

Cautionary Note 5: Service Ethic

The NZRAB has recently dealt with a complaint that has revealed in essence an architect's failure to bring an appropriate service ethic to their practise of architecture.

The architect was commissioned to design a house, a design was prepared, and both resource and building consents were obtained.

Surveyors engaged to set out the works on site soon realised that the height in relation to the boundaries were shown incorrectly in the consented documents. The architect responded that there was no issue, so long as the construction complied with the issued resource consent and building consent.

Further investigation from independent surveyors, commissioned and paid for by the client, confirmed the error. Still the architect was in denial.

When neighbours refused to consent to the extent of the encroachment now identified, the owner was faced with a redesign, new documentation and new consents, and having lost faith in the original architect, commissioned another to undertake the work.

Separate to this, the architect's terms of appointment stated that the architect had a specific level of PI insurance cover which wasn't true. The architect in fact had no cover at all.

Overall, the client suffered a failure of service. We all need to remember: "Do as you would be done by." How would we feel, if we had been the client?

The lesson here is that a professional cannot wash his or her hands of an issue just because somewhere else there's been an official sanction, i.e. a consent. A professional's duty is to protect his or her client, and to resolve issues.

And, absolutely, terms of appointment have to be accurate and they have to be honoured.



Warwick Bell
Chair

10 June 2015