

How to get started in self-certification

Questions and Answers

Thank you to everyone who attended the Plumbers, Gasfitters, and Drainlayers Board webinar on self-certification on Tuesday, 8 September 2026. A recording of the webinar is available on the [Board's YouTube channel](#).

We appreciate the level of engagement and the questions raised during and after the webinar. While we answered some questions during the session, we were not able to get through them all. We have answered those outstanding questions below, along with some common questions the Board has received by email and phone since applications for endorsement opened.

Certifying Plumbers and Certifying Drainlayers are now able to apply for the self-certification endorsement in the Trade Login. Certifying plumbers and certifying drainlayers who want to self-certify eligible work must first obtain a self-certification endorsement from the Board. The [Board's self-certification webpage](#) contains guidance, videos, policies and other practical resources to help practitioners apply for an endorsement and use self-certification.

Getting started

Q: Is self-certification mandatory?

A: No. Self-certification is optional. You do not have to apply for a self-certification endorsement. If you choose not to apply, you can continue working under the existing process, with plumbing and drainlaying work inspected by the Building Consent Authority (BCA) where inspections are required. The endorsement provides an additional option for certifying plumbers and certifying drainlayers who want to self-certify eligible work and are prepared to meet the endorsement requirements.

Q: Do I need a self-certification endorsement to continue work as a certifying practitioner?

A: No. You do not need a self-certification endorsement to continue carrying out your usual responsibilities as a certifying plumber or certifying drainlayer.

A certifying registration and a self-certification endorsement are different things. The endorsement is an additional authorisation that allows a certifying practitioner to certify that specified plumbing or drainlaying work complies with the building consent, instead of that work being inspected by the BCA. Only certifying plumbers and certifying drainlayers who want to use this alternative pathway need to apply for an endorsement.

Q: Can I hold an endorsement but still use BCA inspections for some jobs?

A: Yes. Holding an endorsement does not mean every eligible job must be self-certified. Whether self-certification will be used should be decided as part of the building consent process. If a job is not going to be self-certified, it can continue through the usual BCA inspection process. You should make sure the building consent correctly records how the plumbing and drainlaying work will be verified before the work begins.

Q: How do I decide whether self-certification is right for my business?

A: Self-certification gives practitioners another option for managing eligible consented plumbing and drainlaying work. When considering whether it could benefit your business, you may want to think about:

- the type and volume of consented work you undertake
- how often your work is eligible for self-certification
- BCA inspection availability and waiting times in your area
- your insurance arrangements
- the additional cost of the endorsement fee and audit levy, and
- the value your business places on having greater control over the timing and progression of eligible work.

Self-certification may provide greater flexibility and control by allowing an endorsed practitioner to personally inspect and certify that work without needing to arrange a BCA plumbing or drainlaying inspection.

Self-certification is optional, so practitioners can consider how the endorsement could work within their existing business model and whether the flexibility, control and potential efficiencies it offers would be valuable for the work they undertake.

Q: Why is plumbing and drainlaying self-certification different from gasfitting certification?

A: Plumbing and drainlaying self-certification and gasfitting certification operate under different regulatory frameworks.

While both involve practitioners certifying their own work, plumbing and drainlaying self-certification and gasfitting certification operate under different legislative and regulatory frameworks and serve different purposes.

Plumbing and drainlaying self-certification operates as part of the building consent process. For eligible work, an endorsed practitioner takes responsibility for inspecting and certifying that the plumbing or drainlaying work has been completed in accordance with the building consent and applicable requirements. That certification is then relied on as part of the Code Compliance Certificate (CCC) process.

Gasfitting certification operates under a separate gas safety framework and has its own requirements for certifying gasfitting work.

While there are similarities in practitioners taking responsibility for certifying their work, the two systems have different legislative foundations, processes and regulatory requirements. This is why

plumbing and drainlaying self-certification does not operate in exactly the same way as gasfitting certification.

Q: Who established self-certification?

A: Self-certification was established by Government through legislative and regulatory changes. The Board is responsible for implementing and administering the parts of self-certification that relate to registered practitioners. This includes granting endorsements, maintaining the self-certification register, prescribing the Certificate of Compliance (CoC) form, supporting practitioners, and monitoring and auditing self-certification. The Board did not decide whether self-certification would be introduced or determine its design.

Q: How long does the endorsement last?

A: An endorsement may be granted for up to three years. The endorsement is only active while you hold a current practising licence in the relevant trade. Practising licences must continue to be renewed each year. If your practising licence expires, is suspended or is cancelled, you cannot use the endorsement during that period, even if the three-year endorsement period has not ended.

Building consent process

Q: When can I start self-certifying work after receiving my endorsement?

A: Receiving an endorsement does not, by itself, mean you can immediately start self-certifying work on any job. You can only self-certify work where:

- your endorsement is active and showing on your licence
- the work is eligible for self-certification, and
- the BCA has issued a building consent that identifies the work as self-certifiable.

Before beginning the work, check the building consent and approved documents carefully. If the consent does not allow the work to be self-certified, you cannot self-certify it unless the consent is changed through the appropriate BCA process.

Q: Do I still need a building consent if I use self-certification?

A: Yes, where a building consent would ordinarily be required. Self-certification does not remove the requirement to obtain a building consent and does not replace the wider building consent process. The consent application, plans, BCA assessment and other consent requirements continue to apply.

The main change is how eligible plumbing or drainlaying work is checked after the consent is issued. Instead of a BCA inspecting that plumbing or drainlaying work, an endorsed practitioner personally inspects it and issues a CoC. Self-certification applies only to work carried out under a building consent that allows it to be self-certified. Work that does not require a consent, including work carried out under Schedule 1 of the Building Act, does not fall under self-certification as practitioners can already do this without an inspection.

Q: What changes when plumbing or drainlaying work is self-certified?

A: The building consent process still applies. What changes is who provides assurance that the eligible plumbing or drainlaying work complies with the building consent. For self-certified work:

- the endorsed practitioner personally inspects the work
- the practitioner gathers and retains supporting evidence
- the practitioner issues a CoC, and
- a BCA plumbing or drainlaying inspection is not required for the work covered by the certificate.

The BCA remains responsible for administering the building consent and CCC processes and for any other inspections required for the project.

Q: Will the BCA still inspect my plumbing or drainlaying work?

A: A routine BCA inspection is not required for the plumbing or drainlaying work that is identified in the consent as self-certifiable and is certified by an endorsed practitioner. However, the BCA may still carry out other inspections required by the building consent. A project may also contain a mixture of:

- plumbing or drainlaying work that can be self-certified
- plumbing or drainlaying work that must be inspected by the BCA
- other building work that remains subject to BCA inspections.

Always check the inspection requirements recorded in the building consent.

Q: Can a building consent that has already been issued be changed to allow self-certification?

A: If an existing building consent provides for the usual plumbing or drainlaying inspections, you cannot simply decide to self-certify the work after receiving your endorsement. You or the consent owner should contact the BCA before carrying out the work to discuss whether the consent can be amended or otherwise updated through the appropriate building consent process. The BCA will determine what information and process are required. You cannot self-certify the work unless and until the building consent allows it to be self-certified.

Q: Does the BCA need to know who the self-certifying plumber or drainlayer will be when the building consent application is lodged?

A: The building consent application needs to identify that the relevant plumbing or drainlaying work is intended to be self-certified. If the endorsed plumber or drainlayer has already been engaged, their name and registration number can be provided with the application. If the practitioner is not yet known, their details can be provided to the BCA later. The BCA must be advised who the endorsed self-certifying practitioner is before the self-certified work is carried out.

Q: What happens if the self-certifying practitioner changes during the project?

A: The BCA should be advised so its records can be updated. The replacement practitioner must:

- hold the appropriate current endorsement and practising licence
- understand what work is identified in the consent as self-certifiable
- personally inspect any work the practitioner intends to certify, and
- be satisfied that the work complies with the building consent before issuing a CoC.

A practitioner should not certify work solely because another practitioner was originally nominated for the project.

If the replacement practitioner is not endorsed to certify their work, the building consent will need to be changed to include the usual plumbing and drainage inspections. This should be done before any work is carried out by the replacement practitioner.

Q: Who decides whether work can be self-certified?

A: The types of plumbing and drainlaying work that may be self-certified are defined through [regulations](#). The proposed work must be identified through the building consent process, and the BCA determines whether the building consent can provide for that work to be self-certified.

Practitioners also need to understand the scope and limits of self-certification. An endorsement does not allow a practitioner to certify work that falls outside the legal definition of self-certifiable work. If you are unsure, do not assume that the work can be self-certified. Check the consent, use [MBIE's guidance](#) and discuss the work with the relevant BCA before starting.

Q: Can a BCA decide not to allow self-certification simply because it does not support it?

A: BCAs are required to administer the building consent system established by legislation. The question is whether the proposed work meets the requirements for self-certification, not whether an individual BCA or building official prefers one pathway over another.

MBIE has [published guidance and decision-making resources to support BCAs](#), practitioners, designers and building consent applicants. However, the BCA must still assess the particular building consent application and determine whether the proposed work falls within the self-certification framework. If there is disagreement about a building consent decision, that is dealt with through the processes available under the Building Act.

Q: Do I still need to provide a PS3 for plumbing or drainlaying work that I self-certify?

A: A PS3 should not be required for plumbing or drainlaying work covered by a CoC. The CoC is the formal certification document for that work and must be accompanied by the required supporting information.

Other parts of the building project may still require producer statements or other documentation. Practitioners and consent holders should check the documentation schedule and requirements for the particular consent with the BCA.

Scope of self-certifiable work

Q: Can all plumbing and drainlaying work be self-certified?

A: No. Only work that falls within the legal definitions of self-certifiable plumbing or self-certifiable drainlaying can be self-certified. Some examples of work that cannot be self-certified include work:

- in an apartment building
- in a building over three storeys
- that interacts with certain fire separations
- in certain common or intertenancy walls
- does not comply with an applicable Acceptable Solution or Verification Method
- that is not identified in the building consent as self-certifiable.

A building consent may include both self-certifiable work and work that requires BCA inspection. Practitioners should check the consent and approved documents carefully to identify exactly what can be self-certified.

Q: Can commercial plumbing or drainlaying work be self-certified?

A: Some work associated with commercial buildings may fall within self-certification, but not all commercial work is eligible. Eligibility depends on the building, the nature and location of the work, the relevant exclusions and whether the BCA has identified the work as self-certifiable in the building consent.

Do not rely only on whether a job is described as “residential” or “commercial”. Check the specific work against MBIE’s decision-making guidance and the building consent.

Q: Can septic tanks, on-site wastewater systems, stormwater work or soakage beds be self-certified?

A: Eligibility depends on the particular system and the scope of work covered by the regulations. Practitioners should not assume that all private drainage, on-site wastewater, stormwater or soakage work can be self-certified. Some systems or components may fall outside self-certification or may remain subject to other approval and inspection requirements. Check [MBIE’s guidance](#) and discuss the proposed work with the BCA before agreeing that it will be self-certified.

Q: Can work designed as an alternative solution be self-certified?

A: No, work based on an alternative solution cannot be self-certified. To come within the definition of self-certifiable work, plumbing and drainlaying must be designed to an applicable Acceptable Solution or Verification Method.

There is an exception for on-site systems if there is no applicable Acceptable Solution or Verification Method. This work may still be self-certified providing it complies with the building consent and all other applicable compliance requirements.

Q: What happens if the installation needs to differ from the approved plans?

A: Self-certification does not allow a practitioner to depart from the building consent without following the appropriate process. If a change is needed:

- discuss it with the BCA before completing or certifying the affected work
- determine whether it can be managed as a minor variation or requires a formal amendment
- make sure the change is approved and recorded through the correct process, and
- update plans, as-built information and supporting records as required.

As-built plans document what was installed, but do not replace the need to have changes properly approved. You can only certify work once you are satisfied that it complies with the consent, including any approved variations or amendments.

Inspections and record keeping

Q: Do I have to personally inspect work before certifying it?

A: Yes. If you did not personally carry out the work, you must attend the site and inspect the work in person before certifying it. This applies even where the work was completed by someone working under your supervision.

You cannot rely solely on photographs, videos, test results or statements supplied by another person. Certification is your professional judgement and responsibility.

Q: Can I certify work carried out by an employee, apprentice or another authorised person?

A: Yes, provided the work was lawfully carried out under the appropriate supervision and you meet all the requirements for certifying it. You must:

- meet your usual supervision responsibilities
- attend the site and personally inspect the work
- complete the required inspection tasks
- review the relevant tests, plans and evidence, and
- be personally satisfied that the work complies with the building consent.

An endorsed practitioner cannot simply sign off work without having an appropriate supervisory relationship and personally inspecting it.

Q: Can I certify work remotely using photographs or a video call?

A: No. Photographs, video, test results and other records are important supporting evidence, but they do not replace your personal inspection. The endorsed practitioner named on the certificate must attend the site and inspect the work in person before certifying it.

Q: Do photographs need to be taken directly through the Artisan app?

A: Practitioners should always aim to use the Artisan app to complete the required inspection tasks and capture the evidence needed to support their certification decision. Where existing photographs are used or added, they must still provide clear and traceable evidence of the relevant work. The records must be sufficient to show what was inspected, where the work was located, when the work was inspected, what the photograph demonstrates, and how the evidence supports the certification decision.

The safest approach is to use the Artisan app directly while completing inspections on site so that the inspection record and supporting evidence are captured together. However, if you are unable to use the app due to connectivity or other issues, the photos can be taken on your phone's camera app and uploaded by you at a later time. The [Board's photo record guidance](#) provides further information.

Q: What evidence should I keep to support my Certificate of Compliance?

A: Your records should clearly demonstrate why you were satisfied that the work complied with the building consent and applicable requirements. Depending on the job, supporting evidence may include:

- photographs of work at key stages
- approved plans and specifications
- records of approved variations or amendments
- test and commissioning results
- measurements
- inspection records and notes
- as-built plans
- relevant product information, and
- records of work before it was covered or concealed.

Your records should be clear enough for another competent practitioner to understand how you reached your certification decision.

Q: When must I issue the CoC?

A: You must issue the Certificate of Compliance and provide it, together with the required supporting documentation, to the property owner and the BCA within 10 working days after completing the work. The Self-certification Register is used to finalise the inspection record and

generate the CoC. You must also keep your own copies of the certificate and supporting business records. You cannot rely on the Board's register as your recordkeeping system.

Q: Can I withhold a CoC if the client has not paid?

A: No. Providing the certificate is a legal obligation and is not conditional on payment of your invoice. Failure to provide a required CoC within the prescribed timeframe may result in disciplinary action. Payment disputes should be managed separately through your contract and the usual debt recovery or dispute resolution processes.

Q: How does the CoC fit into the CCC process?

A: The CoC and required supporting documentation must be provided to the BCA. The consent holder includes the certificate and supporting documents in the information provided for the CCC application. The BCA remains responsible for deciding whether all requirements for issuing the CCC have been met. The CoC relates to the plumbing or drainlaying work covered by that certificate. It does not replace the CCC for the overall building project.

Insurance and business systems

Q: What insurance do I need?

A: You must hold insurance that is appropriate for the work you intend to carry out and self-certify. The Board does not prescribe a particular insurer, type of insurance policy, policy wording or minimum amount of cover.

Insurance needs may vary depending on your business structure, employment arrangements, the work you undertake and the risks associated with that work. Before applying, speak with your insurer or insurance broker, explain that you intend to self-certify plumbing or drainlaying work, and confirm that your cover is appropriate for both carrying out and certifying that work. Further guidance to assist with these discussions can be found [here](#).

Q: Do I need my own insurance if I am employed?

A: Not necessarily. However, you are personally responsible for ensuring that appropriate insurance arrangements cover the work you intend to certify. If you are employed, discuss the endorsement and proposed self-certification activities with your employer. You should confirm that the business's insurance covers the work you will carry out or supervise, your personal certification of that work and the types and value of projects you intend to certify. If you or your employer are unsure, seek advice from the business's insurer or insurance broker.

Q: Why does the cost of insurance vary between practitioners and businesses?

A: Insurance premiums and conditions are matters for insurers. They may vary depending on factors such as the business structure, the nature, volume, and value of the work, claims history, policy limits and exclusions, and extent of certification activity.

The Board cannot advise which policy is best for you or determine what an insurer should charge. The requirement is that you take reasonable steps to ensure your insurance is appropriate for your circumstances and the work you certify.

Q: What business systems do I need?

A: You must have documented business systems and quality assurance processes that support your certification decisions. You do not need to buy a particular job management system or use a specific Board template for all business records. Your systems should enable you to:

- identify and manage self-certified jobs
- check the building consent and approved documents
- plan and record personal inspections
- capture and retain supporting evidence
- record changes and BCA approvals
- complete and issue Certificates of Compliance
- keep records secure, accessible and traceable, and
- provide information during an audit.

For many practitioners, existing business systems may be suitable or may only need minor adjustments.

Auditing

Q: Does a Board audit replace a BCA inspection?

A: No. For self-certified work, the endorsed practitioner is responsible for personally inspecting the work and deciding whether it complies.

The Board's audit function reviews the practitioner's certification decisions, evidence, records and continuing compliance with the endorsement requirements. It is not a substitute building consent inspection and does not transfer responsibility for the certified work to the Board.

Q: Can a BCA be audited by the Board under self-certification?

A: No. A BCA is not a self-certifying practitioner and is not audited by the Board as a self-certifier. The Board's audit powers relate to:

- endorsed plumbers and drainlayers
- Certificates of Compliance they issue
- supporting documentation and records

- compliance with endorsement requirements.

Oversight of BCAs sits within the wider building regulatory framework.

Fees and levy

Q: Why is the self-certification endorsement fee and audit levy \$2,260?

A: The total comprises an endorsement application fee of **\$1,440** and a audit levy of **\$820**. The \$2,260 covers the **full three-year endorsement period**. This is approximately \$753 per year.

Self-certification operates on a cost-recovery basis. The fee and levy are intended to recover the forecast ongoing costs of administering and overseeing self-certification, including:

- processing endorsement applications
- maintaining the Self-certification Register and supporting systems
- providing practitioner information and support
- monitoring the operation of self-certification, and
- carrying out audits and related compliance activity.

The Government funded the establishment of self-certification, so those establishment costs are not included in the fee and levy paid by practitioners.

Q: Why are the costs paid only by practitioners who choose to participate?

A: Self-certification is optional and the ongoing costs of self-certification are recovered from the practitioners who choose to use it. This means the cost is not spread across all licensed plumbers, gasfitters and drainlayers, including practitioners who do not hold an endorsement or use self-certification.

Q: Why is the audit levy paid when I apply, rather than only if I am audited?

A: Auditing is an ongoing regulatory function that supports confidence in self-certification. The levy funds the Board's ability to undertake both risk-based and random audit activity. It is not a charge for an individual practitioner's particular audit. All participants contribute to the cost of maintaining the audit and compliance function, whether or not they are personally selected for an audit during the endorsement period.

Q: Why does the Board not charge per job or per CoC?

A: The legislation does not provide for the Board to recover self-certification's costs through a per-job or per-certificate charge. The fee and audit levy are therefore charged as part of obtaining the endorsement for the three-year period.

Q: Will the fee and audit levy be reviewed?

A: Yes. The Board will monitor practitioner participation, the number of CoCs issued, audit activity, practitioner support requirements and the actual costs of administering self-certification. Because self-certification is new, the current amounts are based on the best available forecasts and assumptions. Actual information about participation and operating costs will be available before practitioners need to renew their endorsements and can inform future fee and levy settings.

Further information

You can find further information, guidance and instructional videos on the Board's [self-certification webpage](#).

More information about how self-certification interacts with the building consent process is also available through [MBIE's plumbers and drainlayers self-certification guidance](#).

If you have further questions, please email self-cert@pgdb.co.nz or call the Board on **0800 743 262**.