

Field brief for NZ plumbers and drainlayers

Preparing for 2026 Self-Certification

A conservative field brief on what changed, what is still being finalized, and the evidence pack you should already be standardizing.

CURRENT AS OF 31 March 2026

Act commencement date: 30 June 2026.

Board rollout still shows notice, form, and operational settings moving through May to July 2026.

Not legal advice. Final Board materials may still change.

WHAT THIS HELPS YOU DO

Separate signal from speculation before the form is final

This guide is a practical planning brief for New Zealand plumbers and drainlayers who want a defensible recordkeeping workflow before the self-certification regime is fully operational.

Use this guide to tighten your evidence workflow now, without overselling what the Board has not finalized yet.

The digital audit trail for self-certifying plumbers and drainlayers in New Zealand.

Executive summary

What changed, what is still moving, and what should become standard on every relevant job.

ALREADY CHANGED

The 70m² exemption is live

From 15 January 2026, some new standalone single-storey dwellings up to 70 square metres can use a separate building-consent exemption.

STILL BEING FINALIZED

Board notice and form details still matter

The amendment takes effect on 30 June 2026, but PGDB still shows Board notice, form, and fee settings moving through May to July 2026.

KEY DISTINCTION

Granny flats are not self-certification jobs

Exempt granny-flat work still needs disciplined evidence, but it should not be described as self-certification.

Practical takeaway

Standardize evidence capture now.

That work stays valuable whether the final Board-prescribed form lands exactly as expected or not. The safest commercial position is to be documentation-ready without making stronger legal claims than the public material supports.

Start this month

Three moves that should become office defaults

- Choose which job types need the standard evidence checklist.
- Make location-identified test photos and readings mandatory.
- Capture registration details before the crew leaves site.

Separate the two regimes

The commercial confusion in 2026 is understandable: the January exemption and the upcoming self-certification scheme both raise the stakes for good records, but they are not the same legal pathway.

EXEMPTION PATHWAY

70m2 granny-flat work

From 15 January 2026, some new standalone, single-storey dwellings up to 70 square metres can use a separate building-consent exemption.

The work still needs clean evidence, but it is not inside the self-certification regime.

BOARD-GOVERNED PATHWAY

Self-certification rollout

The self-certification amendment comes into force on 30 June 2026.

PGDB still shows Board notice, form, endorsement, and fee settings moving through May to July 2026.

Use this language internally

- The 70m2 granny-flat pathway is a building-consent exemption for qualifying standalone dwellings.
- The proposed self-certification regime applies to plumbing and drainlaying work that still sits inside the building-consent system.
- Public Board guidance says granny flats are not part of the self-certification scheme because they do not require a building consent.

Office rule

Exempt granny-flat work is not self-certified.

It still needs solid evidence and handover records, but it follows a different path.

Build the evidence pack now

If you make the checklist consistent before the final form is published, your office can adapt faster and defend work more cleanly later.

Checklist

Capture this on every relevant job

- worksite address and a clear job description
- whether the work is plumbing, drainlaying, or both
- building consent number or other consent linkage where one exists
- issuer name, licence class, and registration number
- worker names, roles, and registration numbers
- dates for commencement, key site visits, testing, and completion
- location-identified photographs of key work stages and test results
- pressure-test readings, notes, and who witnessed or captured them
- supporting documents such as plans, as-laid sketches, supplier documents, and variation notes
- timestamps, site context, and capture method for each evidence item
- delivery and lodgement records showing what was issued, to whom, and when

Public PGDB material already points to location-identified photographs of key parts of the job, including test results. Make that discipline normal before it becomes a regulatory expectation your team has to retrofit.

What to design for, even before the form is final

Design for an auditable record, not for a guessed final template. The safest system is the one that preserves evidence cleanly while the Board is still finalizing the operational settings.

Still not final

Board settings that can still move

Current public material still leaves several implementation details open:

- the final Board notice settings for eligibility and endorsement conditions
- the final fee and levy settings for endorsed practitioners
- the prescribed certificate form and any mandatory supporting documents
- the exact operational guidance on how records, certificates, and audits will be administered in practice

Design target

What a certificate-ready workflow should preserve

Even before the final form is published, the direction of travel is clear: the certificate will need to stand up to audit, customer scrutiny, and Board follow-up.

- durable certificate metadata that can be versioned and reviewed
- who performed, supervised, and verified the work
- the rendered document that was issued at the time
- testing records tied to the job and the completion event
- the supporting files referenced by that document
- delivery, lodgement, and later correction history

Your next 30 days

The goal is not to predict every final rule. The goal is to make your current jobs easier to prove, easier to review, and easier to adapt when the Board's final form lands.

1. Decide which job types in your business need a standard evidence checklist.
2. Make location-identified test photos and readings mandatory on those jobs.
3. Capture registration details for everyone involved while the crew is still on site.
4. Store supporting files with the job, not in personal phones or message threads.
5. Nominate who in the office owns certificate issue, delivery, and Board-facing follow-up.

Where PipeDocket NZ fits

Build the audit trail before the Board locks the final form.

- field photo capture with timestamps and site context
- voice notes that become searchable job logs
- draft certificate records backed by supporting evidence
- a web dashboard for office review, issue preparation, and delivery follow-up

The practical win right now is consistency.

If your evidence pack is clean before the Board finalizes the form, your office can adapt without rebuilding old jobs.

This guide is based on public material from New Zealand Legislation, PGDB, and Building Performance current to 31 March 2026.