First WA certification spreads scheme coast-to-coast

ASI fabricator member, JV Engineering in Perth became certified to the new National Structural Steelwork Compliance Scheme (NSSCS) in late 2015, the first in Western Australia to attain the distinction, augmenting the current list of certified fabricators to be found in NSW, Queensland, South Australia and Victoria.

JV Engineering is certified to Construction Category 2 (CC2) which covers medium-sized structures like commercial, residential and educational buildings under 15 storeys, hospitals, warehouses and industrial buildings, making the company part of the solution to help stave off non-compliant building products flooding the market that has also triggered a national Senate Inquiry due to report back soon.

"As much as we believe in self-regulation, it is clear that a low sourcing and cost-driven approach has resulted in decisions driven in monetary terms and compliance to design criteria being compromised," JV Engineering General Manager, **Christopher Louw** said.

"An overarching standard is required as customers, engineers, fabricators (and others in the construction community) all need to comply with the same set of rules to ensure the integrity of designs and quality of the final product.

"The implementation of an agreed compliance standard will result in competing efficiently to meet the quality outcomes at the lowest cost which has led to eliminate the many delays, breakdowns and cost overruns."

The 'Steelwork Fabrication and Erection Code of Practice' (CoP), which fabricators are audited against to gain certification, is the primary input to the first Steelwork Fabrication and Erection Standard for Australia AS/NZS 5131. The first draft of AS/NZS 5131 is to be circulated for public comment in early 2016. For Mr Louw, the compliance journey has been a logical progression for the company which already holds ISO 9001 (quality), ISO 14001 (environmental) as well as AS 18001 and AS 4801 (OHS) certifications.

"By adopting the principles of steelwork accreditation in combination with the others, we can assure efficiency, safety while considering the impact on the environment," he said.

He said the culture which has developed by adopting these certifications has brought staff, including management, closer together as a more cohesive team.

"A happy performing team attracts customers and it does make a significant difference in a very competitive market. Efficiency and quality outcomes have cut costs which can and have been passed on to our customers," Mr Louw said.

"Implementation was relatively straight forward since the principles of ISO 9001 and lean 5S methods overlap with the general requirements of the NSSCS guidelines. The control of process with regards to the verification of the quality of steel and staff have frequently been required from our customers typically in the oil and gas sector.

"These controls have been formalised and documented as part of our production and quality control processes."

He said that the most amazing part of the company's journey was that in many instances it already complied with the NSSCS guidelines but needed to document and implement them with the necessary training.

"This exciting journey has also inspired the team to initiate and formalise process within the organisation to streamline the verification of quality and project management workflow," he said.

"One of the main lessons we learned was to document the processes and 'do what you say'. We were not far off the mark but now know it could have gone much easier if we only documented the existing processes.

"A second key lesson was that controlling quality should not be seen as a cost if managed within the normal workflow as you can potentially save significant cost caused by non-conformances and inefficiencies.

"And managing sub-contractors is much easier when proper controls are in place."

Next stop for the company will be re-engaging with the independent certification body, Steel Compliance Australia (SCA) to pursue CC3 level NSSCS certification covering bridges, structures designed for fatigue actions or those as specifically required in authority construction specifications. JV Engineering has also made a strategic decision to shore up its role as a significant player in the oil and gas sector by targeting API Spec Q1 Certification.