

From the Kitchen

16 February 2011



Dear Madam,

I am writing to you as a penultimate resort as you are the CEO of New Concept Builders and you have the power to set things right. My last resort will be to take this matter to the media, but please don't read this as a threat. I do not know if your General Manager (New Housing) has passed on to you any of my last twenty-eight letters, so I will recap.

In 2004 I signed a contract with New Concept Builders for the construction of a new residence on my own vacant block of land. I chose your company because of your advertised claims that you were able to build a house that was stylish and paid attention to environmental concerns. Under the contract the house was to be completed by the end of June 2005. It is still incomplete. There is a clause in the contract for a late-completion penalty of \$1000 per week, which means, on my calculations, that your company now owes me \$27 000 (the contract price was \$265 000 and we are now 292 weeks past the contracted completion date).

The reason I say the house is not complete is that there is no front door or back door and the solar panels and vertical wind generator have not been connected to anything. (Actually, there were at various times front and rear doors, but these have been removed by the contract builder you engaged each time you failed to pay him amounts due to him. We have been without these doors now for a continuous period of three-and-a-half years.

The house is currently uninhabitable because of the recent flooding of the creek which runs along the back of the property. The inundation would have been prevented if the so-called 'flood-proof levy wall' between the creek and the lower level of the house had been constructed in accordance with the clear specifications in the plans. The wall was built, as specified, using hollow concrete blocks. However, the blocks, contrary to specifications, were laid on their sides, presenting an aesthetically pleasing pattern but also allowing water to flow through it freely.

The house was not possible to live in for much of the time before the recent flood, because we have not been able to open any of the windows. As you know (or should know if you have read my letters to the general manager), opening and closing of the triple-glazed, double-hinged 'weather windows' is controlled by a central computer and the locks and actuators and motors require electricity. This electricity was to be provided by the solar panels and wind generator on the roof. As these are not connected ... At considerable expense to me personally, I had an electrician come to connect these to the window system and was told it was not possible without dismantling the walls around all the windows to expose the electronics and electrics for the windows as these also lack any connected wiring and are totally imbedded in the walls.

By the way, the central computer also needs to be replaced as it uses an arcane operating system that has now been found to have serious security flaws and the operating system itself cannot be replaced as it is hard-wired into the computer electronics (don't ask, I don't understand it). I was informed of this by someone from Bramani Electronics, the makers.

The uselessness of the central computer also means that we have no heating, cooling or hot water, despite all the heat-exchange panels on the roof, which, by the way, have all been installed facing south.

A reading of the building specifications will acquaint you with the fact that I opted for a composting toilet which produces methane, which is piped to the kitchen and was designed to be connected to our gas stove. However, the builder installed an electric stove, and the solar panels and wind generators on the roof ... The flexible hose from the vent on the toilet fermenter to the kitchen, while allowing us to operate a gas camping stove, is unsatisfactory and unsafe.

Despite the four rainwater tanks which have a combined capacity of 40 000 litres, the plumber connected the house to the mains. We have plenty of water but, as we have neither useable electricity nor a functioning central control computer, we cannot operate the pumps to water the vertical vegetation walls (part of the environmentally innovative temperature control system) and all the plants have perished. You can possibly visualise what the outside of the house looks like; dried-up compost repository would be an apt description.

Once the inside of the house dries out through the agency of air flowing between front and back doorways and once we have dealt with mould throughout, we can bring our two ferocious dogs back to guard the open doorways, so we can perhaps move back in.

Please regard this as a letter of demand for the \$27 000 I mentioned earlier and also as a précis of the dossier I have prepared for a television station (but please don't regard this as a threat to you or your company).

Yours etc....