

quickly as possible, whilst they are still small. This almost always involves a loss of face by one side or the other, or both. This must be accepted and accommodated, as the alternative is a steady and rapid deterioration of relationships on the project with cooperation discarded. Nothing is more certain to result in an unsatisfactory project for the client and the contractor.

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## **NEW QUALITY ASSURANCE STANDARD FOR THE BUILDING AND CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY**

One of the more tangible and immediate benefits arising out of the Joint Working Party on Claims and Disputes established by the National Public Works Conference and the National Building And Construction Council last year has been the NPWC/NBCC initiative in conjunction with Standards Australia to develop a new Quality Assurance Standard for the building and construction industry. There is an ambitious programme for this project. It is intended by the QA committee members that a public review draft of this new Standard should be available about August 1990 and that the Standard should be published late in 1990 or early in 1991.

Since 1987, AS2990 - Quality Systems for Engineering Construction Projects (which is based on the Canadian Standard CZ2990) has been used on an increasing basis within the building and construction industry.

However, there have been many complaints about the applicability of AS2990 for the industry, particularly due to the terminology and format of the Standard, the consequent comprehension difficulties many have experienced and the difficulties many have experienced in implementation. This is in part due to the fact that the original Canadian Standard was developed for the power generation industry for power station construction projects and not specifically for the building and construction industry.

Since AS2990 came into use, Standards Australia has also published a new series of Quality Systems Standards known as AS3900-4, which are identical to the International Standards ISO 9000-4 series. However, this new AS3900 series is also considered to be not entirely suitable for application in the building and construction industry.

Consequently, the NPWC/NBCC Joint Working Party into Claims and Disputes has requested Standards Australia to establish a committee to write a new document specific to the Australian building and construction industry in "user friendly" terms.

Standards Australia has agreed in principle to this concept. Therefore, it is likely that the new document will:

- be designed for use in the building and construction industry and accurately reflect the industry's requirements;
- be a definitive stand alone document consistent with the AS3900 series so as to comply with the current government policy to use existing International Standards where they are available;
- contain any additions to the provisions of the AS 3900 series considered necessary to satisfy the requirements of the building and construction industry;
- use clear logical language and easily understood terms which are appropriate for and familiar to the building and construction industry;

- be suitable for direct use in contract documents;
- minimize the extent of documentation required for all levels of quality assurance (quality manuals, procedures, inspection and test plans, audits, etc), consistent with the need to provide objective evidence of conformance;
- clearly define the terms used in the Standard in a way which is understandable to the industry;
- be compatible with the requirements for accreditation to AS3900 series;
- be cost-effective and simple to implement;
- address and define the roles, obligations and responsibilities of each of the various parties, i.e. proprietor, consultant, head contractor, subcontractor and supplier, with respect to quality management;
- be drafted in terms sufficient to make the Standard applicable to all parties within the building and construction industry;
- be structured so as to follow the stages of the project delivery process (pre-design, documentation, construction);
- within the quality system, provide a level of assurance appropriate to the function;
- be drafted so as to ensure that the new Standard is compatible with the various standard general conditions of contract in use within the building and construction industry.

### Structure of Document

The structure of the QA Standard is fundamental to the objective of a user friendly document for the building and construction industries.

The Standard proposed will be a single document conforming with the principles set out in the AS 3900/ISO 9000 series and will be written in a similar descriptive style.

Whilst similar to AS2990/1987 in containing 3 basic standards or levels of quality, it is proposed that the Standard will differ in that the classifications within it will generally apply to the particular elements of the project. Thus:

**Class A** in general, Class A requirements would apply to works where the client requires a high level of assurance that the specified quality requirements will be met. Such works would include special purpose elements such as lifts, air conditioning and control systems, fire protection and structural design, etc. or deal with institutional buildings, hospitals or similar special function buildings, or major civil works.

**Class B** in general, Class B would apply to those works where the client will accept a commercial level of confidence that the specified quality will be met. These works would include elements in CBD

commercial buildings, major industrial works and general civil work.

**Class C** in general, Class C requirements would apply to those works for which a quality standard equivalent to that generally delivered by the industry will be acceptable and for which a higher level of assurance cannot be justified. Such works would include general commercial and industrial projects, housing and minor civil works.

A key issue the Standard will address is the clear definition of the Quality Assurance responsibilities of the parties involved in the procurement of building and construction works, e.g. the proprietor, the consultant, the contractor, the subcontractor and supplier.

The document will also give guidance on the selection of the appropriate classification. It will deal with such issues as performance and reliability, safety, durability, cost factors, environmental functional requirements and regulation requirements. AS 2990 has been criticized, especially by the contracting arm of the industries, because the guide which provides for the selection of categories (Appendix B) is not really appropriate to the industry, neither is it "user-friendly".

- **Edited from an announcement prepared by the NPWC/NBCC Joint Working Party.**