

Proposed repeal of the Registered Engineering Associates regime

The Ministry of Business, Innovation and Employment (MBIE) is seeking feedback on a proposal to repeal the Registered Engineering Associates (REA) regime. MBIE is consulting REAs and stakeholders to understand the impacts of repeal and to inform next steps.

PURPOSE OF THIS DOCUMENT

MBIE is seeking feedback on a proposal to repeal the REA regime established by the *Engineering Associates Act 1961*. This consultation aims to test MBIE's understanding of the issues and assess the impacts on REAs if the regime was repealed.

PROPOSAL TO REPEAL THE REA REGIME

In 2021, MBIE consulted publicly on the future of the REA regime as part of broader proposed changes to the regulation of engineers.¹

In 2022, Cabinet agreed to repeal the *Engineering Associates Act 1961* and replace it with a new REA register within the newly proposed engineers' regulatory regime. However, this option is no longer feasible as the engineers reforms have not progressed to expected timeframes.

In 2024, MBIE reviewed the long-term viability of the regime and the need for a statutory framework for engineering technicians and technologists. The review found that a regulatory regime for engineering associates is not necessary to protect the public from harm, and the regime is not sustainable in the long-term given the small number of total registrants, and declining registration numbers.

MBIE is now proposing to repeal the REA regime entirely. The Minister for Building and Construction has agreed to MBIE consulting REAs and other key stakeholders on the potential repeal. Repeal would involve disestablishing the REA credential and repealing the Engineering Associates Act through legislation. If repeal is progressed, MBIE would also determine how long the regime will continue to operate and whether any functions (such as complaint investigations and disciplinary proceedings for existing complaints) need to remain temporarily.

MBIE's understanding is that the repeal will not affect REAs' ability to work in their chosen fields. REAs may choose to demonstrate their qualifications or expertise through other pathways, such as membership with professional bodies.

HOW TO SUBMIT

MBIE seeks written submissions on this consultation document by **5pm, 18 December 2025**.

Your submission may respond to any or all of the questions in this consultation document.

¹ [Occupational regulation of engineers – Summary of submissions](#)

Please respond using the [online survey form](#). If you are not able to use the online survey form, you can send the submission form attached as a Microsoft Word document to building@mbie.govt.nz.

If you email your submission, please include your name, your relationship to the Registered Engineering Associates regime, and your contact details in the cover letter or email.

Why MBIE is proposing the repeal of the REA regime

This section outlines the rationale for the repeal and the issues MBIE seeks feedback on.

OVERVIEW OF THE REGISTERED ENGINEERING ASSOCIATES REGIME

Registered Engineering Associate (REA) is a statutory credential for engineering technicians and technologists. Registration under the *Engineering Associates Act 1961* is voluntary and allows a person to use the protected title “Registered Engineering Associate”. Removing the regime will not change who can work in these roles, and people can continue working in the same positions.

The REA regime is managed and implemented by the Engineering Associates Registration Board (the Board), an independent regulatory board funded through registration and renewal fees. Its functions include managing the performance and finances of the regime as well as approving new registrants. Board members are appointed by the Minister for Building and Construction with MBIE’s assistance.

Given the small number of registrants, it is becoming increasingly challenging to justify the ongoing costs of maintaining the regime.

Issue 1: The risk of harm from engineering associates is low as the register is not essential for public safety or consumer protection

Occupational regulation aims to protect the public from harm caused by negligent, reckless or dishonest practice. Significant or irreversible harm, such as permanent disability or death, is more likely to justify regulation. Government considers both the likelihood and severity of harm before intervening.

MBIE considers there is little evidence of harm from REAs. High-risk engineering work is generally outside the scope of REA practice, done by other professionals (such as Chartered Professional Engineers) and subject to other regulatory controls within the building system. The regime does not safeguard public safety, as unregistered practitioners can still work in the same roles as an REA would. The only restriction is on the use of the title “Registered Engineering Associate”.

Given the low risk to the public, regulation is not justified. MBIE has not identified any services that depend on the REA credential, and only three formal complaints have been made about REAs since 1961.

Public awareness of the credential is also limited, reducing its effectiveness in supporting accountability or managing safety risks.

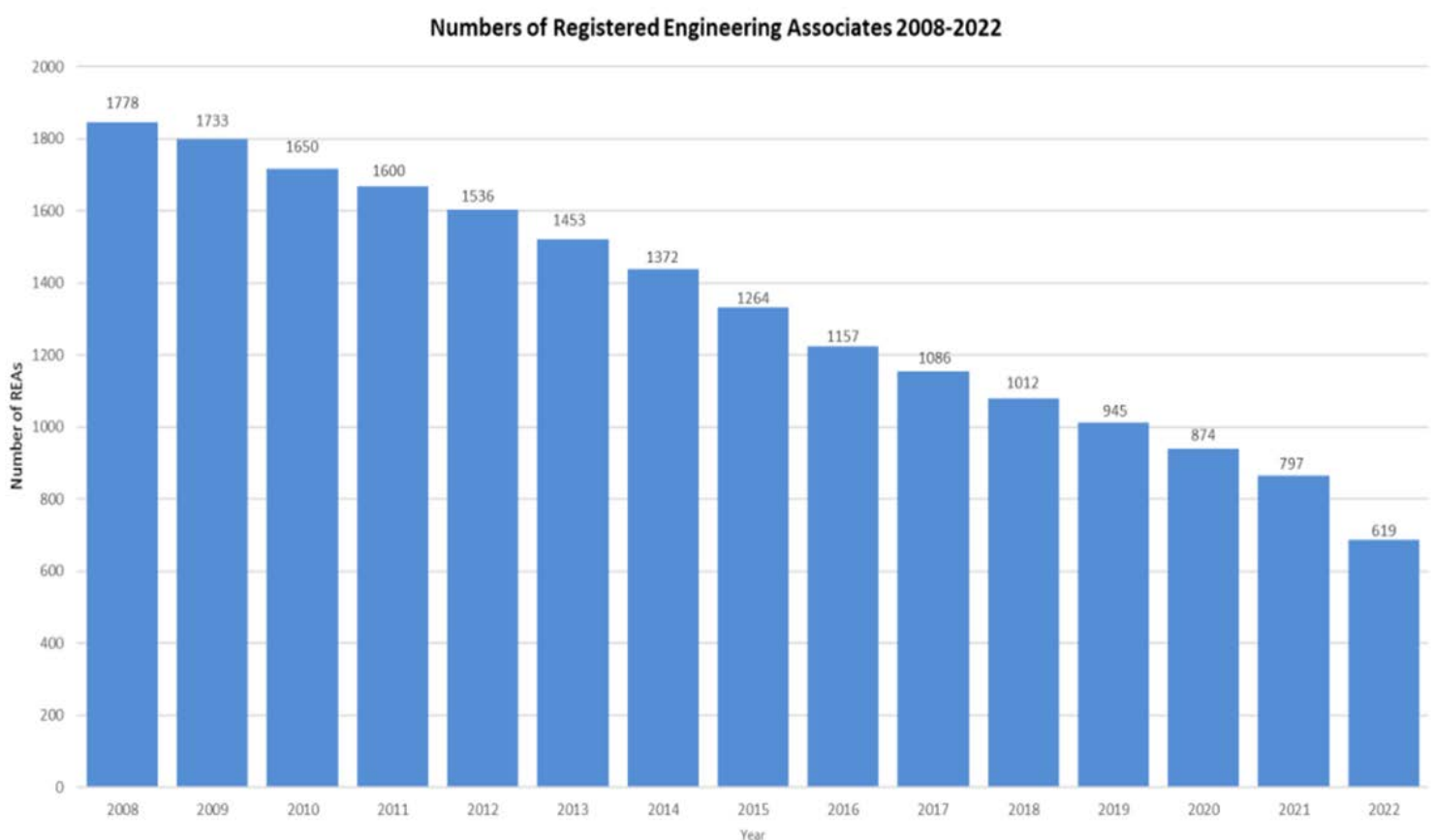
Issue 2: Declining registrations are leading to the scheme becoming unaffordable

Over time, the regime has seen a significant decline in registration numbers. The number of REAs dropped from 1,778 in 2008 to 619 in 2022—around five per cent of the engineering technologists

and technicians workforce.² Figure 1 below shows a consistent decline in registrations over this period. This trend reflects reduced demand for the credential, which is expected to continue as many current registrants approach the end of their careers.

As of July 2024, 402 REAs were aged over 60, and a proportion are likely to leave the profession in the coming years. Without new entrants to offset these exits, registration numbers will reduce further.

Figure One: Numbers of REAs registered 2008-2022



As is the case for many occupational regulators, the regime is designed to be self-funded through new registrations and renewals. This follows a general principle that registered people should pay for the benefits they receive from their registration. Ongoing membership decline has affected the Board’s ability to self-fund. Current registration and renewal fees no longer cover operating costs.

While there is the option to increase registration fees to cover costs from remaining registrants, MBIE does not consider this sustainable. As the number of registrants declines to unsustainable levels, the scheme becomes increasingly unaffordable for those who remain. The Board increased registration fees in 2006, 2014 and 2021 which appeared to directly result in a decrease in

² In the 2023 census, 11,679 people self-reported as being employed as an engineering technician, engineering technologist or engineering draftsman in various disciplines.

registrations. Further fee increases are likely to accelerate this trend, as new applicants are not replacing those leaving.

In the 2021 fees consultation, REAs shared the view that the credential carried more weight during the 1980s and 1990s. They considered that REA membership is not highly valued within the industry citing its dated nature, the general public's preference for proven experience over formal qualifications, and competition from better known schemes. These factors may be contributing to the decline in registrants, as some may not see enough benefit to justify the cost.

Issue 3: There are alternative pathways for engineering associates to register and upskill

One intent of the REA regime (and 2022 reform proposal) was to provide a pathway for engineering technologists and technicians to upskill themselves to become an engineer, offer registrants the benefits of demonstrating minimum standards, and being subject to a disciplinary framework.

While it is difficult to identify how many REAs have used the regime as a 'pathway' in recent years, the low proportion of REAs compared to the broader technician and technologist workforce indicates few employers are actively seeking or requiring REA registration.

The market also offers alternative pathways for engineering associates to upskill and demonstrate competence. Options include membership with professional associations such as Survey and Spatial New Zealand and Engineering New Zealand which require continuous professional development to maintain membership. These associations offer support and development opportunities, connect people with similar roles and qualifications, and foster a stronger sense of professional community. MBIE understands they are also more visible and perceived to be more current within the sector.

Those who want to work as electrical engineers can register with the Electrical Workers Registration Board. This pathway is open to both formally qualified individuals and those who can demonstrate relevant work experience and pass a theory test and practical assessment.

REAs could also explore membership with one of the following associations, some of which currently nominate board appointments onto the Board:

- The Institute of Refrigeration Heating & Air Conditioning Engineers of New Zealand Inc.
- New Zealand Institute of Healthcare Engineering
- NZ Electronics Institute
- Survey and Spatial NZ
- New Zealand Institution of Gas Engineers
- Design Association of NZ
- Institute of Automotive Mechanical Engineers NZ

If the regime is repealed, it will be up to individual practitioners to decide which pathway or professional association best suits their needs.

Repeal is not expected to affect career progression, as engineering associates can access a range of other registration and membership options. Career decisions sit with practitioners and employers based on their circumstances.

Questions

MBIE has a series of questions below to seek your input on the proposal to repeal the REA regime.

Please respond to the questions by using the submission form attached with the invitation email or by using the [online survey form](#). This will help us to collate submissions and ensure that your views are fully considered.

If you are not able to use the online survey form, you can send your submission as a Microsoft Word document to building@mbie.govt.nz. If you email your submission, please include your name and relationship to the Registered Engineering Associates regime in the email.

Questions	
1.	MBIE has found that the potential harm that could be caused by Registered Engineering Associates is low. Do you agree? Please explain your answer.
2.	MBIE has not identified any services that require the Registered Engineering Associate credential. Are there any services that you are aware of that require, use or value the Registered Engineering Associate credential we have not identified? Please explain your answer.
3.	Do you agree with the alternatives identified by MBIE, including those offered by Engineering New Zealand, to be viable substitutes for the Registered Engineering Associates credential? Please explain your answer.
4.	Do you agree with the proposal to repeal the Registered Engineering Associate regime? Please explain your answer.
5.	What impact would repealing the regime have on you and those you work with? For example if you are a Registered Engineering Associate, what impact would there be on you, your employer/s or consumers of your services?
6.	If the regime is repealed, do you have any views on how long it should remain in place? What transition issues should MBIE consider?

Next steps

Thank you for taking the time to read and respond to the questions in this paper. MBIE will analyse the submissions received and use your feedback to inform our report back to the Minister for Building and Construction.