VBA issues occupancy permit for Moscow Circus big top

The Victorian Building Authority (VBA) today issued an occupancy permit for the Great Moscow Circus’ big top at St Kilda after the circus operators provided the correct documentation to the authority.

On Friday, 6 May, the VBA was unable to issue a new occupancy permit for a tent erected at Jacka Boulevard, St Kilda, as circus management could not satisfy the VBA that the structure, a replacement tent, met engineering standards to ensure public safety.

The VBA said the size of the tent and its siting in an area other than was specified in the engineering design, was not in accordance with the occupancy permit that had been issued.

In the interests of patron, public and staff safety regarding wind tolerance of the structure, the VBA had no choice but to refuse to issue an occupancy permit. The Bureau of Meteorology subsequently reported winds gusting up to 76 km/h at St Kilda Harbour on Monday and routinely above 40 km/h in recent days.

The circus operators have now provided the VBA with the required documentation, including engineering design. The required engineering standards have been satisfied and the occupancy permit has been issued, clearing the path for the City of Port Phillip, the responsible local authority, to issue a Place of Public Entertainment Occupancy Permit – and the show can go on.

An occupancy permit signifies that the VBA is satisfied the design of the structure is suitable for occupation when erected in accordance with the conditions of the occupancy permit.

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The VBA and prescribed temporary structures

The VBA, which is the regulator of the Victorian building and plumbing industries, is the relevant authority under section 53 of the Building Act 1993 (the Act) for obtaining an occupancy permit for a prescribed temporary structure, which is often used at major events and can be a tent or marquee, a performing stage or seating stands. There are a number of conditions on occupancy permits for prescribed temporary structures, including:

- Maximum number of occupants
- Location (Terrain Category and Region)
- Maximum wind speed for occupation
- Minimum hold down / weighting requirements
- Fire safety equipment
- Public toilet facilities

The VBA’s role is to assess applications against the requirements in the Australian Building Codes Board’s Temporary Structure Standard (introduced in August 2015), along with relevant referenced standards and sections in the National Construction Code (NCC).