

14 Jun 2004

To: **All Professional Engineers**

Dear Sir/Madam

PROFESSIONAL ENGINEER'S RESPONSIBILITY TO ACT WITH PRIME REGARD TO PUBLIC INTEREST

In the aftermath of the Nicoll Highway cave-in, there had been several comments about professional engineers (PEs) having to work under pressure from the contractor who is the paymaster or with interference from other professionals so much so that safety could be at risk or compromised.

2 In common with the provision of other professional services, there will be commercial forces and pressures faced by PEs at work. These pressures could exist in every situation, whether a PE is engaged by a developer, owner or contractor under a design-and-build arrangement. However, a PE has an important duty to act with prime regard to public interest when providing professional engineering services. This duty is embodied in the PE (Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics) Rules. The Board would therefore like to remind PEs that technical feasibility and economics are not the only parameters to be considered when making professional engineering decisions, as the need to manage and apply safe systems of work is an important professional duty of a PE which must not be subordinated to management goals, commercial pressures, personal interests or interference from other professionals.

3 The Board would also like to emphasise that a PE is expected to practise within his/her own competency, and in accordance with the PE (Code of Professional Conduct and Ethics) Rules, a PE is expected to engage or advise engaging specialist in the area in which he/she lacks experience or competency.

4 Thank you.

Yours faithfully

ONG SEE HO
REGISTRAR

cc

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