

Occupational Regulation for Engineers

Summary

On 31 March 2022, the Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) published Cabinet's decisions for a proposed occupational regulatory regime for professional engineers. The Cabinet Paper refers specifically to registered engineering associates (REAs).

- MBIE's announcement is [here](#)
- The Cabinet Paper is [here](#)

The EARB Board welcomes Cabinet's decision to include REAs, which we have advocated to the Minister and MBIE. The proposed regime is intended to provide the public with greater assurance that engineers are appropriately qualified, experienced, and performing engineering services with care and skill. Key points include:

- Establishment of a new Engineers' Registration Board to replace both the Engineering Associates Registration Board (EARB) and the Chartered Professional Engineers' Council (CPEC)
- Continuing voluntary registration for REAs within a separate register
- Continuing protection of the REA title or similar term
- Eligibility rules for REAs and registered professional engineers would be set by the new Board (refer Recommendations 58-65)
- Two-tier regime for professional engineers being registration with licensing for work considered high risk
- Engineering NZ (IPENZ) may provide services to the new Board
- Annual statement from registered engineers and REAs about compliance with Code of Ethics and continuing professional development, such as REAcap.

Cabinet Consideration of REAs

MBIE recognises that the Engineering Associates Act 1961 provides pathways for voluntary registration as REAs for senior engineering technicians and technologists. REAs are qualified and experienced individuals who support or supplement the work of professional engineers as a team or independently.

MBIE notes the number of REAs has steadily declined in recent years and so a stand-alone regime for REAs is not financially sustainable. EARB has had to use its financial reserves for operations and so Cabinet approved a registration fee rise starting in the 2022-2023 financial year.

The Cabinet Paper notes (74) there are other non-statutory means of indicating standards for the work of engineering technicians and technologists such as industry memberships and qualifications. It says that the REA credential is required for only some tasks in the private and public sectors and considers that the risks of such work does not justify mandatory registration.

It suggests that voluntary registration may provide a pathway for those seeking to practise in licensed higher risk fields. High risk fields are not fully defined in the Paper and will be set out in later Regulations.

New Act will include technicians and technologists

It recommends that the Engineering Associates Act 1961 be repealed and that a new Act includes voluntary registration for engineering technicians and technologists in a separate register within the

new engineering regulator, with a working title of Engineers Registration Board (ERB). It suggests that oversight by the same Board as professional engineers may raise the profile of the REA credential and attract new registrations. The Board would develop Regulations or Rules for professional engineers, technicians, and technologists. Eligibility conditions for registration would include minimum qualifications, requirements for CPD and code of conduct (code of ethical conduct). The REA title or its equivalent would be protected under the new Act.

Regime Management

The Minister of Building and Construction intends to assign MBIE to be the new regulator including roles of Registrar(s) and Complaints and Discipline.

MBIE may choose to operate the regime itself, as it currently does for electrical workers and licensed building practitioners. It may opt to obtain some of the services from an existing organisation such as Engineering NZ (or establishing a new non-governmental organisation).

Timeline and Transition Period

Cabinet has agreed that new legislation be drafted with the intent to bring a Bill to Parliament in late 2022 or early 2023. The process to enact the legislation could take a further two years. Once the Act is passed, transitional arrangements may take a further six years to take effect. It anticipates that the current REA credential will be operative until the new regime is fully operational.

Registration Costs

Annual registration fees under the new regime are expected to be similar to current REAcap fees, adjusted for normal cost increases during the transition period.

Further Information

Further information on the occupational regulation of engineers is available on the Engineering NZ website and can be read [here](#).

The Engineering NZ website also has the video of a recent webinar they hosted with MBIE. The webinar presentations, slides and Q & A sessions refer to REAs and can be accessed [here](#).