

CLIENT COMMUNIQUÉ

SERVICE EXPANSION CLERK OF WORKS

THE CLERK OF WORKS OFFERING AT EPM

A typical construction project involves hundreds of people including consultants, authorities, builders, tradesmen, manufacturers, and suppliers. Construction is heavily regulated through the National Construction Code that also incorporates Australian Standards. Why is it then that poor quality in construction is prevalent in so many buildings, so much so that government has had to introduce even stricter regulations to address the most concerning kinds of defects involving building structures, fire safety and water proofing.

However, unlike all others, the Clerk of Works (CoW) is singularly focused on being the eyes and ears of a client on matters of quality control. As the CoW does not prepare design or undertake building work, the CoW can be truly independent in identifying quality issues because they are not defending their own work. The CoW does this by regularly and systematically inspecting building work to proactively identify quality issues before they are covered up to avoid defects in completed work, sometimes not becoming apparent until years after a building has been completed.

Whilst a core service of EPM is Project Management, we also offer a wide range of Building Advisory Services including the CoW.

(a) What is the benefit to a client of Clerk of Works?

Builders and their trade contractors are more proactive in building good quality work and maintaining genuine quality inspection records. Quality issues are identified early, which avoids defects in completed work and quality issues surfacing years after a building is completed. (Note: some sample defects are appended to this communiqué). Considering the significant cost to a builder to fix defects, particularly after a building is completed, many astute builders will welcome the involvement of a CoW.

(b) What type and size of project should consider the appointment of a Clerk of Works?

The operational and cost impact to rectify quality issues, particularly after a building has been completed, can be significant no matter the size of the project. While there is a cost for a CoW, this should be weighed up against the potential risk of quality issues that may otherwise go undetected.

(c) What is the difference between the role of the Project Manager and the Clerk of Works?

During construction, a Project Manager usually fills the role of the Superintendent to administer the contract between the client and the builder, with a particular focus on assessing cost and time claims and directing the contractor in accordance with the contract. The Superintendent will

largely rely on the client's consultants to undertake inspections and identify quality issues, to inform directions by the Superintendent to the contractor about quality issues.

The CoW, however, is solely focused on the quality of building work and is not distracted by any other functions or compromised by a direct relationship with the building contractor, as consultants are under a 'design and construct' arrangement. Furthermore, because the CoW neither prepares design nor constructs work, the CoW is uncompromised in its ability to identify quality issue in an open and honest way.

(d) Is it possible for EPM to perform both roles on the one project?

Yes. This is because the interest of the Project Manager, the Superintendent and the CoW are aligned – good quality building work that is constructed in accordance with the contract, on time and within the client's budget. There are several examples in which EPM has undertaken both roles on a project with great success.

(e) How many times does a CoW attend site?

The Superintendent attends site as, and when, necessary to administer the contract between the building contractor and the client, particularly as this relates to assessing claims for cost and time. Typically, this would be once every few weeks. However, the CoW will attend more frequently, usually several times each week, depending on what is being constructed at the time.

(f) Does EPM have the experience needed to perform the role?

Ironically, the laws that have been introduced in NSW over the last few years to deal with quality issues may not have been necessary had the government not dispensed with the CoW in the late 1980s. At that time, people with building qualifications and experience were typically appointed as the CoW. Today, EPM employs people who have the equivalent qualifications and experience to provide our CoW service.

Buildings that are built to last will naturally cost less to maintain and operate. Poor quality building work is a liability and a safety risk. The focus on good quality building can avoid disasters and nasty surprises down the track and, for this reason, clients should consider the involvement of a Clerk of Works on their projects. If this is something that you are interested in, then we would be more than happy to discuss this with you further, and to provide a detailed scope of services and a proposal.

Andrew Graham
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epm
projects

SAMPLE DEFECTS

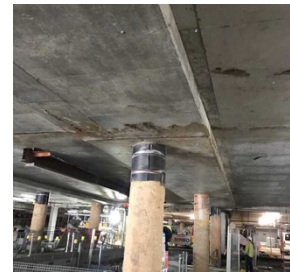
ISSUE

SAMPLE

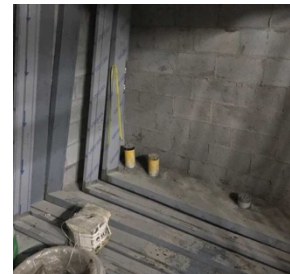
Membrane dislodged from pile wall. If not rectified this will reduce the effectiveness of your membrane. Consequences of poor membrane include risks of damage to other finishes as well as increasing likelihood of mould and other bacteria developing.



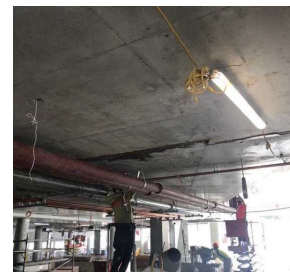
Visually prominent, poorly finished concrete, if not raised early, becomes costly to rectify once new finishes are introduced. Timely identification fosters a better chance of achieving aesthetically acceptable outcomes and mitigates against the risk of added delays.



Pipework for new accessible pan is incorrectly cast-in and will clash with adjacent finishes. This causes knock-on effects to other finishes such as walls, cubicles and create risks to compliance. Identifying these early gives time to remediate.



Untreated joints are a key cause of water ingress and consequential damage to adjacent finishes. Early detection of potential weak points is key to a water tight building.



Poor substrate preparation will lead to issues with waterproofing application and/or warranty. The photo on the right identifies surface debris that, if left in place, will prevent membrane adhesion. Diligent removal and surface preparation will give greater certainty to your membrane's performance.

