



The Future of Our Profession!

The purpose of this article is to put into context the role that the Surveyors Registration Board of Victoria (the Board) plays in facilitating the protection of the integrity of the Victorian Cadastre and to air some concerns with regard to the direction in which our profession is heading.

The Surveying Act 2004 provides the framework for the Board to fulfil the role of Government in regulating the profession as a risk management strategy to protect the integrity of the cadastre. The Board licenses cadastral surveyors to accurately determine and define land-related boundaries and provide authoritative advice to the community on matters related to land and development (Annual Report 2007-2008, Surveyors Registration Board of Victoria, p 14).

Accordingly, as licensed surveyors we are charged with the responsibility of facilitating economic development in a society which places fundamental importance on, and is defined by, private property ownership. A competent licensed surveyor has the capacity to provide expert advice in relation to property boundary disputes. Our licence affords us the professional standing to command the respect necessary to carry out such a role.

Graduates need to understand the gravity of the role of protecting the integrity of the cadastre and treat this with due consideration.

Although the Board has identified that many graduates are taking a protracted time to become licensed, it is important to note that standards will not be compromised to facilitate an increase in the number of licensed surveyors; a high level of competency must be maintained. It is up to the supervising surveyor to actively train and impart knowledge and skills to graduates so that they can reach the required level of competency within a reasonable time frame.

In performing my role as the Rural Cadastral Moderator, a number of disturbing trends have emerged which need to be brought to the attention of the profession:

- Over reliance on modern equipment and software.
- Lack of checking discipline in both field work and office procedures.
- Adoption of the same methodology for a cadastral survey as a feature survey.
- Many graduates see the cadastral licence as an entitlement rather than appreciating that it is something which must be earned by demonstrating competency.
- Rather than treating the projects set by the Board as a challenge, graduates are looking for the line of least resistance. It is important that graduates appreciate

that the projects are a form of examination and must contain a **significant degree of difficulty**.

I would argue that our graduates are being de-skilled and short-changed in their training as cadastral surveyors. The responsibility for this situation lies mostly with the supervising surveyor.

The supervising surveyors must halt this decline by instilling in their graduates the understanding that modern equipment and software are simply tools. The fundamental discipline of traversing and checking has not changed, although the equipment which we can avail ourselves has. The general reluctance to measure offsets and close traverses is very disturbing to say the least; independent checking must be built into the surveyor's psyche.

Graduates must gain an appreciation for the limitations of the equipment they are using. Any technician can be trained to use the new equipment; understanding and appreciating its limitations requires the real skill.

A basic checking discipline must be instilled in graduates; they have an unrealistic faith in the equipment they are using, which is clouding their judgement with regard to possible errors in their field procedures.

Graduates need to be taught to appreciate the difference between precision and accuracy. The modern total station is certainly precise, which is compounding the graduate's faith in its ability, but what about accuracy? Has the graduate considered atmospheric, calibration of instrument/tribrachs, human error – setting up over the point, setting backsights, pointing errors, length of backsight etc. The accuracy which can be realistically achieved is entirely in the hands of the surveyor, as it always has been, regardless of the equipment being employed.

As part of their learning, it is important for graduates to be taught the skill of preparing a paper worksheet to consolidate in their minds the adoptions they are making. Software packages are a great tool, but should not replace fundamental training.

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