

# The hard work is beginning to pay off

Our governments are now listening to 'quality benchmark' message

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In September 2014 at the ASI Steel Convention Fabricators Forum we asked the Australian steel fabrication community to engage with us in a leap of faith.

Our ask and it was a not small one, was for those quality fabricators who believed the steel industry was under threat from low quality non-compliant product, imported or local, to support the ASI's work in creating the National Structural Steelwork Compliance Scheme (NSSCS) by becoming certified through Steelwork Compliance Australia (SCA).

The ASI set out a plan that said it would be a long journey before we would/could get client support for the Scheme but it would only get off the ground if we had fabricator support.

Today, our SCA manager **Alan Nightingale** has certified 16 steelwork fabricators and we have approximately another 38 engaged in the process.

The ASI has been working hard on two other fronts.

## Engineers

Our **Dr Peter Key** has been educating engineers on the new steelwork standard AS/NZS 5131 in preparation for its release for public comment early next year. Peter has also been agitating to cut through the log jam at Standards Australia to get this standard out.

## Clients and Government

The ASI has developed a series of case studies showing fraudulent, non-compliant or just plain shoddy steelwork occurring across our country. This has been necessary to sell the 'burning deck' on the consequences of quality failures occurring in private and government projects in all States.

These include:

- A failed bridge truss in Sydney
- Shoddy workmanship on a series of pedestrian bridges in WA
- Non-compliance on a retail outlet in Brisbane
- Defecting of a building in rural NSW
- Quality concerns on a wharf project in Brisbane

The ASI case for a quality benchmark on the basis of risk exposure has been taken up with state governments and departments.

Support has been given for SCA certification through DPTI for road projects in South Australia followed up by an announcement by the SA Government that they will support Australian steel standards and a compliance regime for all Government spends on steelwork projects.

In NSW, similar support at Departmental level is being given for Australian Fabrication Standard AS/NZS 5131 when issued and support for SCA compliance. This was reiterated in NSW Parliament recently by member, **Gareth Ward MP**.

On the broader front, the ASI has represented the compliance case at the building ministers' conference and subsequent investigations and put in a submission to the Senate Committee investigating non-compliant product.

Similar work is also being done in the private/commercial world and builders seeing risk minimisation due to quality concerns being brought into focus through the recall of Infinity Cable from 40,000 homes, and the serious Melbourne façade fire as examples of the growing number of debacles of recent times.

It is worth noting that the WTIA has also been active in the compliance space and has kindly provided a quality report on welding for the WA bridges case study and been active in helping inform the *7.30 Report* story on non-compliant steel that featured so prominently recently.

The objective of a fully functioning quality compliance system is that it rewards the fabricators/contractors that have put in the systems, skills and training to meet the requirements of Australian standards with more work. It also has the opposite effect for those fabricators either local or overseas, who choose not to meet the appropriate standard quality requirement.

Surely this is the way it should be. We are slowly changing mindsets from upfront cost to total value and I think that the hard work is beginning to pay off.