



**Victorian
Municipal Building
Surveyors Group**^{INC}
Safety • Integrity • Advocacy



VMBSG Mid-year Professional Development Training Day

Practical Enforcement, Real Outcomes:

Clear processes, sound decisions, defensible results

Program

Friday 31 July 2026

|

8.30am – 5pm

|

Rydges, Melbourne

Welcome

On behalf of the Victorian Municipal Building Surveyors Group (VMBSG), we warmly welcome you to today's Mid-year Professional Development Training Day, **Practical Enforcement, Real Outcomes: Clear processes, sound decisions, defensible results.**

We are pleased to have James Cox as our Program Host for the day. We thank him for guiding today's program, supporting the flow of the sessions and helping bring together the important conversations that will take place throughout the day.

Today's program brings together municipal building surveyors, building inspectors, council building teams, planning and building leaders, and other professionals involved in enforcement, compliance and decision-making across Victoria.

With a strong practical focus, the day has been designed to step through key stages of enforcement and compliance matters, from effective interviews and informant statements through to court proceedings, appeals, hearing preparation, post-hearing obligations and compliance outcomes. The program includes real scenarios, case walk-throughs and practical discussion to support clear processes, sound decisions and defensible results.

We are very pleased to have such experienced presenters contributing to the day, and we thank them sincerely for sharing their time, knowledge and practical insights with VMBSG members and attendees.

Today's event is generously supported by the following organisations, without whom the day would not be possible:

- Building Appeals Board
- Maddocks Lawyers
- Russell Kennedy
- Ryt Business Solutions
- Sherwell Harrison Munro Lawyers
- Weir Legal and Consulting

Their commitment to professional development and building safety helps us deliver meaningful learning opportunities like this one.

We hope you find today's sessions engaging, informative, and valuable in your ongoing work. Thank you for being part of the conversation.

— VMBSG Committee

We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the land on which we meet today, and pay our respects to their Elders past and present. We extend that respect to any Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples here today.

Agenda

Practical Enforcement, Real Outcomes: *Clear processes, sound decisions, defensible results*

Program Host for the day: James Cox

Presentation title	Presenter
Registration	
Welcome	James Cox
Understanding the Informant Statement	Mat Sherwell, Sherwell Harrison Munro Lawyers
Conducting Effective Interviews (real scenario)	Stuart Bateson, Ryt Business Solutions
Morning tea break (15 minutes)	
Real Court Case Scenario	Elizabeth Flanagan, Louisa Dicker, and Daniel Silfo, Russell Kennedy
Understanding the Appeals Process	Erin Hill and James Shaw, Building Appeals Board
Lunch break (1 hour)	
What Happens on the Day	Bronwyn Weir, Weir Legal and Consulting
Afternoon tea break (15 minutes)	
Post-hearing Obligations & Compliance	Tara Schulz, Maddocks Lawyers
Panel Discussion and Q&A	Facilitated by Brett Turner Expert panel: • Steven Baxas, State Building Surveyor • Elizabeth Flanagan • Bronwyn Weir • Tara Schulz • Erin Hill
Close	James Cox

Meet the Speakers



James Cox

MBS City of Melbourne

James Cox is the current Municipal Building Surveyor for the City of Melbourne. With extensive experience across both public and private sectors, James Cox has worked in the private building surveying industry with a focus on Class 2–9 buildings, and held senior roles at the Victorian Building Authority, including as a Senior Technical Advisor and Registrar to the Building Appeals Board.

James is a current member of the Building Regulations Advisory Committee and is the Vice President of the Victorian Municipal Building Surveyors Group, contributing to policy and regulatory reform across the sector.



CITY OF MELBOURNE



**Victorian
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Meet the Speakers



Mat Sherwell

Mat Sherwell is someone who knows exactly what to do when your dog's off-leash, your fence is too high, or your neighbour decides their shed is now a nightclub.

Mat Sherwell, Principal Lawyer at SHM Lawyers and a true veteran of local government law - with over 20 years of experience wrangling the legal beasts of planning, environment, food safety, building regs, and, yes, even rogue chooks.

Mat has worked with councils across Victoria, helping them navigate everything from dodgy developments to overenthusiastic backyard builders. He's a master of turning dense legislation into practical action - and doing it all without falling asleep in the process.

When he's not in court or giving sharp legal advice, Mat's busy mentoring young lawyers and keeping the SHM team running smoothly - usually with less paperwork than a planning permit application.



Session: Understanding the Informant Statement

This session will provide a practical overview of the role and importance of the informant statement in enforcement proceedings. It will explore its purpose and legal significance, the essential components required for compliance, and common mistakes that can affect the strength or defensibility of a matter.

Meet the Speakers



Session: Conducting Effective Interviews

Using a real scenario, this session will focus on best-practice approaches to interviewing witnesses and other parties during an investigation. It will cover procedural fairness, accurate recording and documentation of statements, and the importance of cautioning where required.

Stuart Bateson

Stuart Bateson APM is a former Victoria Police officer with more than 33 years' experience in law enforcement, including senior roles in homicide investigations, organised crime, counter-terrorism and operational leadership.

An Australian Police Medal recipient, Stuart spent 12 years with the Homicide Squad, where he led complex investigations, prepared legal briefs and mentored fellow officers. He also served as a Victoria Police Commander and holds a Master of Business and a Graduate Certificate in Applied Management.

Since retiring from Victoria Police in 2021, Stuart has continued his work in training and mentoring through Ryt Business Solutions. His practical, engaging and scenario-based sessions draw on real-world experience to help local government officers and compliance professionals strengthen their investigation, communication and decision-making skills.

Meet the Speakers



Elizabeth Flanagan

Elizabeth is a Partner at Russell Kennedy, working predominantly for local government clients. She advises them on the Building Act and the Building Regulations; in building prosecutions and enforcement in the Magistrates' Court; and in Building Appeals Board proceedings.

Her clients value her comprehensive knowledge of legislative and regulatory enforcement, her efficient and pragmatic approach and her ability to achieve optimal results. She has experience in prosecution, enforcement and compliance for the Building Act, Planning & Environment Act, Public Health and Wellbeing Act, Domestic Animals Act and local laws.

Elizabeth is a committee member of the Victorian Municipal Building Surveyors Group Women's Network and is passionate about the development of women in the profession of building surveying and building inspecting.

RK session (Elizabeth, Louisa, Daniel): *Real Court Case Scenario*

This extended session will walk attendees through an actual court case from start to finish, highlighting the roles and responsibilities of those involved in proceedings. Presenters will share practical insights into what worked, what did not, and the key lessons for councils when preparing and managing enforcement matters.

Meet the Speakers



Louisa Dicker

Louisa is a Partner in Russell Kennedy's Government, Planning and Environment practice. She is a highly sought after prosecutor and legal adviser in Local Government and Statutory Authority matters. Her clients value her hard working, responsive, and strategic approach.

Louisa appears and advises Local Government and Statutory Authorities on a variety of legal issues including enforcement under the Building Act and the Building Regulations. Louisa has also developed and delivered numerous investigations, enforcement and advocacy training programs for Local Government and Statutory Authorities.

Additionally, Louisa has considerable experience as a commercial litigator, having appeared, advised and resolved numerous Court proceedings relating to contractual disputes, debt recovery and insolvency matters, property disputes, and misleading and deceptive conduct. This strengthens Louisa's skill set in managing complex matters and recovery proceedings.

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Meet the Speakers



Daniel Silfo

Daniel is a Partner in Russell Kennedy's Government, Planning and Environment practice.

He has over a 15 years of experience in providing legal services to Local Government. Daniel has acted for over 50 municipalities, both suburban and rural and specialises in all matters to do with Local Government prosecutions and enforcement.

Daniel has extensive experience in conducting prosecutions throughout Victoria and has obtained great results for clients for breaches in relation to building, planning and environment, public health, food, parking, domestic animals and local laws. Daniel also provides advice and training to Local Government on these areas.

RK session (Elizabeth, Louisa, Daniel): *Real Court Case Scenario*

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Meet the Speakers



Erin Hill

Erin Hill is an experienced operations and business leader with more than 18 years of experience across government and residential real estate. She has a proven track record of leading organisational change, improving operational performance, and delivering strategic outcomes in complex, customer-focused environments.

As Deputy Registrar of Operations at the Building Appeals Board, Erin oversees the triage of proceedings, provides operational oversight of the Board's functions, and supports the effective administration of appeals and disputes. She is responsible for driving operational efficiency, implementing continuous improvement initiatives, and ensuring high-quality outcomes within a legislative and regulatory environment.

Previously, Erin held senior leadership roles in the residential real estate sector, where she led multidisciplinary teams, managed large-scale property portfolios, and successfully delivered business acquisitions, technology transformation, and significant operational improvements.

Known for her collaborative leadership style, Erin is passionate about developing high-performing teams, building strong stakeholder relationships, and translating strategy into measurable results.

Session: *Understanding the Appeals Process*

This session will explain when and why appeals occur, with a focus on the relevant legislative and procedural requirements. It will also explore common reasons appeals may succeed or fail, helping attendees better understand how decisions may be tested and reviewed.

**Building
Appeals Board**

Meet the Speakers



James Shaw

James Shaw is a barrister and mediator, and a Member of the Building Appeals Board.

His legal practice is predominantly in building, engineering and construction disputes, and in particular those with a significant technical or engineering focus.

In addition to being a Member of the BAB, James has acted as arbitrator, mediator and as facilitator of conclaves of experts, and regularly participates in mediations.

James has a background as a practising structural engineer for over 10 years prior to turning to the law. As an engineer, James was employed in lead roles on large and complex building projects in Australia, the United Kingdom and Germany. In these roles, James was the lead structural engineer responsible for the design of the Tate Modern art gallery in London and the Australian Embassy in Berlin, as well as senior engineer responsible for a 5,800 seat Olympic capacity underground velodrome and multi-purpose venue in Berlin. Mr Shaw is a chartered member of the Institution of Structural Engineers, London.

Session: Understanding the Appeals Process

This session will explain when and why appeals occur, with a focus on the relevant legislative and procedural requirements. It will also explore common reasons appeals may succeed or fail, helping attendees better understand how decisions may be tested and reviewed.

**Building
Appeals Board**

Meet the Speakers

Bronwyn Weir

Bronwyn Weir is Managing Director of Weir Legal & Consulting – Bronwyn has advised local government building departments and the Victorian Government on all areas of building regulation for over 27 years. Recent work includes the review of the VBA's complaints and investigations practices, acting on over 100 BAB matters relating to the retention of combustible cladding, a review for CSV on fire safety engineers, acting for the MBS at Buloke in relation POPE permits and the Esoteric Festival, acting for Mornington Peninsula in relation to the McCrae landslides. A review for Rural Councils Victoria on resourcing Council building departments.

Bronwyn regularly appears at the Building Appeals Board. She also advises other Australian governments on building regulatory matters which most recently has included a review of home building insurance, new accountability legislation for developers and proposed reforms to improve building product regulation.



Session: *What Happens on the Day*

This session will provide practical guidance on what to expect when appearing before the Building Appeals Board. It will cover the roles of the applicant, council and Board members, along with tips for presenting evidence, preparing effectively and managing expectations throughout the process.

Meet the Speakers

Tara Schulz

Tara is a Senior Associate in Maddocks' Public Law practice who leads the Compliance & Enforcement practice at Maddocks. She regularly provides advice on prosecution and enforcement actions, statutory powers and government investigations, and manages a variety of prosecution and enforcement matters for local, state and federal government clients; frequently appearing in Victorian courts and tribunals of all levels.

Having previously worked for the Office of Public Prosecutions (VIC) and the Australian Federal Police, Tara provides clients with nuanced, pragmatic and expert advice on criminal and civil enforcement. She is regarded as an expert in compliance and enforcement and is often engaged to speak at industry events, most recently participating as a panel member at the 2024 Victorian Municipal Building Surveyors Group conference and making a plenary presentation on Sovereign Citizens at the 2024 EHPA Symposium.



Session: *Post-hearing Obligations & Compliance*

This session will examine what happens after a hearing, including how decisions are reached and what councils need to consider once a decision has been made. It will also explore different hearing pathways, post-hearing obligations, compliance requirements and the enforcement of decisions.



Maddocks

Meet the Speakers

Steven Baxas

Steven Baxas is the Statutory State Building Surveyor and has more than 33 years of Local Government experience.

Steven was the Municipal Building Surveyor at the City of Melbourne for seven years and the Municipal Building Surveyor at the City of Port Phillip for 11 years. Prior to that, he spent 15 years at the City of Monash.

He has formal qualifications in Building Surveying and Fire Engineering.

Steven is passionate about building control, and is:

- An Accredited Member of the Australian Institute of Building Surveyors
- A Professional Member of the Fire Protection Association of Australia,
- A Member of the Society of Fire Safety at Engineers Australia,
- A long-standing former member of The Building Regulations Advisory Committee (BRAC) as appointed by the Minister for Planning, and
- The former Vice President of the Victorian Municipal Building Surveyors Group.



Session: *Panel Discussion and Q&A*

The day will conclude with a panel discussion and Q&A, giving attendees the opportunity to hear practical insights from experienced practitioners. The session will focus on lessons learned, strategies for improving outcomes and ways to strengthen confidence and consistency across council teams.

Meet the Speakers

Brett Turner

Brett Turner has been involved in the Building Surveying industry since the early 1980s, gaining experience in both private and Local Government roles. He's a former President of the Australian Institute of Building Surveyors (AIBS) Vic Chapter, where he served on the executive for over 13 years and was awarded the title of Fellow.

Brett is also a dedicated committee member of the VMBSG and held a long-standing position as Municipal Building Surveyor (MBS) at the City of Casey, before becoming the MBS at Bayside City Council, where he is currently employed.



Session: Panel Discussion and Q&A

The day will conclude with a panel discussion and Q&A, giving attendees the opportunity to hear practical insights from experienced practitioners. The session will focus on lessons learned, strategies for improving outcomes and ways to strengthen confidence and consistency across council teams.



SUPPORTERS

Our Supporters

Building Appeals Board

Building Appeals Board

The Building Appeals Board (BAB) is a specialist expert tribunal that determines matters under the Building Act 1993 and Building Regulations 2018, including the Building Code of Australia. Acting in the public interest, the BAB considers building safety, amenity, energy efficiency and cost-effective construction.

Its jurisdiction under Part 10 of the Act includes appeals, disputes, compensation applications, applications to modify or vary building regulations, access-related applications for persons with disabilities, and questions about whether a design or building element complies with the Act or regulations.

Matters are usually heard by panels of one, two or three members, either in person or virtually. The BAB may also conduct site inspections or list matters for mediation where appropriate.

Once a decision is made, a written determination is issued to all parties. BAB determinations are final and must be put into effect, with appeals only available to the Supreme Court of Victoria by judicial review on a point of law.



Maddocks

Maddocks Lawyers

Maddocks is a leading Australian law firm with a strong reputation for delivering high-quality legal services to government, corporate, and commercial clients. With offices in Melbourne, Sydney, and Canberra, the firm supports clients across a range of sectors including property, construction, government, health, education, and infrastructure.

Known for its deep industry knowledge and practical legal advice, Maddocks works closely with clients to help them navigate complex regulatory environments, manage risk, and achieve strategic outcomes. The firm has particular expertise in planning and environment law, procurement, governance, workplace relations, and major projects.

Maddocks is widely recognised for its work with all levels of government, providing trusted legal guidance on policy implementation, legislative interpretation, and compliance. Its commitment to building strong, long-term relationships and delivering tailored legal solutions has made Maddocks a trusted advisor to some of Australia's most significant public and private organisations.

Our Supporters



Russell Kennedy

Russell Kennedy is a leader in the local government sector. Our reputation is for delivering practical, cost-effective legal outcomes and developing long-term partnerships with our council clients. In fact, in the last three years alone, we've worked with 74 of the 79 Victorian councils.

Russell Kennedy's large team of local government legal specialists offers deep expertise in all local government law: environment, building, local laws, prosecutions, planning, governance, commercial, property, workplace relations and employment. We draft, implement, interpret, advise and enforce.

With over 150 lawyers, we can bring together the various legal disciplines necessary to deal with the many and unique legal issues faced by councils – from small matters to major or complex projects. All sourced from within Russell Kennedy, efficiently and cost-effectively.

At Russell Kennedy, we understand that the strength of our firm lies in the lasting relationships we build with our clients, our people and the broader community.



Ryt Business Solutions

Ryt Business Solutions collaborates with the Victorian Municipal Building Surveyors Group (VMBSG), providing specialised investigative and compliance support to local government building control officers.

We focus on managing uncooperative or resistant property owners, including obtaining and executing search warrants. Our one-stop service includes drafting affidavits, securing the warrant in court, liaising with law enforcement, and collaborating with your team to execute warrants safely and effectively.

Our experienced team can also assist with complex enforcement cases and prepare robust evidence for prosecution or tribunal.

We also deliver highly regarded training for surveyors and inspectors on operational safety, conflict resolution, situational awareness, and evidence gathering.

"I came out of this training 100% more confident as a building inspector and regulator. Fantastic program—all of it."

- Training Participant, August 2025

Partner with Ryt Business Solutions to strengthen compliance, reduce risk, and ensure defensible, transparent enforcement.

Our Supporters



Sherwell Harrison Munro Lawyers

Sherwell Harrison Munro Lawyers is a boutique Victorian law firm providing specialised legal services to local government, government authorities and regulatory bodies. The firm has a strong understanding of the legislative frameworks, compliance responsibilities and practical challenges faced by councils and authorised officers, with expertise across local government and administrative law, building and construction, planning and environment, domestic animals, public health, prosecutions and enforcement matters.

Sherwell Harrison Munro also provides practical training and professional development to support councils in investigations, interviewing techniques, authorised officer powers and regulatory compliance.



Weir Legal and Consulting

Weir Legal & Consulting is a nationally recognised boutique law firm specialising in regulatory, administrative, and government law. Based in Victoria, the firm acts for all three levels of government across Australia, with a strong reputation for expertise in building regulation and a growing portfolio across sectors such as health, education, water, and climate regulation.

Led by Managing Director Bronwyn Weir, alongside Special Counsels Krista Weymouth and Frances Hall, and supported by Administrative Assistant Victoria Whyte, the team is known for delivering pragmatic, clear, and thorough advice tailored to the unique needs of government clients.

Weir Legal & Consulting regularly develops and embeds risk-based decision-making frameworks, supports regulatory enforcement, and appears in courts and tribunals. The firm is a member of the Victorian State Government Legal Panel and the AHPRA Legal Panel, and is highly regarded for being reliable, easy to work with, and deeply aware of model litigant obligations and public sector context.

General Information



General Information

Registrations and Name Tags

All delegates are required to sign in when they arrive at the Training Day. Please visit the registration table on arrival to sign in and collect any event information.

VMBSG members are asked to use their VMBSG member card as their name tag for the day.

Non-VMBSG members will be provided with a name tag at the registration table.

We ask that all delegates wear their name tag throughout the Training Day.

Attendance and Certificates

At the conclusion of the Training Day, a QR code will be made available for delegates to scan before leaving. Please make sure you scan the QR code at the end of the day, as this will confirm your attendance and allow us to prepare certificates of attendance for those who request one.

If you need to leave before the end of the Training Day, please scan the QR code at the registration table before you depart. This will help us record which sessions you attended so that we can prepare an accurate certificate of attendance, if requested.

Certificates for CPD purposes will be made available to delegates based on confirmed attendance.

Pagers and Mobile Phones

Please turn your pager and mobile phone off or to silent mode during Training Day sessions.

Recording and Photography

We ask that delegates do not record sessions (photographic, audio, or visual). PowerPoint presentations will be made available to all delegates after the Training Day.

Exhibition and Resource Stalls

A number of exhibition and resource stalls may be present at the Training Day. These stalls will be open during break times.

Disclaimer

The Training Day program is correct at the time of printing. However, the organisers reserve the right to change the information where necessary, without notice.