

Design and Building Practitioners Regulation 2020 - Stakeholder Feedback

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I am a Principal level Engineering Geologist working for SMEC, having previously worked for PSM and Golder. I am also a member of the Australian Geomechanics Society (AGS). My early years at PSM included many building foundation inspections, including site investigations, approval of foundation design being achieved and testing of foundation soundness. This field experience enabled me to have an understanding of rock properties that have been subsequently used in design on other projects and enabled me to provide clear communication of site conditions to Engineers responsible for detailed design. Engineering geologists are fundamental in the investigation and approval phases for building foundation design and to be excluded from this work would be detrimental to the industry. I recognise industry is considering registration to ensure building and design practitioners are suitable qualified above and beyond university accreditation, however, Engineering Geologists need to be included in the list of those able to apply for registration.

Projects benefit from the experience and technical understanding of both Geotechnical Engineers and Engineering Geologists. There is significant cross-over between the two fields.

It is my understanding that there has been no provision for Engineering Geologists to be included as part of the draft Design and Building Practitioners Regulation. As such, no matter how experienced, an Engineering Geologist, like myself will be precluded from being able to sign or participate in design compliance declarations for multi-storey, multi-unit residential apartment buildings.

While I recognise recent issues with building quality is the catalyst for this Regulation change, I feel exclusion of Engineering Geologists from design compliance teams will be detrimental to the industry.

As such for the Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) question 5 – I recommend the inclusion of an additional category of Design Practitioner: Design Practitioner – Engineering Geologist. I then defer to question 7, that the present draft regulations omit Design Practitioner – Engineering Geologist and that this needs to be included.

Other parties such as the NSW Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources in their Geotechnical Policy Kosciuszko Alpine Resorts recognise Engineering Geologists.

With respect to question 11, I would support Pathway 3 in the near future to cater for engineering geologists.

There are three Australian professional bodies which could provide professional accreditation for engineering geologists in the near future: the Geological Society of Australia (GSA), the Australian Institute of Geoscientists (AIG) and AusIMM (Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy).

Regards,

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SMEC