Dear Members

Accredited Checker System – an essential safety net

1. The main aim of the accredited checker (AC) system, which was introduced following the collapse of the Hotel New World, is to minimize risk of design errors arising from unintended lapses by the design PE.

   a. The Building Control Act empowers the Commissioner of Building Control (CBC) to appoint an Accreditation Selection Panel to assist in the registration of ACs.

   b. The CBC is empowered to appoint a committee of persons and an advocate and solicitor to assist him to conduct a disciplinary inquiry against any AC who is found to have failed to meet the standards of performance as prescribed in the Building Control Regulations or contravened certain specific sections of the Building Control Act.

   c. Since the introduction of the AC System in 1989, it has effectively acted as a safety net to ensure structural safety of building works.

2. ACES presently have a Standard Agreement on the appointment of AC, which is not used by the public sector. ACES has started to review the Agreement and intend to share the Agreement with BCA and other partners in the industry to have a common basis for the appointment of ACs. This would ensure consistency in defining the functions, roles and responsibilities of the ACs in relation to the project that they undertake.

3. The AC has an important role to play in ensuring the structural safety of the building work and adequate time should be given to the AC for this important function. This is emphasised in the circular by BCA. QPs should therefore give adequate time for the AC to perform their statutory duties.

4. The independent review of the AC cannot be compromised, and it is essential that the QP recognizes and respects this role.

5. The review is an independent review of the completed designs and it is a waste of resources if changes are made during the review process. QPs should avoid passing incomplete works to the AC.

6. The Schedule of Payment for the AC should take careful consideration of the resources required at each stage. If the industry tries to push back the payments, effectively making the AC finance part of the project cost, it
will cause a cash flow challenge to the ACs. It is suggested that a standard Schedule of Payment be adopted for the industry. This will form part of the Agreement under review.

7. Actions:

- ACES will review and propose a standard agreement on the appointment of the AC, and have an agreement that will be accepted by BCA and the Industry.

- The functions of the AC are clearly defined in the Act, and the industry should avoid loading the AC with works out of their scope or conflicting role such as value engineering.

- QP should assess the complexity of the project and allocate reasonable and realistic time at each stage of ST submission to enable AC to carry out thorough check of QP’s design of key structural elements. Such checking time should not be left to the project management consultant to dictate.

- ACES will hold regular forums, therefore providing a platform for ACs to express their comments, concerns and concepts. Such forums will discuss on how to improve the system, and recognizing the functions, roles and responsibilities of each professional will increase productivity and cut overall costs.

8. Feedback on Unfavourable Practices

8.1 Some contracts require the AC to include all changes for the entire project.

8.2 AC is required to check on everything including those of non-major structures.

8.3 AC is to agree to whatever time given by QP.

8.4 AC is asked to quote for a certain amount of re-submissions without being given the size of the submission.

8.5 AC is allowed additional claims only when changes exceed 30% of the floor area.

8.6 Some peg additional work on 30% of the beams, then how to differentiate between transfer beams and columns.

8.7 AC (Structure) is required to inspect the site.

8.8 If AC is on leave, a PE from the firm is required to sign first.

8.9 AC is required to go to the QP’s office to collect all drawings.

8.10 AC is asked to liaise directly with overseas designer when the design is done overseas.
8.11 For D&B job where the design is done overseas, AC is asked by the QP to deal with the contractor direct.

We sincerely seek the co-operation of all Members.

Yours sincerely

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President