

Mark Meldrum
Executive Director Land Services
GPO Box 1680
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Australia

8 April 2021

Dear Mark,

RE: Building Reform Consultation: Continuing Professional Development

This letter is a submission for the Northern Territory Government's request for feedback to develop priority reforms that target continuing professional development (CPD) for building practitioners.

About Engineers Australia

Engineers Australia is the peak body of the engineering profession in Australia. We are a professional association with about 100,000 individual members, including over 950 in the Northern Territory. Established in 1919, Engineers Australia is a not-for-profit organisation, constituted by Royal Charter to advance the science and practice of engineering for the benefit of the community.

Engineers Australia maintains national professional standards, benchmarked against international norms. As Australia's signatory to the International Engineering Alliance, this includes accreditation of undergraduate university engineering programs. Furthermore, Engineers Australia manages Australia's largest voluntary register for engineers, the National Engineering Register (NER). A condition of registration on the NER is that engineers must maintain currency with CPD.

The following are responses to each set of questions posed in the consultation paper.

1. Is it reasonable for building practitioners' registration to be renewed irrespective of meeting CPD requirements within the first two years of the scheme? What other approaches to implementation should be considered?

Responsible engineers should already be undertaking a personal CPD program, even if there is no statutory requirement to do so. However, recognising that the NT has not had a legal requirement for CPD, it may be reasonable to allow applicants to be registered on a provisional basis for one year.

At the time of registration renewal and conversion to non-provisional status, the applicant should demonstrate compliance with the CPD requirements.

2. Should the NT CPD structure include only compulsory CPD activities, only elective or a combination of both? Should the NT CPD structure include the option of approving and recognising other CPD schemes?

The NT CPD structure could include some compulsory topics, but the majority should be left to the individual's discretion, based on their developmental needs. This should, however, be within a framework where the types of CPD to be completed is stated.

Any compulsory component could include knowledge of the NCC and any reference documents, relevant Acts and Regulations, and training for effective site inspections and commissioning.

Recognition of other CPD schemes (such as Engineers Australia's CPD scheme for engineers on the National Engineering Register and Chartered engineers) is appropriate as it would eliminate the need for an NT-registered engineer to comply with two separate CPD schemes.

The overarching advice has been that any CPD scheme implemented in the Northern Territory should include auditing, to ensure compliance.

3. Are you aware of areas of poor performance or non-compliance in the NT that could benefit from building practitioners participating in professional development? Do you have suggestions of course/CPD activity topics that could improve compliance to the NCC or improve construction in the NT?

Yes, Engineers Australia is aware of poor performance in the NT that could benefit from building practitioners participating in professional development, particularly in the case of building delivery.

Suggested topics that may assist or enhance knowledge in the following areas may improve construction in the Northern Territory

- Energy Efficiency
- Compliant Documentation, including sufficient detail
- Environmental & Chemical Safety
- Work Health Safety Processes (Safe Work Method Statement etc)
- Business & Management Skills

4. What CPD content subject areas should be accepted in a NT CPD scheme? Are there particular subjects that should be compulsory?

Whilst most CPD content should be driven by the individual, it does need to be within a framework that guides the individual to ensure the CPD undertaken is relevant. For example, engineers who are on the National Engineering Register (NER)—a voluntary registration scheme for engineers across Australia—must document a minimum of 150 hours of structured CPD over a three-year period, of which:

- at least 50 hours must relate to the engineer's area(s) of practice.
- at least 10 hours must cover risk management.
- at least 15 hours must address business and management skills.
- the remainder must cover a range of activities relevant to the engineer's career and interests.

5. What types of CPD activities should be included in a NT CPD scheme?

The following CPD program activities are commonly undertaken by engineers and considered suitable by Engineers Australia: attending conferences, seminars, training courses, giving presentations, and going on relevant site visits. It is also reasonable for there to be a component of reading industry journals, and formal study.

Less obvious, but nonetheless suitable options include participating in industry and volunteer committees, as well as mentoring activities. CPD is also achievable by presenting papers at conferences and seminars and writing articles for journals.

It is often forgotten that an engineer's own workplace offers suitable opportunities for CPD. These include learning new software or codes, in-house presentations, implementing/creating new systems and ways of conducting business and research activities.

Non-engineering related activities are also important. Participation in community committees can give valuable skills in communication, business management and risk management.

6. Should NT specific courses have higher points rating? If so, why? Should practitioners be able to carry over points to subsequent years or registration periods?

No, but the Government may choose to make a selection of NT-specific activities compulsory or require a certain proportion of annual CPD activities to be NT-specific.

The carry-over of CPD points to subsequent years should not be allowed. Professional Development provides maximum benefit if undertaken continuously and so allowing an engineer to batch their CPD is unlikely to produce an optimal outcome.

7. If practitioners fail to comply with the proposed CPD requirements for registration renewal, should individual circumstances be considered and if so how?

Yes, but the individual should be required to apply for assessment of their circumstances before a waiver for CPD in that year is approved.

Thank you for considering this submission. If you would like to discuss the issues raised in more detail, please contact me on KQuinn@engineersaustralia.org.au or 0439 659 050.

Kind Regards,



Keely Quinn

General Manager Northern Division