

Owner builder regulations...

Tasmania

Before requesting a building permit, owner builders in Tasmania are asked to read the *Owner Builder Guidelines (Workplace Standards Australia)* and to then make a statement declaring that they are aware of their responsibilities and obligations.

Owner builders are limited to working on two buildings in 10 years on their own land. A number of additions or alterations to one house is only deemed as one building. The 10-year period begins at the date of the **Start of Work Notification of the first building**.

Obtain a **Planning Permit** or Development Approval. This process regulates the intended use and development of the land. There are zones such as rural, rural residential, village, commercial etc. If the proposed use falls under a discretionary category, you may be required to advertise the application. Generally consent is granted if there are no objections. In a rural zoning, there is also the prerequisite that a botanical survey is carried out, and in some cases a heritage survey, to assess potential impact on vulnerable species and heritage aspects respectively. In addition, the Highway Authority may have to approve access, and the State Fire Commission has to approve bush fire plans including a fuel exclusion zone around the buildings, and a fuel modified buffer zone beyond that.

If the land is prone to flooding, the design will have to comply with the Building Regulations 2004 (e.g. all habitable rooms must be above flood level). Some areas are listed within flood maps, but otherwise you are responsible for assessing the risk.

Obtain a **Certificate of Likely Compliance** from a building surveyor, to certify that the proposed works are likely to comply with the Building Act.

The legislation surrounding owner builders differs from state to state, and has changed a number of times over the last few years. We will attempt to cover some of the main points, state by state, over the next few issues.

You can use a private surveyor or one employed by the council. If building with unusual materials or methods, it would be worth seeking out a surveyor who has previous experience of them.

Building surveyors usually require a site soil test to be carried out prior to issuing a Certificate of Likely Compliance for the proposed work if it includes footings. The surveyor will also determine if it is necessary to carry out protection work in respect to adjoining properties. They may also require certificates from other specialist areas, such as structural engineers.

The same surveyor will then carry out the required building inspections (typically at stages of foundations, footings and slabs, framing up, completion), up to and including the Certificate of Occupancy; once appointed, a building surveyor cannot be removed before they have exercised all their relevant powers.

You can now apply for a **Building Permit**. This process focuses on the proposed building works. You may need to obtain a **Plumbing Permit**, and if the building is in a non-sewered area you may also need a **Special Plumbing Permit** for an on-site wastewater management system to be installed. Plumbing work is inspected by council, typically at stages of covering, commissioning, stormwater and sewerage drains, and completion.

Once you have all your permits, building work may commence:

- Notify the building surveyor of the prescribed stages of building work to allow inspections
- Construct in accordance with your permit and the Building Code of Australia
- Pay all fees, charges and levies required
- Obtain an **Occupancy Permit**
- Obtain a **Certificate of Completion**

Additional constraints

Timeframe

Once a building permit is issued, building work must commence within 12 months and be completed within 24 months, unless other arrangements are made.

Tradespersons

Electrical contractors must be licensed – see the Electrical Standards and Safety (a division of the Department of Infrastructure, Energy and Resources).

Plumbers or gas-fitters must be registered by the Plumbers and Gas-fitters Registration Board.

Scaffolding erection and tree felling are known to require 'tickets' and the installation of wood heaters and on site steel work may also require these. Where no occupational licensing is required, ask for references from owners for whom tradespeople have worked.

Insurance

You will be required to state that you have the appropriate **Public Liability** and **Workers Compensation Insurance**. You will also be required to provide the name of the insurance provider, the policy number, and the expiry date. In some council areas, construction insurance may also be required.

If you sell your house within six years, you will have to obtain a policy of **Housing Indemnity Insurance**. This will require the house to be inspected by a 'qualified person' and to report on the state of the building. These will include: structural engineer, architect, building surveyor, building inspector, independent person nominated by the insurer.

OH&S

If you hire labour for wages or reward you must be familiar with the Occupational Health and Safety laws and requirements of Workplace Standards Tasmania, for the particular work being done (e.g. rules for working at heights

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National Greenbuild & Eco Show 2006

What a wonderful success this inaugural show was. Held over the June long weekend at the Rosehill Racecourse in Sydney, more than 6400 visitors kept over 70 exhibitors very busy. There was an outstanding range of environmentally sustainable products and services on display.

The building area included: insulation, renewable energy, water management, sustainable design, eco directories, wall products, plumbing, straw bale, heating and shading. Both the Australian Straw Bale Association (www.ausbale.org, 07 5485 2720) and the Earth Building Association of Aust. (www.ebaa.asn.au, 0429 321 104) were exhibitors, and their stands were continually busy with visitors wanting to know more about these environmentally friendly and sustainable methods. Each day ended with a short straw bale wall building demonstration.

The main attraction for many visitors was the seminar programme, covering topics such as: Better eco ways of building, Myth busting for new homes and renovations, Creating an ecological garden, Australia's SMARTEST home, Benefits of straw bale construction, Earth building

technology, Shaping your home will shape your life, How to avoid cosmetic chemicals. Many visitors had to return for a second day to visit the stands, as they found the seminars so interesting that they sat through the lot!

Permaculture North (1300 887 145, www.permaculturenorth.org.au) is a friendly group of Northern Sydney residents that meets once a month to plan and implement projects that raise awareness about sustainable living. The 'show bags' proved very popular, containing sample products, seeds, and a few even contained copies of TOB!

Green living was also well represented, with everything from eco linen through bags made from recycled products to earth friendly household products.

Also celebrated was World Ocean Day (www.worldoceanday.com), with the Manly Environment Centre (www.mec.org.au, 02 9976 2842) putting on a great display. Situated alongside, the new publication Australian SeaChange Magazine (www.seachangemag.com.au 02 4945 3481) drew much interest, providing information on how to appreciate, explore, enjoy and care for our coast and marine environment.



The following stand awards were made:

- Energy Smart Award to Endless Solar (www.endless-solar.com, 02 9557 9422),
- Water Smart Award to Eco Living Centre (www.ecolivingcentre.com.au, 02 9817 4911)
- Waste Smart Award to Trashbags (www.trashbags.com.au 0402 550 653).

The Australian Eco Short Film Festival was also showcased, with viewings each day. The winner was 'Visitors,' directed by Peter C.M. Burton.

An on-site café selling wholesome organic meals proved very popular, as did the Wendy's van situated at the front entrance. Entertainment for the children was both entertaining and educational, and the animal exhibits from Taronga Zoo and the Australian Reptile Park drew crowds of adults and children. Who would have believed you could teach an alligator to stop and lie down on command?

So, if you missed out on this year's show, make a note to attend the next one (8-10 June 2007). Sign up for a newsletter at www.ecoshow.com.au. The Owner Builder will certainly be returning! ■

or with scaffolding). You must take all reasonable steps to ensure compliance with minimum safety standards.

Levies

A **Training Levy** is charged on any building project over \$5,000 and is calculated as 0.2% of the estimated cost of the building, as indicated in the contract or as on the building application form.

A **Building Levy** is charged for building work and related plumbing work with an estimated total cost of \$5,000 or more (the contract cost, including materials and labour). It is calculated as 0.1% of the cost of the work. ■

Useful resources

Owner Builder Guidelines

Download from www.wst.tas.gov.au/resource/bsrbactowner.htm or contact Workplace Standards Tasmania to obtain a copy.

Workplace Standards Tasmania WorkCover Tasmania

1300 366 322 or 03 6233 7657

www.wst.tas.gov.au

www.workcover.tas.gov.au

'Workplace health and safety on residential housing projects' is an

essential read. Download or call for a copy. Building legislation is also available.

Office of Consumer Affairs and Fair Trading

1300 654 499, www.consumer.tas.gov.au
Housing Indemnity Approved Insurers

The Owner Builder magazine

Owner building regs in other states:
#131 - NSW, #132 - Vic, #133 - Qld,
#134 - WA, #135 - SA