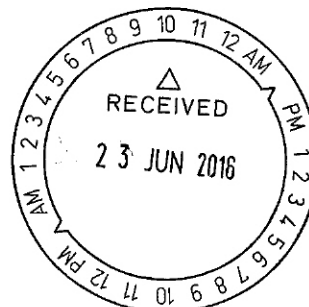




ATTORNEY GENERAL; MINISTER FOR COMMERCE

Our Ref: 44-22129



Hon. Simon O'Brien MLC
Chairman
Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Parliament House
PERTH WA 6000

Dear Mr O'Brien

PETITION 118 – WHITE SET PLASTER

Thank you for your letter dated 11 May 2016, inviting my comments on the terms of Petition No. 118 and the principal petitioner's submissions regarding white set plaster.

In April 2014, the Department of Commerce - Building Commission Division (Building Commission) was invited to join a working group established by the Master Painters and Decorators Association (MPDA) in response to failures associated with internal paint work on white set plaster walls in residential dwellings.

The MPDA established the working group due to complaints it had received against its members relating to the failure of paint adhesion on white set plaster walls.

Whilst the MPDA is yet to provide a report of the working group's findings, the initial tests conducted indicate that white set plaster applied in accordance with the existing standards and manufacturer's recommendations will provide a hard durable surface suitable for receiving a paint coating.

As with any other element of building work, a person adversely affected by the carrying out of building services may lodge a building service complaint with the Building Commissioner. This can relate to the application of white set plaster, demonstrated to have not been performed in accordance with manufacturers' recommendations or Australian Standards.

The Building Commission has received several complaints relating to paint peeling from white set plaster walls. The evidence provided in the majority of these did not support a conclusion that the white set plaster applied was defective. The Building Commissioner did however find that the painters in question failed to carry out the painting work in a proper and proficient manner. As appropriate in these circumstances, orders have been issued requiring the painter to remedy the works.

Additionally, there have also been a small number of complaints in which the evidence has led to findings that the builder failed to ensure the white set plaster was applied in a proper and proficient manner resulting in orders being issued requiring the builder to perform remedial works.

In the two year period ending 6 May 2016, there have been 27 complaints lodged which have included complaints the category of *plastering internal / hardwall set plaster*. Eleven of these were further classified into the categories of *damage and general cracking*. There was one complaint categorised as *plaster not installed in accordance with standards*, 14 categorised as *relating to the finish* and one categorised as *other*.

Based on the above it can be seen that at most there have been 16 complaints lodged with the Building Commission in a two-year period that may be considered as possibly relating to soft plaster. It is noted however that the majority of complaints categorised in the field as *related to the finish* actually relate to surface imperfections and uneven application (flatness).

During the same period the Building Commission received 91 complaints relating to painting work, 17 of which were categorised as *durability (early paint failure)*. Whilst possible that complaints captured in this category may be attributable to soft plaster it is noted that findings in the great majority of these cases have identified that an appropriate sealer has not been applied.

Though the MPDA is yet to release the working group's findings, the group has reaffirmed that the current Australian Standard HB161-2005 *Guide to plastering*, is the minimum industry standard. This standard has been in force since 2005 and has been used by the Building Commission when assessing plastering related complaints. It is the Building Commission's opinion that industry continues to use this guide to achieve best practice when applying plaster.

The Building Commission intends to reinforce the use of this guide in an Industry Bulletin to be provided to builders and painters following the release of the MPDA report to ensure the group's concerns are taken into account in the Industry Bulletin.

From the above information, the Building Commission is not aware of any evidence indicating soft plaster is a widespread issue warranting particular concern.

Thank you for the opportunity to provide these comments.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Michael Mischin', with a stylized, cursive script.

Hon. Michael Mischin MLC
ATTORNEY GENERAL; MINISTER FOR COMMERCE

21 JUN 2016