

**24 June 2021**

## **An Important Message from the Board of AIBS**

The AIBS Professional Standards Scheme (Scheme) for Building Surveyors will commence across most jurisdictions on 1 July 2021 and we hope you have had time to read and consider the information sent out to members in recent days. In that case, you will understand that all practicing members of AIBS must now become accredited through the AIBS Accreditation Scheme in order to remain as members of AIBS and take advantage of being involved in the Scheme.

All of the Board Directors are practicing members of AIBS, and we are leading by example. Those of us who are not currently accredited with AIBS intend to take the necessary steps to become accredited.

As members, we are in touch on a daily basis with other AIBS members. We are therefore aware of the different topics of discussion circulating throughout the membership on various aspects of the Scheme. While most comments are supportive, we know that some commentary is not so supportive of the Scheme.

The Scheme is a new step into the future and a first for building surveying in Australia and of course, there are going to be misunderstandings and concerns about its effects and how it will work. We are getting in touch with you now through this communique to reiterate the rationale that was behind the Board taking this step and to assure you – the Scheme is a huge and positive step for us all as individual practicing members and for building surveying as a career, an occupation and now as a fully-fledged profession.

Nevertheless, now that the Scheme is a reality, we understand that some members may need a little more time to analyse it and understand its benefits. To help with that, we will provide some further brief information in this communique.

**Why did the AIBS Board work for over five years to make this Scheme happen?** Because for some years now, members have continually expressed anger, frustration and at times despair about the way in which our work is undervalued and even disparaged by others in the industry, government, regulators and the news media. We saw this as a gradual undermining of the status of our role in the industry and, at the same time, some other industry players saw this as an opportunity to try to take over our role.

And if we're honest with ourselves, a very small minority of our colleagues did not do the right thing and the resulting negative publicity around the consequences of their actions for building owners meant all of us had to carry an additional burden. We have lost count of the times that members have said that as a building surveyor, you felt that when you visited a building site you were walking around with a target on your backs. Quite simply, this could not continue if building surveying was to survive, and we were to have a future in our industry. The Board determined that the way forward was to lift our professionalism and to find a way to clearly demonstrate our high standards and values to everyone – industry, governments, regulators and the general public. The Scheme will do all of those things.

The Scheme will bring with it the right for us to call ourselves professionals. It will also bring greater acknowledgement of our role and for those of us in private practice it will lead to a reduction in the costs of PI insurance and a capping of liability.

**Will these benefits become a reality overnight?** No, they will take some time to reach us. We think it is important to acknowledge straight up, that the Scheme is not going to immediately make all the issues the profession has experienced over the years go away right now. However, its commencement is really the

turning point at which building surveying is formally recognised as a profession and from which we can start addressing many of the issues that members have raised with AIBS over the years.

Some are asking **why it took over five years** to get to where we are now. As we advised members at the time we commenced this journey towards a Scheme, there was a considerable amount of work we had to undertake to enable AIBS to become an Occupational Association recognised by the combined Australian Governments as having the ability to facilitate us, collectively as members, being able to self-regulate through AIBS. This is quite a different proposition from being the simple membership organisation AIBS has previously been.

The key area for change was our professional structure which included accreditation, code of professional conduct, auditing and CPD. It is CPD requirements that seem to have generated the most comment. **We acknowledge that some of these changes were not popular resulting in the loss of some members seeking an alternate path of least resistance.**

**The Board does not intend to reduce the standard we have set** and there are some very good reasons for that. The changes were required for the long-term interest of building surveying and addressing the very public issues around professionalism, credibility and integrity. By providing this Scheme the AIBS Board is placing our trust in members to support it and take ownership of our profession to ensure we have a long viable future. We are taking control of our destiny with a scheme that is developed by building surveyors for building surveyors right across the country. We don't believe that any other organisation can go close to representing the interests and welfare of building surveying as AIBS does.

The cost of PI insurance has been a vexing issue. While some may have hoped that a Scheme could immediately solve this issue, unfortunately it won't. However, **a Scheme is a medium to long-term solution addressing this area where building surveying has been vulnerable** over the past few years, as it has done for other professions that have experienced similar issues. We fully understand that some of you want and need immediate relief to the spiralling premiums experienced over the past few years. A Scheme is the start of addressing this issue.

If we don't start now and if the AIBS Scheme is not supported, then in five years' time, we will experience the same difficulties we have now. Without a Scheme, building surveying will continue to be seen by insurers as a high risk and premiums will continue to reflect this level of risk. As a scheme grows, the risk for insurers will reduce through demonstrated high professional benchmarks by those involved with the Scheme through AIBS. Then, as other professions have experienced, the PI Insurance scenario will stabilise. Without a Scheme, we will still be complaining about the same issues in the future.

Once again, we as AIBS members are integral to the success of the Scheme and the more building surveyors who support it, the better the benefits will be and the sooner they will come. We have mentioned the benefits of increased respect and recognition of our work and for PI insurance. We also expect that if enough building surveyors support the AIBS Scheme, it will mean the greater strength in numbers will have more influence for building surveyors in industry and government decisions. Obviously, the more accredited practicing members AIBS has, the greater and the stronger our voice will be when we're advocating for building surveying in all those forums.

We anticipate other benefits in the future. As the Scheme becomes more recognised and accepted, we expect **it will attract more people towards building surveying as a career**. Building surveying will be seen as a serious profession, alongside other professions such as law and accounting, with all the desirability that comes with that.

To underscore this point, **AIBS will be embarking on a promotional campaign** in two phases. The first phase will be promoting the Scheme to building surveyors in both the private and public sectors. In the latter part of the year, we'll be promoting the Scheme and the professionalism of building surveying to other audiences including students and the general public. The promotion to the public will be around **why choosing a building surveyor who is involved with the AIBS Scheme ensures you're getting a real professional in the building and construction industry**, and you can rely on their professionalism, high standards and integrity.

The Scheme is a real opportunity for us as members to genuinely play a role in determining the future viability of building surveying and not leaving this to others including governments and regulators to have full control of our destiny. We want you to be part of the success of the Scheme and the profession and even though in the short term this may mean additional requirements and costs.

As the Board of AIBS, we are proud that the work undertaken by all those involved over at least five years has paid off, and we have delivered on our long-term and well publicised goal of an AIBS Professional Standards Scheme for Building Surveyors.

Please join us in making this a fantastic success from which we can all benefit.

#### **Update of AIBS Policies & AIBS Professional Audit Program**

On a final note as we move towards implementation of our Scheme, a number of updates were required to the AIBS By-Laws and AIBS Membership Policy which has now been finalised and can be found [here](#) for your information.

We are also pleased to announce that the AIBS Professional Audit Program has been approved. Details can be found [here](#). The introduction of the AIBS Audit Program represents a monumental shift in the way we approach the regulation of our professional standards. The Program is also a focal point through which we can all work together to raise the level of professional standards right across building surveying thereby gaining the greater credibility and integrity with industry, government and the public that the Scheme is designed to achieve.

On behalf of the Board, we thank you and welcome your ongoing support and do not hesitate to contact us or the AIBS staff if you have any questions.



**Troy Olds**  
President



**Wayne Liddy**  
Vice President