

Important Member Information

AIBS Professional Standards Scheme for Building Surveyors

The AIBS Professional Standards Scheme for Building Surveyors will come into effect from 1 July 2021 as it is progressively gazetted by governments in each Australian jurisdiction.

The Scheme has been gazetted by the relevant Ministers in NSW, South Australia and the Northern Territory and it is anticipated it will be gazetted in other jurisdictions (except Victoria) in time for the commencement date of 1 July 2021. In Victoria, the Scheme will commence two months after it is gazetted. ***AIBS will provide a further update and confirmation of each jurisdiction prior to the scheduled commencement of the Scheme.***

All of the important information about the AIBS Professional Standards Scheme for Building Surveyors can be found on the AIBS Professional Standards Scheme webpage or by calling the AIBS office.

What does a Professional Standards Scheme Mean?

One of the major advantages of operating under a Professional Standards Scheme is that it identifies AIBS members as genuine professionals in the building and construction industry and AIBS as an organisation with the ability to oversee and regulate the high professional standards of its members.

A Professional Standards Scheme is a legislative instrument that obliges an organisation, in this case AIBS, to monitor, apply and improve the professional standards of members under the Scheme. This reduces the risk for our clients and consumers in general by ensuring our professional standards are of the highest quality possible. In recognition of this, the Scheme limits the civil liability or damages that professionals under the Scheme may incur if a court upholds a claim against them.

For AIBS, a Professional Standards Scheme means recognition by the combined Australian governments, through the Professional Standards Councils, that AIBS is an association with the capacity to regulate the professional standards of our practicing members.

The AIBS National Accreditation Scheme will be the mechanism by which the professional standards of ALL practicing members of AIBS will be overseen and regulated. Therefore, all practicing members will be required to be accredited under the AIBS National Accreditation Scheme.

In return for greater professional accountability, as a member of the Professional Standards Scheme, if you are sued over a project you have worked on, a monetary ceiling will generally apply to the amount of damages that can be awarded against you. In the long term, the intention is to make it easier for you as a member to obtain the professional indemnity insurance you need to stay in business. Please refer to the AIBS Professional Standards

Scheme Instrument for details of the limitation of civil liability in the Professional Standards area on the AIBS website. While this may not be applicable to public sector employed building surveyors, the advantages of being part of a scheme that demonstrates professional excellence are obvious.

Practicing Members of AIBS

On 1 January 2021, the Board of AIBS revised the AIBS membership policy to categorise all members as either:

1. A practicing member; or
2. A non-practicing member

Only practicing members will be entitled to be participants in the Professional Standards Scheme. There is no change to the requirements of non-practicing members who are not working as building surveyors, and therefore, the Professional Standards Scheme does not apply to them.

However, for all practicing members, which means those who are working as building surveyors, there is now a requirement as a condition of membership, to be accredited under the terms of the AIBS Accreditation Scheme.

This requirement of a practicing member of AIBS to be accredited, is the way in which AIBS is accountable to the Professional Standards Council for the regulation of professional standards for all of our practicing members.

In summary, this now means that regardless of the grade of your membership (Member, Fellow or Life Fellow), or the sector you work in (government, private or academia), all practicing members will be subject to the same level of professional accountability through membership of AIBS.

Current AIBS Accredited Members

For current accredited members of AIBS, there will be no significant changes. However, you will need to complete one of two processes prior to the commencement of Professional Standards Scheme on 1 July 2021. You must either:

1. Seek an exemption from the Professional Standards Scheme; or
2. Complete the online declarations to ensure you understand and meet the requirements of the Professional Standards Scheme.

If you intend seeking an exemption from the Professional Standards Scheme, please see the details contained in the section below on seeking an exemption from the Scheme.

If you have any difficulty completing the online declaration, please contact the AIBS office for assistance.

Non-Accredited Practicing Members

As previously advised, all practicing AIBS members will now be required to become accredited by AIBS. The AIBS Membership Policy details the transition process for non-accredited members to become accredited.

Practicing AIBS members working in private practice are generally not exempted from a Professional Standards Scheme and will have until 30 June 2022 to become accredited with AIBS.

For practicing members working in government or academia, and exempted from the Professional Standards Scheme, you will have until 30 June 2023 to become accredited with AIBS.

From 1 July 2021 until 30 June 2023, as part of a two year transition, AIBS will allow accreditation through mutual recognition. Further details can be found on the accreditation page on the AIBS website. In summary, mutual recognition will recognise the equivalent level of a building surveyor's registration in their current jurisdiction to that of the equivalent AIBS accreditation level. A table of equivalent qualifications is provided on the AIBS website accreditation page. All conditions and restrictions on a member's registration will be recognised on AIBS accreditation via mutual recognition.

It should also be noted that 'AIBS accreditation via mutual recognition' may not be accepted in those jurisdictions which recognise or require AIBS accreditation for registration. Members seeking registration in those jurisdictions (QLD, SA & ACT) should apply for accreditation through the currently designated accreditation process and not through mutual recognition.

Application forms for both Accreditation and Accreditation via Mutual Recognition can be found on the Applying for AIBS Accreditation webpage or by calling the AIBS office.

Seeking an exemption from the Professional Standards Scheme

All practicing AIBS members will be required to become Scheme Members unless they apply for and are granted an exemption from the Scheme.

Practicing members who work solely for local government or other public entities and where that entity is not able to meet the professional indemnity insurance requirements may apply for an exemption.

Practicing members who are able to demonstrate that they do not and will not undertake building surveying work, such as academics, may also apply for an exemption from the Scheme.

Practicing members seeking an exemption from the Professional Standards Scheme can apply online via the Professional Standards Scheme page on the AIBS website or by calling the AIBS office, but practicing exempted members should note they will still be required to meet the requirements of AIBS membership and the AIBS National Accreditation Scheme.

Insurance Requirements

The AIBS Professional Standards Scheme is not a source of professional indemnity insurance.

However, for a Scheme Member to be able to limit your liability under the AIBS Professional Standards Scheme, you must hold professional indemnity insurance that meets certain requirements.

An important requirement is that the amount payable under the policy, after legal costs, must not be less than the amount for which liability is limited under the AIBS Professional Standards Scheme.

The AIBS Insurance Standards that set out the liability limits can be found on the Professional Standards Scheme page on the AIBS website or by calling the AIBS office. It is highly recommended that prior to completing your member declaration, that you check that your current policy meets the requirements under the Professional Standards Scheme. You should discuss your policy with the insurance broker through whom you obtained your current policy.

If your current professional indemnity insurance does not meet the requirements of the Scheme, you must advise AIBS via memberservices@aibs.com.au and the AIBS team will contact you to discuss possible solutions for your membership.

Again, it is emphasised that all AIBS Practising Members will be required to be covered by the Scheme unless you apply for and are granted an exemption.

Increasing your Liability Cap Cover

In certain circumstances, a Scheme Member may apply to AIBS for a higher liability cap to work on a specific project and, subject to AIBS being satisfied that sufficient professional indemnity insurance is and will be in place for the duration of the project, the increased cap may be allowed.

The Professional Standards Scheme page on the AIBS website outlines the details and process of applying for an increased liability cap for specific projects. This information can be found Professional Standards Scheme page on the AIBS website or by calling the AIBS office.

Summary

It is with a great deal of satisfaction and pride that the work by the Board and staff of AIBS over the past five years has paid off, and we have delivered on our long-term and well publicised goal of delivering an AIBS Professional Standards Scheme for Building Surveyors.

The Board recognises that there will be considerable changes for some members, and we know that change is not always easy. However, we believe the decisions taken by the Board are in the best interests of building surveying in both the short and long term. This is especially the case given the recent public criticism of building surveyors and the issues

surrounding availability and cost of professional indemnity insurance. This happened as a result of insurance companies perceiving that building surveying was a high risk to them and the AIBS Professional Standards Scheme was our response to proactively do something about that.

We firmly believe that the changes we are now implementing will in the long term be of enormous benefit to the new profession of building surveying. In the future, we will look back on this time as a turning point at which we took a path that led to the next phase of the continued development of building surveying as a worthwhile and rewarding career.

We look forward to your continued and valued support on this journey towards greater awareness of the role of building surveying in the building and construction industry and even greater respect for the work you do.

Troy Olds
AIBS President

Brett Mace
Chief Executive Officer