

Sydney's Opal Tower is a timely reminder

Opal Tower in Sydney fiasco comes as a timely reminder. Image credit ColourByDesign.



In the wake of Sydney's Opal Tower fiasco, the [New South Wales state government's](#) approach is geared toward improving the construction industry and alleviating public concerns by cracking down on private building certifiers. For all in the industry, this can be likened to taking the paintbrush off a

child and leaving them with the open paint tin.

Let's be honest: What is the purpose of building certifiers? They check that the proposed building design meets all the regulations, standards, and building codes for the proposed "classification" of the building. Once the building is complete, all they are checking to ensure the building, in its "finished" form, meets the classification requirements. The certifier will also compile every consultant, subcontractor, and builder alike, that all the appropriate evidence (aka paperwork) stating they have completed their job correctly.

At what point has the private building certifier walked onsite? Unless you are doing a partial handover, they will only come to the site at the end. How is this relevant to the Opal tower in Sydney?

Building certifiers and Opal tower



First, we need to ask: was the building certifier there when the concrete was being poured? Was the certifier there when the precast panels were being installed? It is highly, highly unlikely.

How is this the certifiers problem? Frankly, its not. Who's responsibility is

it? It's ours; we have all done it: didn't blow/clean the formwork deck off properly, didn't remove the over-spilled concrete from the top of that column. And before everyone jumps up and down, I am not saying we are doing a bad job. The Opal Tower is one major incident that has emerged after the handover in how many buildings that we all have collectively built? More than anything, this is a timely reminder.

We all have tight timelines, and hundreds of meters of concrete booked weeks in advance, all while managing teams of contractors to meet these fictitious dates. We have become masters of balancing risk, timing, and ever-pressing constraints of construction. Of course, we let things slide; how else do you build a tower in under 12 months?

Opal tower's timely reminder

It's easy for us to get complacent when making decisions of what we will let slide and what we won't. Just like the guys on the ground at Opal tower would be feeling the weight of their decisions made throughout the project, we, too, have to live with our decisions.

Maybe we have been lucky, maybe not. And with all the quality and consultant inspections that we have to complete on a daily basis, not to mention the



continual re-checking (I know we all love re-checking everyone's work), it's the detail that will always cause sleepless nights.

As the saying goes, "the devil is in the details." By having the person (private building certifier) that has a broad brush stroke being responsible for painting

between the lines will only cause a mess. After all this has blown over, as we are the people responsible for building our buildings, we will have missed the direct government scrutiny, but we will feel the added pressure with our ever-shrinking project constraints.

Related article: [Don't stand on the outside of construction](#)

Original article: <https://thetravellingbuilder.com/sydneys-opal-tower-timely-reminder/>

Image 1: Image by [The Travelling Builder](#)

Image 2: Image by [The Travelling Builder](#)

Image 3: Image by [The Travelling Builder](#)