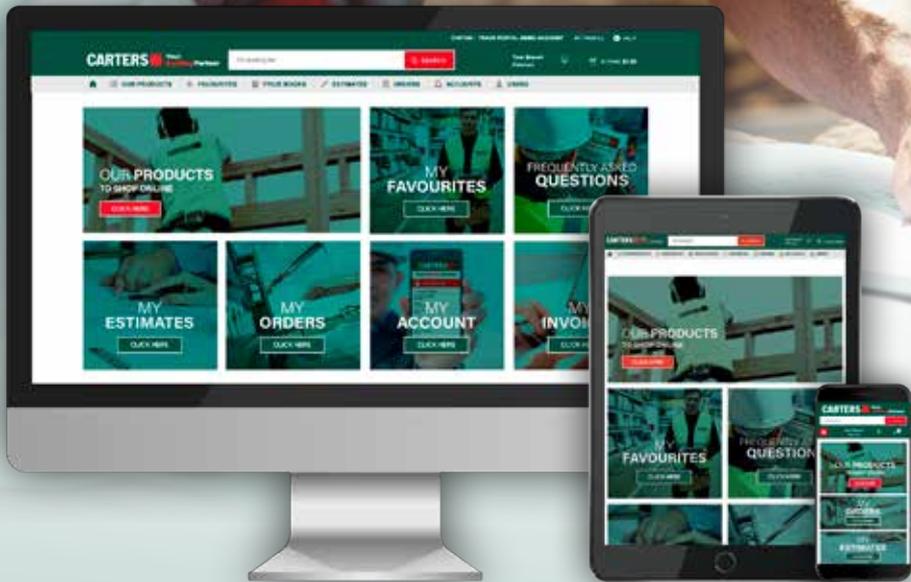


INSIDE:
CONSTRUCTION
WASTE UNDER
THE MICROSCOPE
MIKE FOX: WHY DON'T
POLITICIANS UNDERSTAND
OUR INDUSTRY?



ALSO INSIDE:

STUDY: OUTDATED AIRCON HELPS SPREAD COVID > RMA TO FINALLY BE REPLACED



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BUILDINGTODAY

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BT's resident trouble-maker Ross Middleton takes a stance in favour of tiny homes as an alternative to what could be seen as conformist middle-class attitudes.

FROM THE EDITOR

The construction industry needs political and governmental focus and support to make it more efficient and sustainable, columnist Mike Fox writes.

He asks why this has not been forthcoming over recent years. And why does the impact and relevance of the industry seem to "fly under the radar in the eyes of the Government?"

It's hard not to agree with the points he makes in this month's issue. See if you think he's correct in what he says on pages 32 and 33.

Long-time columnist Don Bunting writes his final piece for BT this month as he muses upon the apparent difficulty of providing affordable housing in this country. Don has penned many thought-provoking pieces over the years, and his contributions will be missed.

Andrew Darlington, Editor

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The Good, The Bad and the Ugly

With a nod to that classic 1966 Spaghetti Western movie starring Clint Eastwood, RMBA president Kerry Archer outlines the good, the bad and the ugly of the New Zealand construction industry.

The Good

Building activity is at an all-time high, with 39,420 new dwellings consented in the year ended December 2020.

This level of activity has not been seen since the 1970s when, in 1974, there were 37,919 new dwellings built.

The number of new homes has been slowly increasing in the past 10 years after coming off lows in 2009 and 2011 when there were fewer than 14,000 new homes consented.

The total value of residential building consents for 2020 was just shy of \$16.5 billion, while non-residential building consents totalled almost \$7 billion.

The other interesting thing is that the mix of houses being constructed has changed. Stand-alone properties made up the highest percentage of housing but these have been overtaken by flats, multi-units and apartments.

This shows the way we are building is changing in relation to the use of the land. The kiwi quarter acre dream is seemingly over.

I am pretty sure that no one, including the Government, was predicting these levels of construction after the first lockdown — which is great not only for our industry but also for the country.

The Bad

With construction levels at an all-time high, the industry was always going to struggle with sufficient numbers of skilled and competent people to meet the challenge — and it's a pretty common theme across the country.

The bad part is that only 10% of employees train an apprentice. This figure could be slightly out of date as, since the government announced its Apprenticeship Boost Scheme, there has been a 17% increase in new apprenticeships.

But the 10% is not enough. As an industry, we need to get this figure up and not rely on such a small percentage to train new blood.

Instead of moaning about the lack of staff maybe we should do something about it.

On another note, the amount of waste the New



Zealand construction industry creates is staggering. Construction and demolition waste accounts for 40% to 50% of the total waste going into landfills (see story, page 12).

An average new house build generates an average of four tonnes of waste.

To put it into perspective, you would have to put your standard household bin out weekly for more than 30 years to generate that type of volume.

This is something we can do a lot better at by thinking about the 3 Rs regime — Reduce, Reuse and Recycle:

- Reduce the amount of material coming to site, ordering more accurately to reduce offcuts.
- Reuse materials/products again if possible.
- Recycle whatever you can — which is the majority of our waste. This is probably one of the easiest things to do on site.

Put together a waste management plan — many of which are available online — and see what you can do to reduce the amount of waste.

I know it's easy just to keep filling up skip bins on site and then away they go — out of sight, out of mind — but think about where it ends up.

One report I read said that by 2025, construction waste will amount to 2.2 billion

tonnes. That's a whole lot of rubbish, but if everyone does something small imagine what could happen?

The Ugly

One statistic the industry should not be proud of is that construction has the highest rate of suicides of any industry in New Zealand.

We are losing more than 50 people a year to suicide — so one person a week from the construction sector is taking their own life.

We hold ourselves out that construction is a great industry to be a part of, and it is. But some things need to change.

The good old "here's a concrete pill, now harden up" attitude is changing, albeit slowly.

I always tell my staff that unless you win lotto then you have to work — so you might as well try to get some satisfaction or enjoyment out of it because you're going to spend an average of 45 hours a week doing it.

Doing this should not cause any kind of misery to others. You never know what's going on in someone else's life, and if they are coming to work and getting a hard time, are under pressure to get the job done, being bullied or working long hours on top of external pressures, then there is no enjoyment in that.

And it could lead to something much more serious.

If someone you work with is a bit off and might be getting angry, isolating themselves, drinking more than normal, arriving late or not showing up at all, and you know that is not normally them, they may need someone to reach out and just ask the question: "Are you ok?"

Those three words are all you might need to help someone avoid becoming one of these terrible statistics.

If someone does open up to you and you don't feel as though you can handle it, there are lots of people who are only a phone call away.

If you feel you can't talk to a workmate, call someone who can help.

The RMBA has an 0800 number for counselling — 0800 800 397 — or Mates in Construction have people on the phones trained to help. Call them on 0800 111 315.

A ONCE IN A LIFETIME OPPORTUNITY



MARK LOVELOCK

UPPER SOUTH ISLAND REGIONAL WINNER
3RD PLACE NATIONAL
REGISTERED MASTER BUILDERS
CARTERS 2020 APPRENTICE OF THE YEAR

Mark is employed by Timbercraft Construction and was trained through the Building and Construction Industry Training Organisation (BCITO).



SUCCESSSES

Taking time at the start of the practical challenge to interpret the plans and specifications helped Mark prepare for the carpentry component.

“Having the opportunity to attend the national competition was a once in a lifetime opportunity. I was pleased I put in the effort at the regional stage.

“I also enjoyed meeting the other regional winners, hearing about their backgrounds, and varied employment situations.”



CHALLENGES

The biggest challenge Mark faced was the practical component of the competition.

“The time pressure and scrutiny from the judges made for a pressure cooker environment. The mud kitchen that we were assigned to build had a water feature element which was made up of PVC spouting and downpipes. This was a bit of a head-scratcher and took a bit of time to work through.”



EMPLOYER COMMENTS

Employer David Kepes of Timbercraft Construction encouraged Mark to enter the competition because he felt Mark's pathway towards the building trade was worthy of recognition.

“Mark commenced his building apprenticeship after completing a Master of Architecture degree. This gave him an understanding of building structure and a passion for build design, setting Mark apart from other apprentices.

“During his three years of training Mark was able to add practical construction skills to the theoretical knowledge that his architecture training had equipped him with.

“I believe the pathway Mark has taken should be more widely encouraged. Whether he follows a career in building or architecture, the skills he has developed in both areas will strengthen his ability to deliver in either area.”

JUDGES' COMMENTS

“Mark had an outstanding submission that demonstrated a fascinating project. Working in a unique and tough environment in the Marlborough Sounds has set him up with excellent skills. The value he added to the submission project was immense, and should be commended. Mark was able to utilise his previous training in architecture to assist during the planning stage of the project. In the interview, Mark clearly demonstrated his depth of industry knowledge and his passion for what he does.

“Mark is highly ambitious and has a clear direction for where he wants to go.”

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Successes

"The team was absolutely stoked with the result," says Justin Green of Alteration Specialists Manawatu. The whole team gathered together to have its own viewing party of the national awards which were held virtually. They were delighted to then celebrate the win.

"Our favourite features of the build were the detailed native timber work and ceiling beams. All details from the existing home were replicated in the new areas of the home, including recycling of the Matai floorboards.

"The win is a perfect way to showcase our high level of workmanship."



Challenges

The team found a few challenges during the build.

"Installing the large steel portal at the rear of the property with minimal tolerances and the challenging site access needed to be worked through in detail.

"The custom machining of Rimu trims, beams and detailed timber features also needed to be carefully executed."



Judges' comments

"A living room and veranda have been added at the rear of this 1930s two-storey house, and the existing interior rooms and doors have also been altered and relined. Matching boxed beams were replicated to the existing and new ceilings so precisely that it is difficult to see where the old ends and new begins.

"Great care has been taken to recycle and reuse existing Matai flooring boards and old doors.

"This renovation has been carried out with extreme attention to detail, resulting in a seamless integration of the existing and the new."

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Restoring a piece of history

Steve Brown Builders

National Winner 2020
Craftsmanship and Special Awards



Successes

The whole team involved felt proud and excited to win its two awards.

"This is a unique build showcasing a skillset many carpenters and tradesman today would not have," says Steve Brown of Steve Brown Builders.

"Successes were the stairwell and prism. When we visited the property after the earthquake, there were literally shards of glass ready to dislodge from the unit. We had to carefully make this safe, remove the unit and then refurbish to make it compliant before we could reinstall.

"The win has certainly increased our profile and shown the level of craftsmanship we have."



Challenges

Meeting the owner's brief to change as little as possible, and finding subcontractors with the right skillset that were up to the task, was a challenge.

"We needed to make the exterior timber joinery suit the stained glass to meet today's code.

"Sourcing and using salvaged materials required forward planning. For example, we engaged a stonemason who, during demolition, salvaged as much of the Oamaru stone as possible so he could replicate the exact detail on new Oamaru stone."



Judges' comments

"When this historic Christchurch home was destroyed in the earthquakes, the owner was determined to rebuild the home exactly like-for-like.

"This exceptional team of craftsmen went to amazing efforts to recreate this beautiful home, using traditional methods to achieve what can only be described as a sensational result.

"The attention to detail in every part of this home was to a level we have rarely seen before. The builders have gone to great lengths to source materials and products identical to what was used when it was originally built.

"This amazing team has left no stone unturned to ensure every part of this home is exactly as it was before its demise, and it will now stand proud as part of Christchurch's wonderful history."

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A project for the community

Te Omanga Hospice

CATEGORY

Winner of the Altus Window Systems
Health Project Category

ENTRANT

Armstrong Downes Commercial

PROJECT PARTNERS

Armstrong Downes Commercial (Construction
Company), CCM Architects (Architect/Designer),
Kensway (Project Manager), Norman Disney & Young
(Engineer), Spencer Holmes Limited (Engineer)

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Te Omanga Hospice Foundation



Successes

Armstrong Downes commercial director Tony Doile, along with the team, were very proud to win this award.

"There was a lot of local support from contractors and volunteers in the local community.

"Using local labour and contractors meant several of those involved in the project had personal experience of the care Te Omanga Hospice provides. We often heard stories of parents or grandparents who had been treated in the old building, and of the extra care the tradesmen were taking 'in memory' of those lost.

"The project certainly touched the hearts of many."



Challenges

The client was constantly fundraising in order to finance the build.

"Throughout the project, pricing was always sensitive, and the team worked hard to meet budgets.

"Working on such a large build in a residential area required careful consideration. Where possible, we looked to reclaim as much as possible. The salvage of a number of features such as stained glass windows and native timber floors were used. All existing concrete was crushed and used as hardfill."



Judges' comments

"If you were looking for a project that epitomises a community, you wouldn't go any further than the new purpose-built Te Omanga Hospice, in Hutt Valley. The site was constrained due to tree protection and boundary lines. However, a C-shaped hospice building with eight care beds, lounges, kitchen facilities, and an administration area was designed with considerable staff involvement. The building's design and ability to provide privacy, both internally from circulation areas, and external settled areas, was challenging, but the end result is a credit to all."

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RMA to be repealed and replaced

The repealing and replacing of the Resource Management Act 1991 (RMA) is going to be among the biggest acts of Government during its second term in office.

Last month Environment Minister David Parker outlined the shape of the replacement legislation and the time line for when it would be implemented.

This huge legislative overhaul will see the Government trying to change the settings to get more houses built, better protect the environment, and start responding and adapting to the effects of climate change.

In analysing the changes, independent political web site *Politik* described it as “probably the most fundamental and complex legislative reform put before Parliament in decades.”

We’re unlikely to see the effects of it until at least 2024, but the *Politik* article suggested there will be applause for the government trying to take it all on at once, rather than constant smaller moves to tinker with bits here and there.

Parker says the RMA will be repealed and replaced with new laws in “this parliamentary term”.

The three new Acts replacing the RMA will be:

- The Natural and Built Environments Act (NBA) to provide for land use and environmental regulation (this would be the primary replacement for the RMA).
- The Strategic Planning Act (SPA) to integrate with other legislation relevant to development, and requiring long-term regional spatial strategies.
- The Climate Change Adaptation Act (CAA) to address complex issues associated with managed retreat, and funding and financing adaptation.

Urban areas struggling

“Urban areas are struggling to keep pace with population growth and the need for affordable housing,” Parker says.

“Water quality is deteriorating, biodiversity is diminishing, and there is an urgent need to reduce carbon emissions and adapt to climate change.

“The new laws will improve the natural environment, enable more development within environmental limits, provide an effective role for Maori, and improve housing supply and



Resource Management Act 1991

Public Act 1991 No 69
Date of assent 22 July 1991
Commencement see section 1(2)

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Note
Changes authorised by subpart 2 of Part 2 of the Legislation Act 2012 have been made in this official reprint.
Note 4 at the end of this reprint provides a list of the amendments incorporated.
This Act is administered by the Ministry for the Environment.

affordability.

“Planning processes will be simplified and costs and times reduced.”

Other key changes include stronger national direction, and one single combined plan per region.

And there will be more focus on natural environmental outcomes and less on subjective amenity matters that favour the status quo. Better urban design will be pursued.

Mandatory policies and standards

The reform follows the review of New Zealand’s resource management system led by former Appeal Court Judge Tony Randerson, published in July 2020.

Under the NBA there will be a mandatory set of national policies and standards to support the natural environmental limits, outcomes and targets specified in the new law.

These will be incorporated into combined regional plans prepared by local and central government and mana whenua.

“The existing 100-plus RMA council planning documents will be reduced to about 14,” Parker says.

The Strategic Planning Act will integrate functions under the RMA, Local Government Act 2002, Land Transport Management Act 2003 and the Climate Change Response Act 2002 to enable clearer and more efficient decision-making and investment.

“New spatial strategies will enable regions to plan for the well-being of future generations, ensuring development and infrastructure occurs in the right places at the right times.”

The Climate Change Adaptation Act responding to the effects of climate change will be progressed by Climate Change Minister James Shaw.

Parker says secure, healthy and affordable housing is at the heart of the well-being of New Zealand families, but that it is no longer a reality for many New Zealanders.

“Urban areas hold 86% of our population and experience 99% of our population growth. Instead of allowing cities to respond to population growth sustainably, poor quality and restrictive planning has contributed to a lack of certainty and unaffordable housing.

“Housing problems are a complex mix of demand, costs, financing, capacity and supply, and there is no silver bullet,” Parker says.

“This reform will help by improving how central and local government plan for housing and urban development. This includes better coordination of future infrastructure with land use, development and urban growth.”

These changes will build on the National Policy Statement for Urban Development released last year that directs councils to make room for growth, both “up” and “out”.

Parker noted that the National and Built Environments Act, as the core piece of legislation replacing the RMA, will be progressed first.

“Given its significance and complexity, a special select committee inquiry will consider an exposure draft of the NBA Bill from mid-year.

“This will include the most important elements of the legislation, including the replacement of Part 2 of the RMA.

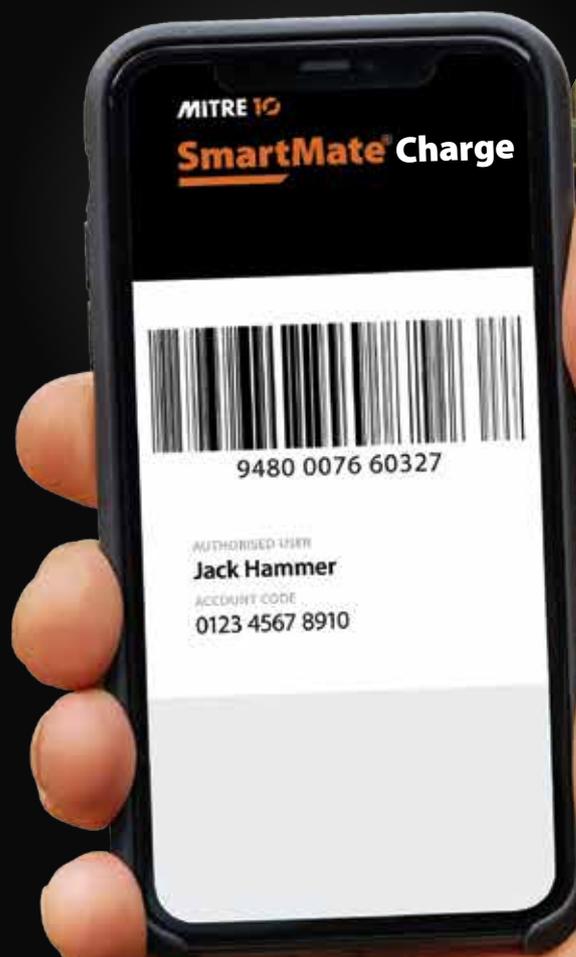
“I expect that the complete NBA and the SPA will be formally introduced into Parliament by the end of 2021, with the NBA passed by the end of 2022,” he says.

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Resource recovery and waste sector infrastructure under the microscope



Waste from construction makes up between 40% to 50% of all waste sent to New Zealand landfills.

New Zealand Infrastructure Commission, Te Waihangā's latest discussion document looks at the state of play of infrastructure in the resource recovery and waste sector.

One of a series of reports into key infrastructure sectors, it highlights some of the challenges for resource recovery and waste infrastructure planning.

The document finds data showing that waste from construction makes up between 40% to 50% of all waste sent to landfill.

"It is clear New Zealand could be doing better at reducing the amount of household, construction and other waste we send to landfill when compared to others in the OECD," chief executive Ross Copland says.

"We have found limitations in the data available at a national level which make it hard to plan for resource recovery and waste infrastructure over the long term," he says.

"Access to recycling infrastructure is not uniform across the country, with many areas lacking access to the infrastructure necessary for recovering materials or downcycling.

"There are also gaps in the types of materials that can be processed here versus overseas.

"On the surface, this may point to the need for investment in more infrastructure, but the economics of resource recovery are heavily



New Zealand Infrastructure Commission chief executive Ross Copland.

influenced by factors that can change quickly, often beyond our borders.

"Regulation and policy settings, and changes in the international market value of recycled materials all have a big impact on the affordability and demands on resource recovery infrastructure.

"There is potential for waste prevention to become a more important part of the solution.

"Off-site construction, computer-aided design, product stewardship and 'design for deconstruction' are a handful of examples of how the construction industry is taking proactive steps to reduce the volume of waste produced during construction.

"New Zealand is also dealing with a legacy of

historic landfills. The 2019 incident with the Fox Glacier landfill highlights the importance of understanding and proactively managing our contaminated sites, particularly as we experience more frequent and intense floods.

"These are just some of the issues we'll need to consider as we work toward our 30-year strategy for infrastructure."

In addition to waste and resource recovery, Te Waihangā has published state of play discussion documents on the telecommunications, energy and water sectors.

Over the coming weeks it will share state of plays on the transport and social infrastructure sectors.

Based on reviews of research on each sector, these build Te Waihangā's evidence base for a 30-year infrastructure strategy. Following consultation, the strategy will be presented to the Minister for Infrastructure by September 2021.

Te Waihangā invites people to share their feedback on the State of Play, and identify any issues they feel should be included.

The Resource Recovery and Waste State of Play, along with information on how to have your say, can be found at <https://infracom.govt.nz/strategy/state-of-plays/resource-recovery-and-waste>.

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BUNNINGS
TRADE



\$40 million Wellington waterfront development underway



Construction has kicked off at Site 9, one of the last major commercial development sites on Wellington's waterfront.

Construction has kicked off at Site 9, one of the last major commercial development sites on Wellington's waterfront.

The four-level, 3900sq m premium office building will be base-isolated, and Bell Gully has secured tenure for the top two floors of the building. The ground floor will feature retail, hospitality and lobby space.

Located at 15 Customhouse Quay, the premium commercial development will be built by Registered Master Builders LT McGuinness, ready for occupation in mid-2022.

Designed by Athfield Architects Ltd with structural design by Dunning Thornton

Consultants, the building is designed to withstand a 1-in-1000 year earthquake.

Conventionally-built commercial buildings are generally designed to withstand 1-in-100 year seismic events.

Last year, Willis Bond broke ground on the \$140 million Victoria Lane Apartments project, providing close to 300 jobs and a boost to Wellington's construction sector and wider economy.

Site 9 and Victoria Lane construction will run simultaneously, rejuvenating the city centre with premium commercial and residential options for Wellingtonians.

Trade Me seeks clearance to acquire homes.co.nz

The Commerce Commission will be looking very closely at its "substantially lessening competition" rulings after receiving a clearance application from Trade Me Limited, which wants to acquire 100% of the shares or assets of PropertyNZ Limited, which owns and operates the homes.co.nz web site.

Trade Me owns and operates an online marketplace and classified advertising platform, trademe.co.nz. This includes Trade Me Property, an online platform for listing real estate for sale and rent.

Trade Me also provides property information

and data through its Property Insights microsite, and sells digital advertising services to advertisers, including real estate agents.

The homes.co.nz web site is also a platform for listing real estate for sale, and provides property information and data. Like TradeMe Property, PropertyNZ sells digital advertising services to advertisers, including real estate agents.

A public version of the clearance application will be available shortly on the Commission's case register.

\$400,000 fine for 'carefully crafted' Home Funding Group scheme

A company which falsely claimed to offer a savings scheme to assist low-income families buy a home has been fined \$400,000 following a Commerce Commission investigation.

In a hearing in the Auckland District Court, Home Funding Group Limited (HFG) was convicted on two charges under the Fair Trading Act 1986. HFG is in liquidation and did not appear at the hearing.

HFG offered services to prospective home buyers who found it difficult to save for a deposit or qualify for bank finance.

It claimed to operate a savings scheme which could assist customers to purchase a home with a deposit as low as 5%. However, customers' payments were not paid into or treated as being in any form of savings scheme.

The contracts that customers entered into were for a brokerage and financial coaching service. Between February 2015 and April 2017, HFG received \$316,361 from 149 customers. They typically paid HFG \$50 to \$100 per week.

"The claims made by HFG induced consumers to make regular payments to HFG in the belief they were putting money towards a house deposit. They were not," Commerce Commission chair Anna Rawlings says.

"In fact, they were paying for financial services, and HFG's contract allowed HFG to limit or avoid providing those services."

In sentencing remarks, Judge Bouchier said it was a "carefully crafted scheme" and the conduct involved "serious offending against vulnerable people".

She noted that affidavits from four victims were "extremely sad" and "heart-rending", and that all four complainants were still unable to purchase houses of their own. She directed full refunds be paid to eight complainants named in the Commission's case, and voided their contracts.

Since the company is now in liquidation, the question of whether refunds will be paid is in the hands of the liquidator.

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House prices set to rise further in 2021

Residential construction is booming and net migration into New Zealand is close to zero, yet house prices are still set to boom in 2021, Westpac chief economist Dominick Stephens says.

And that's mostly down to one factor — low interest rates.

"Low interest rates are more influential on house prices than the supply of housing, and the past year has been living proof of that," Stephens says.

"We have almost zero net migration and high levels of construction, but house prices are booming, so we see low interest rates are more influential than anything else.

"Supply and demand is a factor though, and the housing shortages are unwinding rapidly. In time, we think that will be shown in a lower rate of increase in rents.

"Housing shortages impact rental and buying prices," he says.

Stephens and his team of economists have forecast 17% house price inflation in 2021.

"Our forecast is 7.5% house price inflation for 2022. But we are expecting house prices to decline by about 4% per annum in the middle of the decade," he says.

The team believes mortgage rates have reached their lows, and long-term interest rates will start to increase as global economic sentiment improves.

In its latest Quarterly Economic Overview, Stephens' team says: "We expect house price inflation to turn negative by 2024."

So, what does this mean for owners and buyers?

"If house prices fall, it's bad for those who own, but good for people buying," Stephens says.

"It could be nasty for people who have recently bought, because they will find the interest cost rises much higher on their mortgage.

"This will crimp their budget for other spending and, in turn, crimp the economy. That's what happened in 2007, just a year before the collapse of Lehman Brothers," he says.

Despite the Reserve Bank's tightening of loan-to-value restrictions coming into play, the effect on current house prices will be a small one, the team wrote in its report.

According to the latest data in February from the Real Estate Institute of New Zealand, median house prices across New Zealand increased by 19.3% from \$612,000 in January 2020 to \$730,300 in January 2021.

Median house prices for New Zealand, excluding Auckland, increased by 14.7% from \$525,000 in January last year to \$602,000.

Auckland's median house price increased by 14.9%, from \$870,000 at the same time last year to \$1,000,000.

Construction costs keep rising

Construction businesses charged customers more in the December 2020 quarter, Statistics NZ says.

At the same time, prices charged by hospitality businesses such as hotels, motels and restaurants increased after Covid-19 hit the tourism industry and prices were cut last year.

The construction industry saw a 0.5% increase in prices received from customers in the December 2020 quarter.

Contributing to this was a 0.9% increase in building construction prices, and a 0.8% increase in construction services prices.

The heat is on

The Government has been under increasing pressure to do something about the overheated housing market, with house price inflation running at 19% during the past 12 months as buyers take advantage of ultra-low interest rates.

The Reserve Bank itself sees house price inflation hitting 22% by the middle of the year. And now Finance Minister Grant Robertson says the Bank is required to consider the impact on housing when making monetary and financial policy decisions.

Changes have been made to the Bank's monetary policy committee's remit requiring it to consider government policy relating to more sustainable house prices, while working towards its objectives.

The announcement follows the Bank's monetary policy statement in which it said returning New Zealanders were adding to housing pressures.

A recent CoreLogic Housing Affordability Report showed the house price to income ratio at its equal highest point since data collection began in 2004.

"The Committee retains autonomy over whether and how its decisions take account of potential housing consequences, but it will need to explain regularly how it has sought to assess the impacts on housing outcomes," Robertson says.

A direction has also been issued (under section 68B of the Reserve Bank Act) to the Reserve Bank requiring it to have regard to government policy on housing in relation to its financial policy functions.

"The Bank will have to take into account the Government's objective to support more sustainable house prices, including by dampening investor demand for existing housing stock to help improve affordability for first-home buyers.

"The Reserve Bank's objectives and mandate remains the same — which is to maintain price stability, support full employment, and promote a sound and stable financial system."

The Minister has also asked the Reserve Bank to provide advice on debt-to-income ratios and interest-only mortgages.

"I want to understand the extent to which interest-only mortgages (particularly to speculators) pose risks to financial stability, and whether restrictions should apply.

"Some jurisdictions, like Australia, have, in the past, applied restrictions on interest-only mortgages due to financial stability risks.

"Following the Bank's request that the Government allow it to make use of tools such as debt-to-income ratio limits, I've asked for further advice on how the Bank might implement such tools.

"I have made clear that, in principle, I would want these to apply only to investors. It's important that any potential restrictions do not disproportionately affect first-home buyers and low-income borrowers.

"This announcement is just the first step as the Government considers broader advice about how to cool the housing market.

"We know the rapid increases we have seen in recent months are not sustainable, which has meant many first-home buyers are struggling to access the market," Robertson says.



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The hard grafters remain optimistic despite Covid

Despite the challenges of the past year, more than half of New Zealand tradespeople have a positive outlook for their business in 2021, according to a comprehensive new report.

Job management software company, Tradify, surveyed tradies across the country to find out how Covid-19 had affected their business.

The February 2021 Pulse Report showed 53% believed conditions would improve over the next year.

Tradify's user data mirrored this positive sentiment, with there being little to no change in the average number of quotes, jobs and invoices generated by Kiwi tradies through the platform compared to this time last year.

Tradify chief executive Michael Steckler says post-pandemic building and renovation activity may be part of the reason why the trade industry doesn't appear to have seen any significant drop in work due to Covid-19.

Data from a previous Pulse Report showed an

increase in new home consents following the first lockdown last year, providing more work for tradies.

"At this stage, the impact of Covid-19 on many New Zealand trade businesses doesn't seem to have been as bad as initially feared last year, with the volume of job activity remaining at or above pre-pandemic levels," he says.

"However, despite more than half of the tradies surveyed feeling positive about the future, the results show there are many who feel Covid-19 has had a high impact on their business, and they may take longer to bounce back."

Of all the individual trades surveyed, roofers tended to have the least positive outlook for the upcoming year, with only 25% believing business conditions will improve in 2021.

The report also looked at areas where tradies felt they had least control of their businesses during uncertain times.

While the vast majority said they almost always or often felt in control, there were still

headaches, including getting quotes out quickly and having confidence in finding new work.

Electricians, construction workers and landscapers were the trades that felt least in control of their businesses, while 14% of owner-operator electricians said they never felt in control of their business' finances.

And when it comes to business efficiency, most Kiwi trades businesses are still spending up to a staggering 80 hours on administration per month.

This didn't vary for different-sized businesses, showing the basic requirements for organisation and administration in trades businesses can be similar for smaller and larger operations.

Even with a heavy administration burden still holding some tradies back though, the report found tradies seem to be getting paid faster, with 72% of trade business owners now spending just one hour a week on chasing payments, likely thanks to the impact and increased usage of automated payment reminders and online payments.

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Study: Outdated aircon helps spread Covid

Sick building syndrome, which blames factors such as heating and air conditioning for sickness, days off and poor performance has been a concern since the 1980s.

A study of how infectious diseases spread in tightly-packed buildings using different ventilation systems says Covid-19 has highlighted the need for a fresh focus on intelligent ventilation systems.

The message is that most ventilation systems are just not up to the job when it comes to helping curb the spread of Covid.

“The most commonly-used ventilation systems are inadequate at lowering airborne transmission risks,” Brunel University London’s Professor Hussam Jouhara says.

“High-occupancy buildings must be better adapted as a matter of urgency to reduce disease transmission resulting from inappropriate or inadequate ventilation.

“Covid-19 has exposed areas requiring urgent development to protect our health, well-being and the economy by providing safe indoor environments for employees or students,”

Jouhara says in a study published by the International Journal of Thermofluids.

While social distancing and wearing a mask can lower virus transmission, indoor airflows in buildings holding many people must work better to remove airborne pathogens, the study finds.

Depending on the weather outside, most ventilation systems suck in outdoor air, then heat or cool it before circulating it around the building. The “used” air then either gets pumped back outside or is recirculated in the system.

Most current systems use centralised air distribution and ceiling level air supply or recirculation, which create the best conditions for disease to spread, the study says.

And with claims the virus can stay in the air for up to three hours, the more people come and go from the building, the more the virus spreading pathogens people are exposed to.

These centralised systems should be swapped for displacement ventilation systems such as natural ventilation, or naturally-assisted ventilation (mixing mechanical extract with

controlled inlet openings).

Poor maintenance and alterations to cut energy use or noise also mean there’s often a big gap between the level of ventilation laid down by building standards and reality, the team found.

In classrooms, ventilation rates often fail to reach required minimum standard, several studies show. The peak carbon dioxide concentration often exceeded the recommended levels.

“Since the vast majority of air conditioners and hybrid ventilation systems in public buildings mix the indoor air like a blender and utilise air recirculation, it raises the question over their safety, and indicates the need for further research so safety can be improved, especially in light of the Covid-19 pandemic,” Jouhara says.

“If designed and implemented appropriately, natural ventilation measures, or a combination of localised mechanical exhaust and large cross-section natural inlets, can provide an adequate displacement ventilation solution, significantly reducing the risk of infection.”

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ROIs sought for South Waikato trades training centre

South Waikato Investment Fund Trust (SWIFT) is seeking Registrations of Interest (ROIs) from main building contractors to provide construction services for a new \$14 million South Waikato trades training centre in Tokoroa.

The development at 30 – 32 Chambers Street involves two separate projects:

- Siteworks, including diversion of services, and
- Construction of a new tertiary education centre.

The project is being led by SWIFT, a community-owned economic development fund dedicated to the prosperity of the South Waikato, in close liaison with Toi Ohomai Institute of Technology who will be the training provider.

The centre is scheduled for completion in 2022, and will cater for up to 500 students a year.

SWIFT chairman Bruce Sherman says the goal of the new centre is to assist local people into local jobs, fully equipped with the knowledge, skills and support for the future of work.



The centre will be a combined 3500sq m of learning, workshop and staff space with a commercial kitchen, cafe and barber shop.

It will also have a space allocated for a digital and entrepreneurial hub to help address the deep digital divide, and assist young people into their own businesses.

Sherman says the project provides the opportunity to encourage local firms across

the Waikato region to tender as much as possible to help assist the local economy and to provide job opportunities.

Interested parties should contact project manager Steve Home at Veros at steveh@veros.co.nz for further details and a Registration of Interest information pack containing ROI terms and conditions.

ROIs close at noon on March 15, 2021.

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Dates and format announced for 2021 Awards

The multi-venue delivery approach that the New Zealand Institute of Building (NZIOB) developed for the 2020 edition of the NZIOB's annual awards night, was brought about by the uncertainty of Covid-19.

And although the risk of the pandemic causing disruption to large events is likely to dissipate by August 2021, the three-location model has been retained for this year.

As evidenced by the 800+ "in-person" attendees and a separate live-stream audience that was achieved in 2020, the format was well supported by the construction industry.

Entries for the 2021 New Zealand Building Industry Awards are now being sought. For main contractors, the traditional cost-band categories are open to those who have run a construction project with distinction, with eligible projects being those that have been completed in the period November 1, 2019 to May 31, 2021.

Other categories include:

- Interdisciplinary Collaboration (for builder/consultants/client project teams),
- Innovation (for new products or processes that change the way we build),
- Safety Excellence (for those who have demonstrated leadership in safety, including safety in design), and
- Young Achiever (for those under 30 years of age).

For non-builders, the Consultants category provides for high-performing architects, engineers, quantity surveyors and project managers.

"What sets the New Zealand Building Industry Awards apart," NZIOB chief executive, Malcolm Fleming says, "is that the full range of construction practitioners have a category in which they are likely to be eligible to enter.

"This sees a good cross-section of design consultants, project managers, builders and subcontractors being recognised, either individually or as part of a project team, in front of the full construction industry, rather than in front of professional peers only.

"Through Covid-19, we saw the construction industry come together. That sense of unity that was expressed throughout the 2020 lockdowns was a feature that helped the majority of companies engaged in construction emerge from the pandemic well placed.

"That sense of a strong construction community has stuck, and is why forums that involve the full construction supply chain, like



the New Zealand Building Industry Awards, resonate so strongly — the industry loves to come together."

The deadline for entries to the 2021 New

Zealand Building Industry Awards is May 7, 2021. More information and access to online entry forms can be found at nzbuildingindustryawards.org.nz.

Designgroup wins fun-filled golf day

The sold-out NZIOB Carters Central Region Golf Day was held in Lower Hutt last month.

After a heavy rain shower in the morning, the sun came out, creating perfect conditions for a round of golf at an event in which the full cross-section of the supply chain was represented.

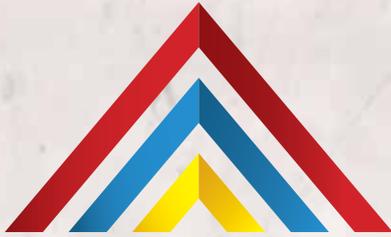
Hole sponsors came to the party, hosting a variety of competitions and refreshments around the course, and the Fireshield drinks carts kept the cold drinks flowing.

Congratulations go to Designgroup Stapleton Elliott for not only winning the "favourite hole" competition, but also taking out first place in the golf — a talented bunch!

Managing director Nigel Dong said the team had a fun-filled day out connecting with its construction industry peers and colleagues.

"A massive thanks goes to all of the sponsors who stepped up and provided an abundance of food, refreshments and activities during the day," he said.

The NZIOB thanks all the teams involved and its generous sponsors: APL Window Solutions, Armstrong Downes Commercial, Brendan Foot Supersite, Carters, Dahua Technology, Designgroup Stapleton Elliott, Dulux NZ, Fireshield, Firth, Formshore, Franklin Smith, GIB, Hirepool, Kensway Consultants, LT McGuinness, McKee Fehl, Naylor Love, NME Group, Rockcote (Resene Construction Systems), and Silvester Clark.



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The NZ Building Industry Awards are open to anyone who participates in the design and delivery of New Zealand's built environment. For employers of finalists, it is an opportunity for them to showcase their company's capability and talent. Entries are judged by a panel of senior construction practitioners.

The closing date for entries is 7 May 2021.

AWARDS CEREMONY & GALA DINNER

Following 2020's successful multi-venue live-stream format, the NZ Building Industry Awards Ceremony & Gala Dinner will once again be held across three locations: Auckland (Cordis Hotel), Wellington (Te Papa), and Christchurch (Town Hall); and will also be live-streamed. **The date for the Awards Ceremony & Dinner is 13 August 2021.**

Save the date and stay connected for updates.

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Before setting up a Workdek system, you need to be fully trained. Alternatively, you can hire Workdek to handle the set-up and breakdown for you.

You can download Workdek's detailed installation guide at www.workdek.co.nz. The guide includes:

- Unpacking Workdek.
- Installing Workdek.
- Pack down, care and storage.

Should you buy or hire Workdek?

If you're looking to just try it out, hiring is probably the best option. If you're already sold on Workdek, and you have more than one project, buying is a great option.

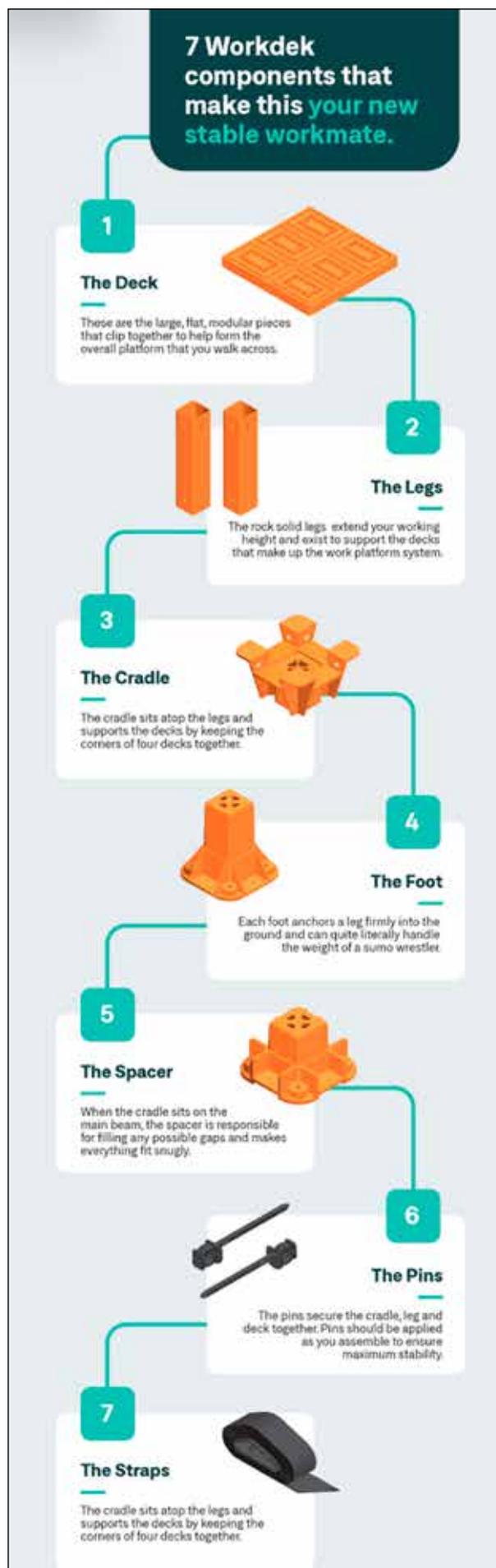
Workdek has a growing list of supply partners. If you're interested in becoming a stockist you can contact them via their web site.

Workdek is on the same page as Worksafe NZ

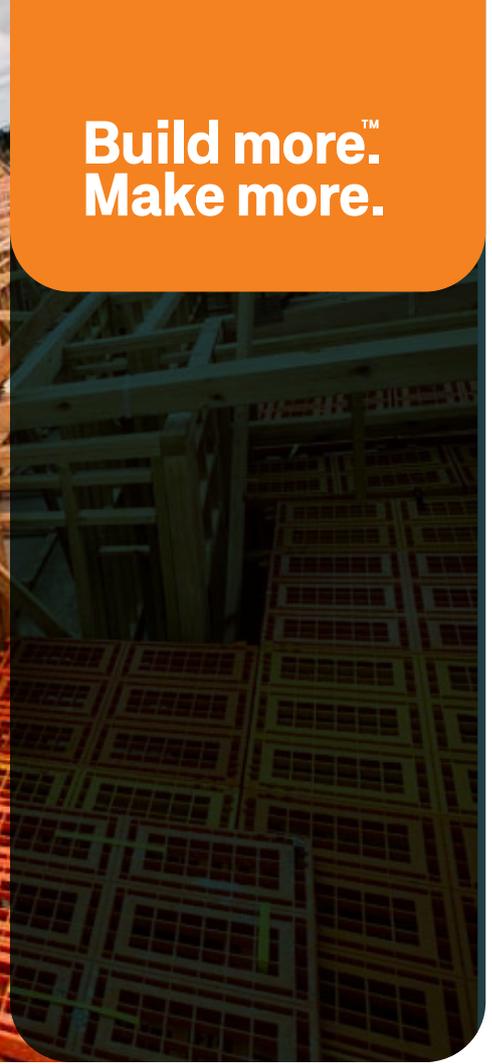
Worksafe NZ endorses Workdek's view on the hierarchy of fall protection, which is that eliminating the fall is better than capturing the fall.

Nets are outdated, unsafe and counterproductive. And Worksafe NZ has issued safety alerts over the use of nets. Workdek says it is the safer, alternate solution.

To learn more and get started with Workdek, visit www.workdek.co.nz.



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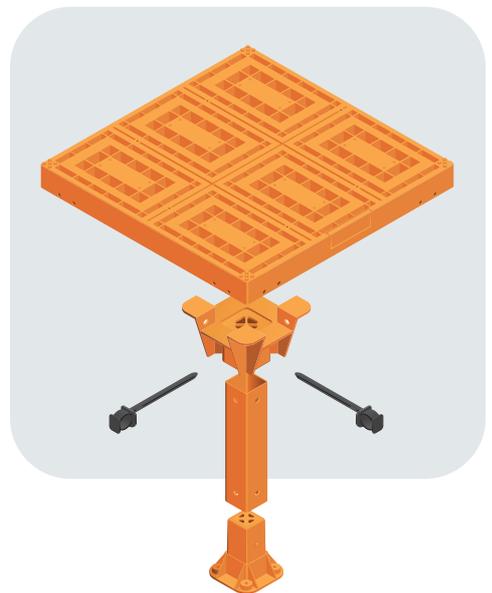
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Connecto Trade domestic surface water drainage range designed for NZ climate

Poor water drainage causes water to pool and can prevent areas around the home from being utilised. Additionally, pooling may cause damage to foundations and exterior pipes and wires.

NIWA annual rainfall reports in 2019 showed rainfall was above normal (120% to 149% of normal) in western Southland and parts of Westland, but was below normal (50% to 79% of normal) across Northland, Auckland, the Bay of Plenty, parts of Waikato, Hawke's Bay, the Wairarapa and Marlborough.

Rainfall was near normal (80% to 119% of normal) for the remainder of New Zealand.

Improving drainage in areas of a section, whether that be from rainfall or even garden hoses, is easy with the new Connecto Trade range.

Designed for New Zealand's climate, it is an ideal solution for domestic surface water drainage.

The shape or size of a surface water channel system can have a marked effect on the velocity of the water and how much is moved.

To estimate surface water run-off, there are a number of factors that need to be considered, including:

- The area of land to be serviced,
- The surface type (impervious or pervious), and
- The type of terrain (flat, hilly or gently rolling).

If you need assistance on the best depth system from the Connecto Trade range for your project, email dux@dux.co.nz, or visit www.connectotrade.com for more information.



The channel system is made from tough, lightweight UV-stabilised recycled plastic, and features anti-floatation feet to prevent floatation during pouring of concrete, and a U-shaped design to assist with water flow rate and self-cleaning. The channels also slot directly into each other using male and female ends.



Connecto Trade channels can be cut at 100mm intervals, so installers can size the channel length to that of the drainage project. Be sure to retain the male nodules during cutting, as this will allow the female adaptors to be used to connect other components without the need for silicone.



With appropriate installation, the channels and grates can support a range of passenger vehicles, offering a 5-tonne vehicle load rating. This rating applies to all Connecto Trade grates (standard, pedestrian, galvanised and stainless steel).

The plastic grates have a new clip design to allow for easy removal for maintenance and cleaning.



A range of accessories includes a solvent-weldable end outlet which fits 100mm pipe (without the need for silicone) and features a "step down" design to allow for a thicker concrete slab above the pipe (which will reduce cracking).

In addition, a solvent-weldable bottom outlet is available, which fits both 90mm and 100mm pipe (without the need for silicone).

A drill guide in the base of the channel makes creating the opening with a holesaw easy, prior to attaching the bottom outlet.



The range also offers a new patent-pending support bracket which supports and strengthens the join between channels, while creating extra internal stability for transporting long lengths of channel, carrying the channel onsite and also during concreting.

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bracket strengthens
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Access App allows all sorts of door locking controls

The Unity Entrance Lock achieves patented digital deadlocking technology, locking the internal and external handles of the lock.

Lock alert indications show users the lock mode via a built-in LED. The lock has three modes — Unlock (Green), Locked (Yellow) and Secure (Red).

Controllable by either the Yale Access App, a key card or Yale Smart Keypad, the Unity Entrance Lock provides the user with a range of options to control the lock.

The App allows users to lock and unlock the door, grant access to others, and keep track of visitor access, all via a smartphone.

Grant users one-time access, access for a set period of time or a date range, and avoid lost keys or having keys stolen or copied.

Using varying technologies including Bluetooth, Wi-Fi and GPS as well as the Yale Access App, the auto-unlock feature unlocks the door as the user approaches.

The door position sensor checks the status of the door and tells the user if the door is securely closed and locked. This avoids inadvertently locking your door whilst the door is open.

The Unity Entrance Lock can be upgraded with the Yale Connect Bridge. The Yale Connect Wi-Fi Bridge allows the user to access the lock from wherever they are.

The Yale Connect Wi-Fi Bridge allows “Works with” ability, integrating into Google, Samsung or Alexa smart home hubs.



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- Battery-saving technology for 50% more holes per battery charge than standard drill bits.
- Made from M2 High Speed Steel (HSS), offering the best combination of strength, heat and wear resistance.
- Bright finish for general purpose applications, non-ferrous metals and plastics.

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Box sets

In his final column for *Building Today*, architect Don Bunting muses upon the apparent difficulty of providing affordable housing.

What is wrong with our industry and our government? Here we have a clear mandate to produce a solution for providing enough affordable housing for our existing and increasing population needs.

We are very good at building houses, at least when we make sure that building rules are followed. That's another challenge but one that is more than achievable. The rules are there. Follow them.

Problem? We can't seem to provide a simple definition of what an affordable house is, where they need to be built, how much they should cost and, most importantly, who and what they are for? Try two words: small and transitional.

What went wrong?

Kiwibuild was a slogan, an aspiration that was then destroyed by adding a target to it. Adding a target without a solution in political terms is doomed to failure.

If you have no idea how something can be achieved, then failure is inevitable. 100,000 houses in 10 years at clearly stated price points; with a weak and woolly definition of who the target audience was.

The first owners proved to be a reasonably established young couple who received some unnecessary criticism for not meeting the public's definition of worthy recipients.

Unlike when Micky Savage was photographed triumphantly carrying furniture into the first State house in Miramar, Wellington, in 1937.

Who for and where?

Take the second key word; transitional. Homes for those not yet on, or who continue to struggle to join the housing ladder and need a start. New home owners yes. Renters yes.

Both target markets are keys to success because the second represents a growing trend towards those renting by choice or by necessity. Both are represented in the transitional group, prepared to start small and, in time, move up.

A first home today is less likely to be permanent; and probably shouldn't be if we accept the "transitional" definition as valid.

Where should these transitional homes be built? Simple — near transport, near existing or new services, and near employment

options. More about the supply of land later.

What should these houses be like? What should be their key attributes? One word — small.

They are transitional dwellings, starter homes for couples, singles and small families. Clear definitions are key to the success of a housing policy's success.

We lived quite happily in a two bed, 75sq m home for a time. Compact? Yes it was, but it had separate living spaces, storage, insulation, ventilation and heating.

Set aside "high tech" for the moment, and consider passive and active solar design over the dreaded heat pump.

Land

For a national housing policy to work, government must be and must remain actively involved, directly and through its operating agencies — Housing New Zealand and Maori authorities for a start. They must also work closely with local and regional authorities.

As an example, Auckland Council has been actively engaged in establishing the likely and preferred shift of Greater Auckland's population for some years.

A great deal of this work has already been done, and just needs coordination. And legislation.

Changes to the Resource Management Act are already on the cards. This must consider the specific needs of a national housing policy, and allow the necessary land to be made available for rapid development.

Develop

The Government no longer has a Ministry of Works. Private enterprise must therefore become involved at the beginning.

Clearly, different approaches will be needed depending on land ownership, both initial — say, Maori land — and final.

The key is that land is available, serviced and ready to proceed immediately, without proviso, and backed by legislation.

Specify

This is the easy part because the key requirements are simple once you accept that what is sought are transitional and small. Along the following lines:



- Compliant, stand-alone for future flexibility and natural light/ventilation.
- Single-storey with a simple living, dining, kitchen, utility, bathroom and two-double bedroom layout. Footprint 70 to 80sq m.
- North exposure. Covered external space but no garaging.
- Reference for groupings of homes with shared parking and pedestrian/cycling access only to homes.

Build

The industry must step up. Who and how the homes are to be constructed or delivered should be left to the market to decide.

No top-down instructions from bureaucracy, excepting for clear requirements under the Building Act and Code. Perhaps beyond the Code.

And make use of the work done and the operational structure set-up under the Construction Sector Accord.

Ensure the Accord is appropriately resourced, and operates with a clear and precise government and private mandate to act and act quickly on proposals received from the market — be they prefabricated, kitset, 3D printed, or constructed on site.

The method will suit the companies concerned, and the scale of contracts they are offered and availability of materials and products at the time.

Last words

The answers to providing shelter are many and varied. The key to the current dilemma of insufficient affordable housing requires a clear unequivocal solution.

In my view this should be small and transitional homes. What is yours?

As this will be my last column, I will indulge myself with two random thoughts:

- What is the real relationship between climate change and our growing earth's population?
- Electric vehicles can't save the planet, but you can.

Why don't politicians seem to understand the

EasyBuild director Mike Fox wonders why, considering the construction industry's significant contribution to New Zealand's GDP, the industry continues to be seemingly neglected by government?

Having a building career spanning 40 years has given me the opportunity to experience the many financial, political and technical cycles that affect the construction industry.

And over this time, one thing that's become more apparent to me is that politicians don't seem to understand the relevance of our industry, nor the role it plays in supporting New Zealand's economy.

Let's set the scene

The construction sector is New Zealand's fifth-largest sector by employment, with around 200,000 full-time employees, and approximately 54,000 additional full-time employees in construction-related services — altogether, making up more than 10%, and growing, of total employment across the economy.

There's no denying that our sector plays a large role in New Zealand's economy, contributing strongly to employment, businesses and GDP.

Construction and construction-related services contributed around 9% of New Zealand's total GDP in 2015, and have an even greater impact when integration with other parts of the economy is considered.

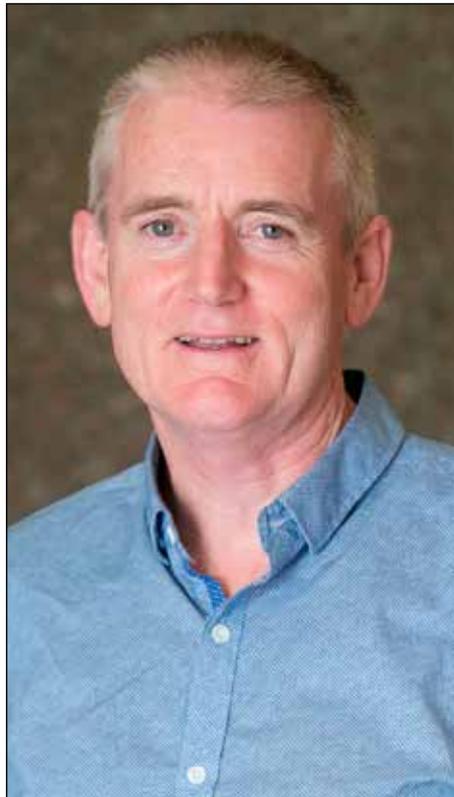
As a sector, we deliver almost as much GDP as the whole of the Waikato region, and this contribution is growing rapidly.

Over the past three years, core construction has seen 17% GDP growth, overtaking wholesale trade to become the eighth biggest contributing sector to GDP.

Quoting the 2016 PWC *Valuing the Role of Construction in the New Zealand Economy* report: "For every dollar invested in construction, circa three dollars of activity are generated across the economy" — making the construction industry one of the nation's most stimulatory sectors.

Out of the top 10 individual sectors by contribution to New Zealand's GDP, construction supported the highest job growth between 2012 and 2015, with core construction contributing one out of every five new jobs in New Zealand (26,000 new jobs).

This has undoubtedly grown in the five years



since, and it's important to note that this figure excludes construction-related services so, in reality, the total new jobs will be much higher.

In contrast, the agriculture, forestry and fishing sector, for example, contributed a much smaller 330 new jobs over the same period.

With such an impact, you'd expect our industry to be supported and nurtured by Government. Instead, the opposite occurs.

Endless challenges

Our industry continues to face a seemingly endless list of challenges that, for some reason, fly under the radar in the eyes of the Government:

- We work under the Building Act, one of the most confusing and regulated acts in existence. Even lawyers struggle to understand its many vagaries and cross references to other Acts and regulations.

- The national housing crisis has been apparent for at least a decade, and yet we continue to be moribund in red tape and process. Lots of hand-wringing and finger pointing takes place, but there's no effective ownership or action.

- The LBP scheme has never delivered value or any real stature to the practitioners or the consumer. Currently it just adds cost and process to the build. Builders should be signing off more of their own work like plumbers and electricians.

- Joint and several liability has strangled our industry, driving up costs and wiping out co-operation within it.

- Suicide is ashamedly 34 times more likely in our sector than any other. Why? It can be a dog-eat-dog environment, starting with unfair contract conditions. Unfortunately, Government agencies are some of the worst culprits.

- Our industry is very unproductive and slipping further back behind other similar industries.

- The majority of the laws that impact our industry are set by central government and left to local councils to administer, yet many councils are ill-equipped to resource and administer them.

There needs to be a review and cull of unnecessary regulations.

- Poorly written laws such as the Health and Safety Act where no clear directive is given force businesses to default to the most complex scenario imaginable, almost always beyond practicality and costing the builder and consumer significantly more than it should.

- With zero industry input and at very short notice, the Department of Building and Housing was subsumed into a "super ministry", the Ministry of Business Innovation and Employment (MBIE).

The result has been a loss of industry focus and watering down of the services provided to the industry.

This list could go on almost indefinitely as to the things our industry needs political and governmental focus and support on to make it efficient and sustainable. At the end of the day, one thing is clear — change is needed.

relevance and impact of our industry?

Leper industry

But why isn't change forthcoming? Why is the construction industry continually left to fend for itself by Government?

Continued disregard for our industry has us looking like the leper that no senior Minister wants to have.

It is an indictment on successive governments that they don't give our industry the credence it deserves.

Governments have paid lip service to our industry by giving the construction portfolio to their Minister of last resort, often outside of cabinet or to an inexperienced Minister who seems to come from nowhere and then returns there with little achieved.

Another reason we haven't had good outcomes is that any Minister for Construction is perversely supposed to protect the consumer as well as represent the industry. You can't serve two opposing masters and expect good outcomes for both.

We haven't had a Minister who has really championed for our industry in the entire 40 years I have been involved in it.

For all his faults, Winston Peters really stepped up for the racing and fishing industries as their Minister and actually made a difference.

Yet we have never had that level of representation and, unfortunately, this neglect shows.

And all the while, as stories about insufficient affordable housing, delays and inefficiencies continue to get louder, our industry is seemingly ignored by the day.

The housing crisis is one of the most pressing issues our country faces but, apparently, isn't important enough to be handled by a top-ranking Minister with the clout and dedication to make impactful change. Or am I missing something?

Broad benefits are to be gained for the economy from support for our sector

There is a large return to be gained by New Zealand's economy from dedicated support for a sector that continues to struggle with the cyclical nature of work and low productivity.

Since 2012, measured labour productivity has increased by a total of only 1%. But every 1% increase in labour productivity for construction yields an increase in GDP, so it's surely a no brainer for the Government to focus on boosting our industry's productivity.

More broadly, improving performance of the sector provides a range of benefits which will be shared by industry and consumers.

For the industry, this means improved profit margins, better skills development and earning opportunities, and a better ability to weather the cyclical nature of the industry.

For consumers, this means that high quality construction will cost less, there will be fewer

project delays, and a wider variety of options will be available to satisfy consumer demand — and, ultimately, that more houses are available for more Kiwis.

And what if change doesn't occur?

Without change, our sector will struggle to meet medium-term demand. There is a significant task ahead to accommodate new private sector and government demand, compounded by the nationwide housing shortage.

The opportunity for the construction sector is significant, but the sector will not be able to meet the challenge without a serious rethink of how we break free of the constraints currently holding the industry and the country back.

Our industry is vitally important to the country, and the quality and amount of leadership, coupled with change, is paramount to the sustainability of the industry and the provision of housing that our nation so desperately requires.

• Note: The majority of statistics in this article come from the 2016 PWC Report *Valuing the Role of Construction in the New Zealand Economy*.

• **This article contains the author's opinion only, and is not necessarily the opinion of the Registered Master Builders Association, its chief executive or staff.**

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Surveying your people for real answers

Tradie HR director Leigh Olsen provides the lowdown on engagement surveys.



When was the last time you asked your people, “how’s work going?” And how did they respond?

Maybe some responded with “yep, sweet as boss!”, leading you to think that you’re all on track and things are going well.

For others, their people might respond with a “flat out mate!”, giving the manager a clue that some things might need shifting, yet leaving the manager confused as they’re not sure on exactly what to shift.

For many managers, these kinds of responses are just not enough information to know what to keep continuing, or what to start changing.

It’s also often these kinds of responses that hide us from amazing opportunities that are holding our business back from truly growing and thriving.

Unlocking the real opportunities: engagement surveys

To unlock what’s really going on with your people, and to discover the real answer behind “how’s work going?”, engagement surveys are a key way to give your people a voice, and help take your business to the next level.

Your people know your business the best. They are the ones on site, on the shop floor, up on the roof, under the house or down the corridor.

These are the people who know what is working and what is not, and if asked in a safe environment, will tell you, and with added extras!

Our team at Tradie HR has seen numerous managers uncover and fix issues such as absenteeism and low productivity, just by uncovering the real reasons through surveying.

Once the real reasons have been established, these successful managers have established a clear plan of action to help get their people back on track.

Getting an engagement survey right

Running a survey shouldn’t be hard work. In fact, the best surveys are not complicated — they are written in clear language with unbiased questions.

Here are some key dos and don’ts to help your survey get the real information, and also to keep your people engaged.

Do:

- Have a communication plan: You’ve heard it

before — communicate, communicate, communicate. Not just at the beginning, but the middle and at the end of the engagement survey process.

In the beginning, tell them the plan, and ensure them it’s a confidential and safe process. You’ll get much better answers.

During the middle, let them know where you’re at. Then, communicate again at the end, such as letting everyone know what the responses were, the themes you’ve discovered and the action you’ll be taking.

Just check that you keep the plan moving quickly and smoothly, as the longer the gap between the survey and feedback, the greater the risk that your people will lose interest. It’s advised that results are shared as quickly as possible.

- Use an engagement survey expert: Asking the right question in the right way is critical, so cut yourself some slack and use someone who knows how to put these together.

They’ll make sure you get the right kind of responses, and ensure a survey and process that remains confidential and anonymous.

- Be creative: A lot of surveys are done electronically and that works well, but for one of my clients that was not an option.

Their staff were nervous about committing their responses through email as they felt this could be traced.

We came up with an idea to go paper-based. I know it’s old school but it worked. Employees were hand delivered their paper questionnaire along with a sealed envelope and a Kit Kat.

We encouraged them to take a break, have a kit kat and do the survey! The response rate came in at an all-time high for the company. Take a creative approach and use it as a time to engage people in the engagement survey.

- Show courage: Running an engagement survey takes courage. It takes even more courage to share the results with the whole company as well. Yet, this is often where engagement surveys fall down.

I have seen many engagement surveys begin with the right intentions, great introductory communications to the team, response rate is high, everyone is keenly filling out their questionnaire, and

then silence.

There is no feedback from management to the team on the results, or they only publish the more favourable ones, conveniently leaving out those not-so-great results.

The bottom line is that if you are going to invest in doing an engagement survey, share the results — the good, the bad and the ugly.

You will earn extra trust for doing so, and your people are more likely to participate in the next survey. Appreciate that reading some of the results and looking at the data can be confronting, but wouldn’t you rather know what your people thought than not?

- Take and show action: Remember, “the proof is in the pudding”, and it’s the same after the survey, that you make and, more importantly, take action steps.

A great way to do this is to make everyone part of this process. Create some project teams or get teams to choose two or three key initiatives that they want to see improvement on. This sends the message that management are listening to the survey feedback and acting on it.

- Be open, honest and impartial: No matter which stage of the survey you’re at, keep it honest and real.

Stay away from trying to arrange the results as better or worse than they actually are. It is really important that how you communicate the results back to the team sets the tone for future communications, especially around receiving feedback and ideas. Being open builds trust and credibility.

Don’t:

- Try to change opinions. I have seen this happen where managers have tried to persuade employees to change their opinions and scores.

This is a time for humility. Embrace the comments, warts and all. Yes, there might be

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Misrepresentation, leaky homes, disclosure and building reports

Timothy Bates and Bodene Robertson-Wright of Auckland law firm TM Bates & Co review a recent case regarding misrepresentation in the purchase of a residential property.

We review the recent High Court decision of Justice Cooke which involved an agreement for the sale and purchase of a residential property, where a building report was provided to prospective purchasers making misrepresentations about the weathertightness of the property.

Background

The property was constructed around 1990, with additions made in 1996 and 2002 and, therefore, prior to the enactment of the Building Act 2004.

There were three levels, multiple decks, James Hardie texture spray monoclاد, minimal eaves, flat roofs and internal gutters.

The defendant purchased the property in 2005. Insurance claims, building quotes and reports indicate the defendant encountered weathertightness issues from around 2008.

The defendant attempted to sell the property in 2011 which, ultimately, did not proceed due to a failed building report by Capital House Inspections. This was obtained by the prospective buyer, which indicated the dwelling was a “very high-risk” weathertightness risk.

Between 2012 and 2014, significant works were done on the property, without obtaining building consent.

These works involved replacing sections of roof, retiling, and redesign and repair of the balcony.

For the purposes of sale, the defendant procured a further building inspection report from Building Science Ltd.

There were two versions of this report, dated November and December 2017 respectively.

The first version of the report was sent to the defendant with the following comment: “What I have sent you so far is not what we would be going to market with when you are ready. I will give you a snappy, more impactful report that will help make the sale.”

In December 2017, the plaintiffs entered into an unconditional sale and purchase agreement to purchase the defendant’s property in Wellington for \$1.2 million, paying a 10% deposit.

The disclosures made to the plaintiffs prior to the purchase included the positive building

inspection report of Building Science Ltd that the defendant had obtained for the property in December 2017.

Prior to settlement, the plaintiffs became aware of adverse information about the property, which included the adverse Capital House Inspections building inspection report obtained in 2011.

After seeking an explanation from the defendant about this information, the settlement did not proceed, and the agreement was subsequently cancelled.

The dispute in question was concerning whether the deposit was forfeited by the plaintiffs.

Misrepresentation

The primary cause of action for the plaintiffs was misrepresentation, the requirements of which are set out by the Contract and Commercial Law Act 2017.

This case for the plaintiffs was that there was a misrepresentation by the defendant; the plaintiffs were induced to enter into the sale and purchase agreement by the misrepresentation; that it was reasonable for the plaintiffs to rely on the misrepresentation; and that the effect of the misrepresentation was to substantially reduce the benefit of the contract to the plaintiffs or make it substantially different.

It was accepted there was a misrepresentation by the defendant in that the Building Science Ltd report did not accurately describe the condition of the building to the best of his knowledge, as stated in the “Disclosures” document as part of the pre-purchase material.

It was further accepted that the representations induced entry of the contract.

There was evidence provided by the plaintiffs that they were seeking a modern, low-maintenance building for their retirement.

They had turned their mind to the issue of weathertightness but, having been provided with the Building Science Ltd report, they were satisfied that this was not a major concern.

Although the plaintiffs made an unconditional offer, it was accepted in this case that it was reasonable for the plaintiffs to rely on the misrepresentation.

The first paragraph of the building report



referred to the building as “constructed of monolithic materials in the 1990s”, which could be taken to be an oblique reference to a potential for weathertightness.

However, Justice Cooke stated whether this reference would ring alarm bells, as it would depend on that purchaser’s state of knowledge, and partly due to the plaintiffs living abroad for the 15 years prior, they did not have that knowledge.

It was further stated that it does not lie well in a vendor’s mouth to say it is unreasonable for a purchaser to rely on a report that the vendor has provided to describe the condition of the property.

Conclusion

Justice Cooke had little hesitation in finding the

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Little boxes made of ticky tacky

Our resident trouble-maker Ross Middleton takes a stance in favour of tiny homes as an alternative to what could be seen as conformist middle-class attitudes.

I opened up a can of sardines the other day and, bugger me, if there wasn't a family of four taken up residence!

They'd done a pretty good job kitting out the tin but, while the kitchen was well supplied, things were a bit oily and the bones hadn't worked too well as furniture.

Guy looked up at me and said, "Cheers for the skylight. Just remember to come back when it starts to rain."

I didn't have the heart to tell him he was going on my toast. But while I was eating I did have pause for thought, unfortunately for you, loyal reader . . .

If my imagination was living in a can of sardines, just how small are houses going to get?

I mean, what I had seen was patently ridiculous but, surely in scouting those eternally leafy avenues for solutions to our "housing crisis", we should be looking more closely at making those ticky tacky boxes on a hillside just a little smaller — faster to erect, easier to create off-site, cost-efficient, easily relocatable — all that stuff.

But, you know, status quo etc — don't stick your head outside the box lest you get it chopped off. Banks won't lend, real estate agencies pooh pooh, regulators erect the obstacle course . . .

For example, some recent comments by a nameless economic guru who generally produces measured and illuminating opinions, fail to consider the potential for a rush of converging factors as our world evolves, the demographics evolve, and the politics evolve.

Amongst a grab bag of structural changes he doesn't see happening, he includes those so-called "tiny homes".

"They are not what people want for raising a family," he says.

"They can look very cute when shown on TV, but so can backyard treehouses. I do not see this sector as ever gaining much ground, and certainly not the ones on wheels.

"In the United States, they gather such 'houses' together in places called trailer parks."

You can smell the entitlement and the bias from here — although he restrains himself



from using that alliterative sobriquet usually attached to the inhabitants of these "parks".

Here is a stark choice. Which option would you prefer to call home — a shed, a car, a tent, the underside of a bridge, or a tiny house? I don't see you scratching your head over the choices.

The facts relating to the situation are that, under the bureaucracy's official definition,

Here is a stark choice. Which option would you prefer to call home — a shed, a car, a tent, the underside of a bridge, or a tiny house? I don't see you scratching your head over the choices.

more than 41,000 people are experiencing "homelessness" in New Zealand.

A 2018 report suggested 1% of New Zealand's population of five million is homeless, the highest of any country among wealthy OECD nations.

You can bet your anecdotal boots this is just the tip of the iceberg too.

In addition of course, in our "team" of five million we have the approximately 1900 households apparently getting an emergency housing special needs grant.

At an average of 2.7 people per household, that adds at least another 5000 souls.

Why are there so many homeless in New Zealand? The escalating "housing crisis" has contributed to our punitively high rate.

The price of renting or buying a home in New

Zealand has been akin to one of Peter Beck's phallic creations leaving the Mahia Peninsula for parts stratospheric.

For instance, in the country's largest city, Auckland, housing prices climbed 90% from 2008 to 2018.

The Government would like us to think they have it under control. It says it is committed to ending homelessness, and work is underway or planned.

"We are increasing housing supply nationwide and increasing our response to homelessness. Over the next year, public housing supply will increase by at least 1600 places across the country, and is set to reach 6400 places by June 2022."

Much to the delight of their opposition, they have managed to fill 12 "places" so far. Guess that rocket is still stuck to the pad. That is some mighty super glue.

Last year, the nationwide median house price soared by 19.3% to \$749,000 according to the Real Estate Institute of New Zealand, a sharp improvement from year-on-year rises of 12.3% in 2019 and 1.8% in 2018.

The data shows New Zealand saw spectacular house price rises of about 114% from 2001 to 2007. This was soon followed by nine further years of substantial price rises from 2012 to 2020, supported by strong economic growth.

Because of this, housing in New Zealand has become really expensive, for a country with such a small population relative to its land mass.

Despite the pandemic, demand remains extremely high, helped by very low interest rates. The limited supply of homes in the market puts further pressure on prices.

In December 2020, the number of properties available for sale fell by 29.1% year-on-year to 12,932 units — the lowest level of inventory since records began, according to the Real Estate Institute of New Zealand (REINZ).

Worse, the growth in construction activity is slowing, with the number of new dwelling consents rising by less than 3% in the first 11 months of 2020, a sharp slowdown from an annual average growth of 14% in the past eight

years, according to Statistics NZ.

“Currently we have half the inventory levels we had back in December 2018. Therefore, there just isn’t enough choice for people looking to purchase, which has meant that there is significant pressure being placed on house prices in most parts of the country,” outgoing REINZ chief executive Bindi Norwell said.

“When you add into the equation the fact that there are record low interest rates, it means that people are more willing to compete to secure the property they want.”

Decades of restrictions on development have resulted in a construction sector scaled to the amount and types of building that have been allowed, rather than the amount and types of building that might be demanded by a growing and changing population.

We read about the issues daily. Housing shortages and high resulting housing costs undermine social cohesion.

Families are forced to live in less pleasant and overcrowded dwellings, leading to deprivation, adverse health and social outcomes, and unstable environments for young children to grow and learn.

This is without touching on the future where issues around sustainability, climate change and environmental awareness will need to be confronted.

If the old quarter acre section has gone, you can bet your boots the stereotypical ticky tacky boxes are not far behind.

Alluring element

Perhaps the most alluring element of tiny homes is their significantly lower cost to build than traditional houses, as well as the ability to tailor a budget based on a wide range of individual circumstances.

A tiny home can cost anywhere from around



Marble and gold plating go a long way in a 40sq m house, while a line-up of power like this might see you in consumption credit for the rest of your life.

\$20,000 upwards, depending on the size, materials and design scope.

However, building a tiny house to meet the requirements of the Building Code is likely to cost closer to \$100,000.

The issues for tiny homes usually revolve around the inconsistency and non-specificity of rules and regulations. Considering this, 2021 should hopefully be a watershed for tiny homes and for prefabricated buildings.

If the Building Amendment Bill advances through its various phases with some urgency and we get a workable end product, many of the issues and frustrations around consenting will be removed and the pathway to factory certification will lead to growth in the adoption of off-site manufacturing technologies by the broader construction sector.

Building for climate change will also help direct the construction sector to develop off-site strategies.

My humble suggestion for builders and constructors looking at the tiny home and general prefabrication sector as a future opportunity — don’t listen to the local economist.

They’ve got flash fingers on the old calculator, but badly bruised thumbs when it comes to the nitty gritty.

Misrepresentation . . .

From page 35

representations were false, which meant the requirements for misrepresentation set out above were met.

Further to this, it was accepted that the misrepresentations led to a material reduction in, or change to, the benefits of the contract to the plaintiffs. They were therefore able to cancel the contract, and were entitled to remedies, including refund of the deposit, interest on the deposit, and legal fees for the purchase.

The court also found for the plaintiffs on breach of warranty pursuant to the sale and purchase agreement, in that the defendant had warranted he had obtained a building consent for any works carried out which needed a building consent.

The court concluded the significant weathertightness repairs carried out to the dwelling needed a building consent, but the defendant did not obtain one.

Note: This article is not intended to be legal advice (nor a substitute for legal advice). No responsibility or liability is accepted by TM Bates & Co or *Building Today* to anyone who relies on the information in this article.

Business expectations – it all depends on the human factor

Terry Sage of Trades Coaching New Zealand says the human factor is the big unknown when it comes to what looks like a sound business opportunity.

Got a story for you this time around. It's a true story but one that hasn't got an ending as yet.

There are three individual businesses that are all doing okay in their own right and industry, but all looking for that extra something else.

Player one is a family that has purchased a property for a specialised venture and is building gradually, as planned, into a successful business.

They have lots of space and, in particular, an area that is surplus to the original plan but could be ideal for another use.

Player two is a long-established business with an owner who is ageing — gracefully of course — and who can't do the work on his own but who is finding it hard to get qualified staff.

The business was decimated by Covid lockdowns, and really needs alternatives to ride out the slow times.

Player three is a person who is great at the job but doesn't know if he wants to carry on with it or make a career change. He has a telephone book full of the right contacts for a possible new project, but he needs a little direction.

They have all talked about "what ifs" and "could we do", but none of them has the full package to get the little extra off the ground.

Together, however, the story takes a

completely different direction and has the potential for a happy ending.

One has the location, one has the equipment and the third has the management. The secret ingredient is the somebody who could bring it all together. That was me, but the hero of this story is not a person but an opportunity seen.

Introductions are not new in business. In fact, some of the biggest successes in history can be traced back to an introduction or two. The key element is introducing the right people with the right attitudes and who don't have over-inflated expectations.

It's the expectations — or commonly known as outright greed — that can undo the best laid plans and intentions.

So we have three players who are all good businesspeople and who all have the attitude to succeed. And we have somebody who can negotiate and calculate individual expectations that are fair and achievable.

Yeah, me again, but the heroes are the three business owners because they are realistic and flexible.

Question one was "what do you want to earn out of this?" Question two was "what's the minimum you will take and still feel it was a success?" The last question was "if you get this much for this much effort, are you in?"



Then it all gets drawn up on paper — a business in a box — to make sure it can actually work.

Then comes the biggest question — can these three individuals work together? That can never be answered with any real certainty — only time has the real answer.

Now I really would be the hero if I could conjure answers to questions such as "shall we employ this person?" "Should I invest in that guy?" "Shall I become a shareholder with them?"

With a gift like that there would be a lot fewer lawyers out there.

My point is that an opportunity can look 100% on paper, but you still have to take a gamble on the human factor.

So far in this particular scenario, we are talking expectations. If the ending is not a happy one I will tell you why. If it does end up having a happy ending you will possibly read about it in the press . . .

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THE BUSINESS SIDE OF CONSTRUCTION

Surveying your people

From page 34

some venting that has gone on, but there will be some nuggets of truth in there as well.

- **Sacrifice confidentiality:** Survey responses should be confidential. It is all about what is being said, not who says it. The conversation should never turn into speculation about who said what. Doing that will be the quickest way to destroy the credibility of the survey process.

Give Tradie HR a call to help build your next engagement survey to unlock all of the real answers of your people.

Note: This article is not intended to be a replacement for legal advice.

Building Consents Information

For All Authorisations, January 2021

Dwellings	\$1,241,919,000
Domestic Outbuildings	\$13,173,000
Total Residential	\$1,255,092,000
Non-residential	\$481,842,000
Total All Buildings	\$1,736,934,000
Non-building Construction	\$23,644,000
Total Authorisations	\$1,760,578,000

Number of new dwellings consented

	Jan 2021	Dec 2020	Jan 2020		Jan 2021	Dec 2020	Jan 2020
Far North District	29	32	16	Horowhenua District	12	20	21
Whangarei District	52	75	20	Kapiti Coast District	23	21	15
Kaipara District	16	23	4	Porirua City	17	39	36
Rodney District	67	76	54	Upper Hutt City	27	11	17
North Shore/Albany Wards	281	177	188	Lower Hutt City	74	131	36
Waitakere Ward	166	141	107	Wellington City	20	154	76
Auckland Wards	526	491	148	Masteron District	43	14	7
Manukau/Howick Wards	179	420	211	Carterton District	6	8	12
Manurewa-Papakura Ward	114	213	123	South Wairarapa District	23	9	1
Franklin Ward	77	71	119	Tasman District	29	25	30
Thames-Coromandel District	26	25	20	Nelson City	12	23	56
Hauraki District	2	7	9	Marlborough District	14	21	21
Waikato District	71	80	58	Kaikoura District	1	3	6
Matamata-Piako District	15	14	19	Buller District	6	5	10
Hamilton City	121	115	58	Grey District	2	1	1
Waipa District	26	58	54	Westland District	5	2	1
Otorohanga District	5	5	3	Hurunui District	9	11	4
South Waikato District	2	5	2	Waimakariri District	42	47	52
Waitomo District	1	2	0	Christchurch City	237	234	245
Taupo District	26	26	18	Selwyn District	109	155	123
Western Bay of Plenty District	32	51	10	Ashburton District	12	16	10
Tauranga City	101	222	115	Timaru District	7	23	20
Rotorua District	13	19	9	Mackenzie District	5	7	6
Whakatane District	6	7	5	Waimate District	2	3	2
Kawerau District	4	2	6	Chatham Islands Territory	0	5	0
Opotiki District	1	4	1	Waitaki District	4	14	5
Gisborne District	9	9	6	Central Otago District	14	12	21
Wairoa District	1	2	0	Queenstown-Lakes District	52	75	80
Hastings District	40	38	55	Dunedin City	44	48	25
Napier City	23	9	21	Clutha District	5	7	7
Central Hawke's Bay District	15	2	10	Southland District	8	14	8
New Plymouth District	32	58	45	Gore District	3	3	2
Stratford District	0	3	2	Invercargill City	15	29	16
South Taranaki District	5	7	5	Area Outside TA	0	0	0
Ruapehu District	0	6	3				
Whanganui District	12	13	7	Total	3025	3751	2564
Rangitikei District	4	7	4				
Manawatu District	12	12	18				
Palmerston North City	29	33	34				
Taranaki District	2	1	5				

- Based on 2006 census areas
- Each dwelling unit in a housing project is counted separately
- Figures in these tables may differ from published statistics

Source: Statistics New Zealand

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Congratulations go to Lloyd James, Craig Harvey and Greg Richardson, who have each won a pair of Grisport Monza Zip boots from last month's competition.

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