



4th October 2017

**Statement to Oireachtas Joint Committee on Housing, Planning, Community
and Local Government**

Construction Industry Register Ireland Bill

Chairperson, Deputies and Senators,

My name is Caroline Spillane and as Director General of Engineers Ireland I would like to thank you for the invitation to give evidence to your committee this afternoon. I would like to introduce Cormac Bradley, a Fellow of Engineers Ireland, who is joining me in representing our Institution at this morning's meeting.

Engineers Ireland is one of the oldest and largest representative bodies on the island of Ireland, with over 23,000 engineers. This membership incorporates all disciplines of the engineering profession in Ireland across industry in consulting and contracting organisations, the public service, semi-state organisations and academic institutions.

Engineers Ireland awards the professional title – Chartered Engineer – the 'gold standard' for engineers working in Ireland. This professional badge of excellence, awarded following a rigorous assessment, is recognised internationally and in Irish law. Under the Building

Control (Amendment) Regulations 2014 – known as BC(A)R, for example, only Chartered Engineers may act as Design Certifiers and Assigned Certifiers to a building project.

Engineers Ireland welcomes the General Scheme of the Building Control (Construction Industry Register Ireland) Bill 2017. During the BC(A)R consultation process, the Construction Industry Federation (CIF) proposed a voluntary register that all the stakeholders welcomed and it was the collective ambition of all the stakeholders that the Register would become statutory even though we knew this would require Government support.

We therefore believe that establishing CIRI as a mandatory statutory register of builders, contractors and specialist sub-contractors now is an important step in improving building control and consumer protection and the ultimate step in the previously declared ambition of the BC(A)R consultation process. We believe that this Bill will help to promote a greater commitment to compliance with the building regulations thereby promoting greater safety and quality for the consumer and the wider public.

The Bill provides for independent and cost-effective oversight. For example, two industry nominees to the Admissions and Registration Board may be ‘registered construction professionals’ which include Chartered Engineers registered with Engineers Ireland. Two such registered construction professionals (not being members of the Board) shall also be nominated to the Appeals Committee. It is important for the transparency of the statutory Register that the other building sector institutions are afforded the opportunity to nominate individuals to both the Admissions and Registration Board and Appeals Committee.

It is our view that the obligation to demonstrate, to the satisfaction of the Board of CIRI, the ability to comply with the multiple requirements of Clause 5(4) (i) – (viii) strengthens the

credibility of the Register and acts as an appropriate deterrent to those who may try to operate outside this regulatory vehicle.

The advent of a transparent and rigorous system of qualification to undertake building works should enhance competition for projects in the sector and will go a long way to ensure that only “bona-fide” builders operate in what is bound to become, for the immediate future, a highly focussed sector as we attempt to redress our housing shortage in particular.

We are not of the view that the proposed Register is either discriminatory or exclusive and that it affords all those who wish to operate in the building sector an equal opportunity to be selected for specific works in accordance with declared expertise and a successful track record of project completions.

Accordingly, we welcome this proposed Bill for the benefits it can bring to the sector as a whole in improving the build quality of projects going forward and the opportunity it affords building owners to engage with builders who are prepared to subscribe to the regimen of membership of the Register. We look forward to ongoing engagement with Government to ensure regulation keeps pace with industry and delivers optimum outcomes for consumers and the wider public.

Thank you.

ENDS