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Good advice essential for homeowners taking advantage of reduced consenting costs

The Institute of Architects welcomes changes to the Building Act to ease consenting costs for homeowners.

The country's recent experience of working from home might be a reason for homeowners to consider investing in some small, low-risk changes, and to take advantage, in particular, of the exemption for 30-square-metre 'sleep-outs'.

"Given the country's current economic challenges it is right for the government to be focusing on the costs associated with building work in New Zealand, whatever the size of a project," says Judi Keith-Brown, President of Te Kāhui Whaihanga New Zealand Institute of Architects.

"While the exemptions will be welcomed, it is important for homeowners to note that these changes are not a permission for lesser quality short-cuts on building code requirements, and nor are they an unfettered 'green light' for building works in your backyard."

"The requirements of the building code still apply, which means homeowners will need to seek good early advice about any project they are considering," Keith-Brown says.

"Registered Architects are well placed to help homeowners navigate the needs of building projects, be it exempt works, consenting processes, building code standards and working with builders."

"It would be a shame for homeowners to misunderstand the opportunity here and create future risks to their properties through unauthorised works or works non-compliant with the building code."

Keith-Brown encouraged the Government agency MBIE to engage early with the industry and skilled professionals, including the NZIA, on the public guidance to be developed for exempt development prior to the August launch of the changes.

“It is important that all homeowners understand that low-risk doesn’t mean no risk. Good early advice and working with licensed professionals, offers homeowners confidence in their decisions and investment, which is not insignificant for some of these exempt projects,” Keith-Brown says.

“New Zealand is still living with the legacy of some sub-standard building works that have unfortunately too often been used for housing. In announcing the scrapping of building consents the Government said, ‘every New Zealander deserves a warm, dry, safe home’.”

“I agree, and the Government must be careful that a well-meant initiative does not have unintended consequences.”

ENDS

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