

DECLARATION

I hereby declare that this submission is my own work and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, it contains no material previously published or written by another person nor material which to a substantial extent has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma of a university or other institute of higher learning, except where due acknowledgement is made in the text.

John Richard Elder

ABSTRACT

The study of employer associations in Australia has focused on the activities of state employers' federations and peak employer organisations in the federal sphere and on the effect on those organisations of Australia's compulsory conciliation and arbitration system. The majority of literature has continued to mainly focus on national employer associations and on their difficulties in achieving national unity due to the differing views of their State branches. Despite their historic relevance, state employer associations that were established during the colonial era have been virtually ignored. Whilst single industry associations at the state level have also had to come to terms with the demands of Australia's dual industrial relations systems, the role of the state systems and of the state-based employer associations appear to have attracted comparatively little academic interest.

The effect on employer associations of the character and status of those who direct and influence their operations has received little, if any, analysis. Leading builders who were the major contractors of their time established the Master Builders Association of NSW (MBA/NSW) during the colonial era, and those that led the association throughout the turmoil of the 1890s, a major depression and two world wars continued to be the leading builders in the State of New South Wales. Following the Second World War, the character of the MBA/NSW changed with the absorption of suburban associations that comprised small to medium-sized builders. That development was compounded by the changes in the size, height and complexity of buildings within the Central Business District of Sydney and in other centres throughout the metropolitan area. Enormous capital was required to fund construction works and large corporations were formed and the bench-mark of what constituted a major contractor was raised considerably. Those events had an enormous impact on the character and operations of the MBA/NSW.

This historical thesis seeks to explain why the MBA/NSW was successfully established in 1873 after two previous attempts; and, what accounts for its subsequent survival and growth. It analyses the various challenges that faced the MBA/NSW during its first one hundred years and the effect on that association of the policies and practices of

architects, governments, trade unions and other employer associations. It traces the 1890 establishment of the Master Builders Federation of Australia (MBFA), the oldest federal industry association in Australia, by the MBA/NSW and its sister associations from other areas of Australia and analyses the manner in which the State-based Master Builders Associations each fought to retain their individual independence and reject any attempts to cede their powers so as to convert their federation into a national centralised body. The need for quick national responses of major building companies during the 1970s was addressed through a composite organization created by the Master Builder movement and the Australian Federation of Construction Contractors due to the continued refusal of the Master Builders associations to cede their powers to MBFA.

The development of the trade union movement in the building industry in New South Wales is also analysed together with reference to the history of building industry awards in this State. The study also outlines the history of MBA/NSW initiatives and policies related to tendering and industrial relations which came under increasing pressure due to legal challenges from disciplined members and to changes arising from industrial and trade practices legislation. The practice of convening tender meetings, the introduction of Builders Licensing in New South Wales and, the origins of the MBA/NSW Group Apprenticeship Scheme are each described.

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LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

ABLF	Australian Builders Labourers Federation – later named the Australian Building Construction Employees & Builders’ Labourers’ Federation - ABCE&BLF
ACEF	Australian Council of Employers’ Federations
ACMA	Associated Chambers of Manufactures of Australia
ACTU	Australian Council of Trade Unions
AFCC	Australian Federation of Construction Contractors
AFCEC	Australian Federation of Civil Engineering Contractors
AIB	Australian Institute of Builders
AIF	Australian Imperial Force
AIQS	Australian Institute of Quantity Surveyors
ALP	Australian Labor Party
ASC&J	Amalgamated Society of Carpenters and Joiners
AWC	Allied Works Council
BATA	Builders’ and Allied Trades Association
BEG	Building Employers’ Group
BIAC	Building Industry Advisory Council
BIC	Building Industry Congress of NSW
BLB	Builders’ Licensing Board
BTC	Building Trades Council
BTG	Building Trades Group
BWIU	Building Workers Industrial Union
BCA/NSW	Builders & Contractors Association of NSW
CAI	Confederation of Australian Industry
CCC	Civil Construction Corps
CES	Commonwealth Employment Service
CPA	Communist Party of Australia
CRTS	Commonwealth Reconstruction Training Scheme

FBCA	Federated Builders & Contractors Association of Australasia
FEDFA	Federated Engine Drivers & Firemen's Association
FMBA	Federated Master Builders Association of Australasia – and from 1925 Federated Master Builders Association of Australia
HIA	Housing Industry Association
IPC	Industrial Policy Committee
Labor Council	Labor Council of NSW
MBA/NSW	Master Builders Association of NSW
MBAV	Master Builders Association of Victoria
MBFA	Master Builders Federation of Australia (from 1928)
MBU	Master Builders Union
MPA	Master Plumbers & Sanitary Engineers Association of NSW – now known as the Master Plumbers & Mechanical Contractors Association of NSW
NIE	National Industrial Executive of the Building & Construction Industry
NP	National Party (fore-runner of the Liberal Party)
NSO	National Service Office
NSW	New South Wales
NSW/BWIU	NSW Branch of the BWIU
NSW/ABLF	NSW Branch of the ABLF
NSW/FEDFA	NSW Branch of the FEDFA
NSW/RAIA	NSW Chapter of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects
PWD	Public Works Department
RAIA	Royal Australian Institute of Architects
RTC	Rehabilitation of Trades Committee
SMH	Sydney Morning Herald
TLC	Trades and Labour Council
UAP	United Australia Party
ULPS	United Labourers' Protective Society
VRAG	Victoria Street Resident Action Group

CONVERSIONS

MONETARY

1d	(one penny)	0.83 of a cent
1/- or 1s	(one shilling)	10 cents
£1/-/-	(one pound)	\$2.00 (two dollars)
£1/1/-	(one guinea)	\$2.10 (two dollars ten cents)

LINEAR

1 inch	25.4 mm
1 foot (12 inches)	30.48 cm
1 yard (3 feet)	0.9144 metre
1 mile	1.609344 km

AREA

1 acre	0.40469 hectares
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TEMPERATURE

100° Fahrenheit	37.8° Celsius
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