

THE IMPORTANCE OF CHARTERED STATUS

I was recently on holiday in the UK and was dismayed to be told by a long-term associate that, certainly in some areas of the UK, "certifying engineers" no longer need to be CEng. I have also found this to be the case in Australia (Victoria). This led me to conclude that there is real evidence that society has lost faith in "Chartered Persons" (CP) for all disciplines in the building industry. I have expressed my concern to IEAust, IStructE and the Building Commissioner for New South Wales.

I suggest we all know the cause of the problem but seem to be in denial. It dates back to the 1980s, in particular, the introduction of "Design and Construct" contracts. The chartered fraternity in Architecture and different Engineering disciplines has never come to terms with the contractual conflict created with chartered status i.e., working for the builder and not for the Client. I remind everybody that "chartered" status means "integrity, acting without compromise in the interest of all parties involved in a project". Client, Builder, Society and Eventual Owner. 90% of the problem is concerned with lack of attendance on site. Design certification is easy enough because it relates to paper. As-built certification is the only meaningful certification, and it has no meaning if all works are not inspected to an acceptable standard.

Prior to 1980, all projects of significance size involved a "Clerk of Works" (COW) for architectural work and a "Resident Engineer" for the different engineering disciplines. The DBPA is a positive introduction to achieve a better standard of design, but it is only half complete as it stands. The legislation needs to include far more actual definition of what is required for site services. The recent reintroduction of brick facades for high-rise residential buildings makes a full-time COW (working for the Architect) essential to inspect the quality of all works associated with the brickwork.

When I look at the training that I received in 1970 to obtain Chartered status in 1978 and compare it with the training given to graduates today, there is no comparison. The lack of training in our industry is deplorable. It is further accentuated by the change in teaching methods in schools and universities. The inability of far too many graduates 2022 to be able to neatly handwrite, draw by hand and design without computers is also unacceptable. When you add these problems to the fact that graduate engineers do not go to site often enough because there are no site inspections services of any real significance, it is a sorrowful picture of a general decline in our standards.

Chartered persons need to stand up and drive change in the industry through their institutions around the world to remind society that we are not prepared to allow the continuing erosion of standards in the industry to continue.



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