



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Christchurch, New Zealand – 13 November 2025

Councils Failing Builders with Inconsistent and Inefficient Consenting Processes

A nationwide survey by Combined Building Supplies Co-operative (CBS Co-op) has revealed widespread frustration among builders over inconsistent, inefficient, and delayed consenting processes across New Zealand councils — with members calling for urgent reform.

More than **80 percent** of respondents rated their local Building Consent Authority (BCA) as either *poor* or *fair* in efficiency, while over **70 percent** said council decisions and requirements were *highly inconsistent* between inspectors or regions.

Builders also reported a **huge inconsistency in inspection timelines**. Many projects are being forced on hold for days or even weeks waiting for inspections that, in many cases, could easily be completed via **video or phone-based assessments**.

“Our members are telling us that delays, inconsistency, and a lack of accountability within the consenting system are adding unnecessary cost and stress to an already strained industry,” said **Carl Taylor**, CEO of Combined Building Supplies Co-operative.

“Some builders are waiting over a week for a basic inspection — halting progress on site — when the same task could be done remotely in minutes. Councils must adopt modern, flexible approaches to keep the industry moving.”

The CBS survey, conducted across its 2,000-member network, also highlighted:

- **Limited innovation:** The majority of councils still do **not** offer video or phone-based inspections.
- **Traffic-management burdens:** 60 percent of builders said traffic management has become an “expensive and unnecessary hurdle” for small projects.
- **Inconsistent handling of on-site amendments:** Nearly 80 percent said BCA inspectors vary widely in how they apply or approve minor variations.

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Respondents named more than a dozen BCAs — including Christchurch, Selwyn, and Waimakariri District Councils — illustrating that these issues are systemic rather than isolated.

“CBS is calling on central government to take leadership and create a nationally consistent consenting framework,” Taylor said.

“We’re ready to work with the Minister for Building and Construction, councils, and industry bodies to find practical, technology-driven solutions that reduce red tape and restore confidence in the consenting system.”

CBS Co-operative has forwarded the survey findings to the Minister for Building and Construction, urging government action on what builders view as one of the industry’s most persistent productivity bottlenecks.

ENDS

Summary of CBS Member Survey – Building Consenting in New Zealand (November 2025)

The survey gathered responses from CBS builder members across regions including Christchurch, Selwyn, Waimakariri, Dunedin, Auckland, Wellington, and Masterton.

Key findings:

- **82%** rated their local council’s consenting efficiency as *poor* or *fair*.
- **73%** said there was *high inconsistency* between councils and inspectors.
- **68%** said inspections are *often* or *significantly delayed*.
- **Only 15%** reported having access to video or phone-based inspections, despite growing delays.
- **59%** said traffic management requirements have become an *expensive and unnecessary hurdle* for small projects.
- **76%** said inspectors were inconsistent in applying or approving on-site amendments or minor variations.

Key themes from member comments:

1. Major delays and unnecessary hold-ups

Builders reported long waits for both consents and inspections, in some cases bringing projects to a complete standstill.

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“We’ve had projects sitting for weeks waiting for an inspection that could have been done over a five-minute video call.”

2. Significant inconsistency between inspectors and councils

Members highlighted the unpredictability of inspections and differing interpretations of the Building Code.

“What passes one week can fail the next with a new inspector.”

“Rules change depending on the council and sometimes depending on the person standing in front of you.”

3. Lack of practical construction experience among inspectors

A large portion of respondents expressed concern about inspectors with no trade background.

“I’ve been in the industry 40–50 years and I’m now dealing with people who’ve never swung a hammer telling me how to build.”

4. Excessive RFIs, paperwork and over-engineering

Many felt RFIs were being issued for trivial matters, adding costs and delays without improving outcomes.

“The RFIs are out of control – pages of questions on issues that add no real value.”

5. Cost blowouts for even minor variations

Simple amendments – such as small layout changes or different product choices – often attract thousands of dollars in design and consent fees.

“It cost over \$2,500 and weeks of waiting just to change a bathroom layout that my apprentice could have fixed in an hour.”

6. Poor communication and lack of accountability

Several respondents described unanswered emails, contradictory advice, and departments not communicating internally.

“We had a final inspection six months ago and have had no response since – no one replies to anything.”

7. Broad calls for system reform

There is strong demand for nationwide consistency, more use of video inspections, and a simpler, unified system.

“There needs to be a universal online consenting system for all councils.”

“Council should be part of the team, not acting as police trying to catch you out.”

For further information, please contact:

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About CBS Cooperative:

The Combined Building Supplies (CBS) Cooperative is a New Zealand-based organization that leverages the collective purchasing power of its members in the construction industry to secure significant discounts on building materials. By uniting over 2000 builders, electricians, plumbers, painters, and other construction tradies, CBS enables its members to access discounts ranging from 5% to 50% across a network of over 30 suppliers nationwide.

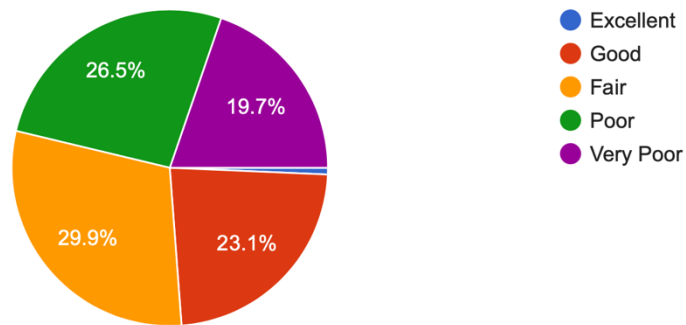
For more information, please visit: www.cbscoop.co.nz

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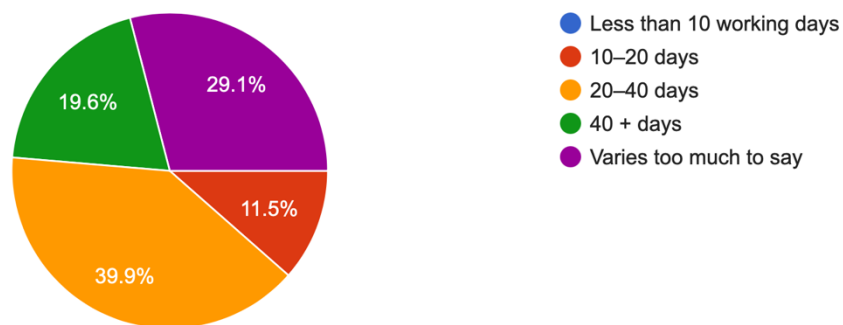
How would you rate the overall efficiency of your local Building Consent Authority (BCA)?

147 responses



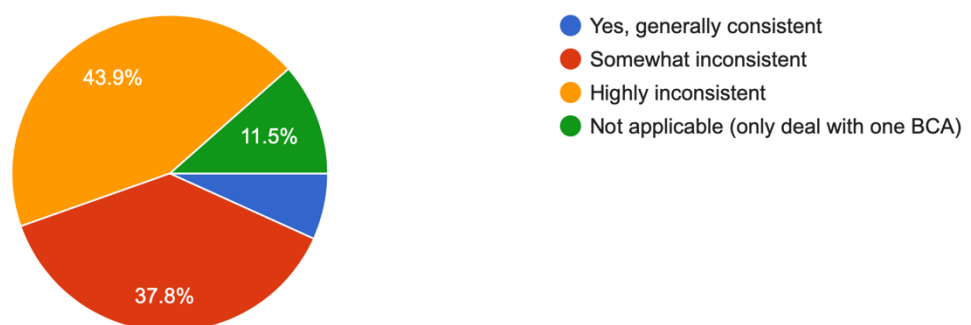
On average, how long does it currently take for you to receive building consent approval after submission?

148 responses



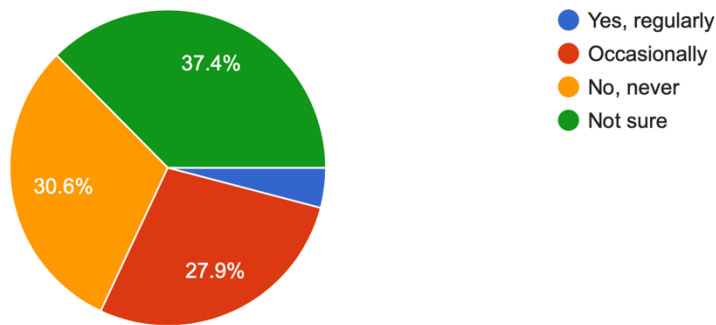
Do you find there is consistency in consent decisions and requirements between different councils or inspectors?

148 responses



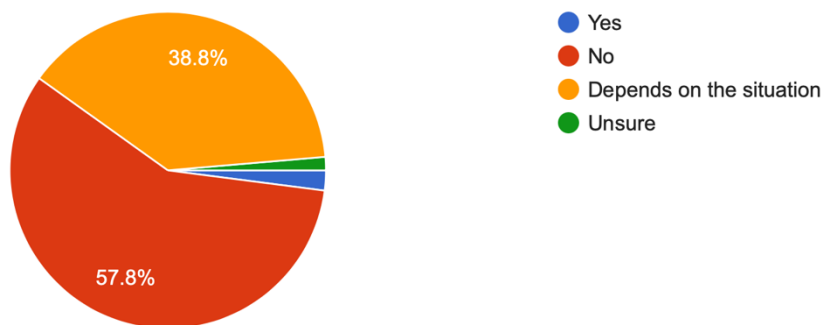
Is your BCA allowing any video or phone-based inspections?

147 responses



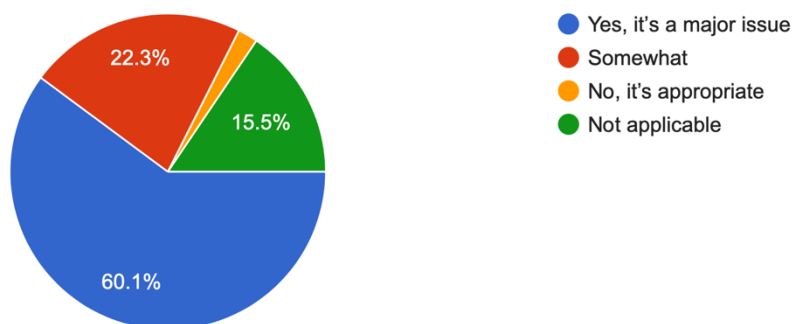
Do you believe a partial inspection should automatically be recorded as a 'fail'?

147 responses



Is traffic management becoming an expensive and unnecessary hurdle for small projects?

148 responses



What do you believe is the biggest issue with the current consenting process?

146 responses

