VBA Annual Report highlights results of proactive regulation

The Victorian Building Authority’s (VBA) 2015-16 Annual Report, tabled in State Parliament on Tuesday, 11 October 2016, highlights that amongst other things, a new Proactive Inspections Program designed to improve safety and quality outcomes inspected 341 sites in its first six months of operation.

The Proactive Inspections Program was introduced by the VBA to address any issues with building work early in a project’s life with the aim of minimising future complaints. Under the program, VBA inspectors visit building sites to engage with the relevant building surveyor and builder. They inspect building work against the relevant legislation, regulations, codes, standards and guidelines and building practitioners are supported to ensure work complies. The VBA anticipates 1600 inspections will be conducted under the program in 2016-17.

The VBA also carried out 1,368 investigations into building and plumbing work in 2015-16, with 110 building and plumbing practitioner disciplinary hearings conducted by the Building Practitioners Board (BPB) and the VBA. Sixty-seven registered and unregistered building and plumbing practitioners were prosecuted and 2,061 rectification orders and notices were issued to plumbing practitioners.

The report highlights four major pieces of work for the VBA in 2015-16 as:
- the audit of external wall cladding of some 168 high rise buildings, which was an outcome of the Lacrosse Apartments fire investigation in December 2014;
- implementation of a new registration and licensing process for plumbers and builders;
- delivery of the Victorian Government’s legislative reforms, with the first phase implemented on 4 July 2016; and
- implementation of the ‘Building Confidence’ brand strategy, designed to increase community understanding of the VBA’s core regulatory role.

An additional outcome of the Lacrosse Apartments fire was a VBA investigation into the conduct of the practitioners involved in the construction – three were referred to the BPB for discipline and the architect was referred to the Architects Registration Board of Victoria, the regulatory body for architects.

One of the VBA’s functions is to conduct research relating to the regulation of the building and plumbing industries. During the year the VBA Board approved a research program that includes work to reduce the risk associated with non-conforming building products.

The Annual Report shows that the VBA continued to work closely with stakeholders through its regular Stakeholder Reference Group meetings and with local government and its regulatory partners. A statement of intent was signed with Consumer Affairs Victoria, to ensure the two organisations provide consistent information on the regulatory framework for domestic building to practitioners and consumers. In addition, the VBA was involved in the Building Construction Advisory Panel established by the Emergency Management Commissioner to provide advice on rebuilding after the Separation Creek and Wye River bushfires of Christmas 2015.

For more information, read the VBA 2015-16 Annual Report at http://www.vba.vic.gov.au/about/annual-reports

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