

Sustainability and the Building Code of Australia

Research that assisted the Australian Building Codes Board (ABCB) in the consideration of the role it may play in sustainability within the built environment

Buildings are such a significant part of the economy that it is inevitable that when governments adopt broader social, economic and environmental agendas, questions arise about whether, and how, these agendas need to be supported by building regulation. Broader government policies driven by whole-of-government approaches will inevitably draw in building regulation issues.

Governments also use a range of tools to achieve social, economic, environmental and political objectives. The primary mechanism is to rely on free and efficient markets to allocate resources and maximise economic growth. Where markets do not deliver acceptable outcomes, regulation is one way governments may intervene.

The ABCB is a joint initiative of all levels of government in Australia. The ABCB brings together government, industry, the professions and the community to develop the regulatory environment affecting health, safety and amenity for people in buildings in Australia. Its role is to develop the Building Code of Australia (BCA) and to promote national building industry regulatory reform. It is the ABCB's view that sustainability should be a goal of the BCA.

The Australian Cooperative Research Centre (CRC) for *Construction Innovation* research project *Sustainability and the Building Code of Australia* provided the ABCB with the information required for it to judge whether sustainability should be a goal of the Building Code of Australia.



CRC Construction Innovation
B U I L D I N G O U R F U T U R E



Sustainability in the BCA

A literature review conducted in Stage 1 of the project collected information on international sustainability requirements for buildings as well as current thinking and practice concerning sustainable building developments in Australia and internationally. In Stage 2 it identified issues and implications associated with sustainability requirements for buildings and advised whether provisions are necessary in the BCA. Workshops involving key stakeholders such as regulators, local government and representatives from key industry associations were held in all capital cities across Australia.

The study recommended to the ABCB the need to include sustainability requirements in the BCA. It demonstrated the need to control and regulate sustainability along with the methods available to control and regulate it.

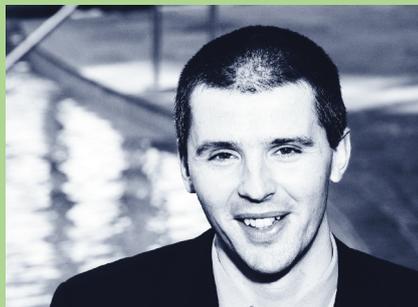
The way ahead

The ABCB have provided advice to the responsible Australian, State and Territory Government Ministers, so that the approach proposed for sustainability can be properly considered. The ABCB has identified energy, water, materials and indoor environmental quality as issues to be considered. Work will now commence on prioritising specific sustainability issues against their significance and impact, including assessments about community expectations.

This project focussed on public good outcomes and was driven by environmental and social concerns. Nevertheless, potential business opportunities resulting from this research and development included:

- the development of building products with lower amounts of embodied energy, lower emissions from products and improved reparability and recyclability
- increased use of renewable and recyclable materials
- the development of products that use water more efficiently in buildings
- increased demand for practitioners (e.g. builders, designers, specialist consultants) specialising in sustainable building developments
- marketing and promotional opportunities associated with sustainable buildings or products.

These business opportunities will become clearer once the extent of sustainable building requirements is identified and decided.



“The ABCB recognises that the BCA is only one way in which governments, industry and the community can address sustainability. It sees a need for a national coordinated approach to policy issues raised by sustainability and the built environment and, where regulation is involved, that the BCA and the ABCB should play a role.”

Brian Ashe, Manager – Research, ABCB

CRCs bring together researchers from universities, CSIRO and other government laboratories, and private industry or public sector agencies, in long-term collaborative arrangements which support research and development and education activities to achieve real outcomes of national economic, environmental and social significance.

Images courtesy of Construction Innovation participants.

Partners in progress

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The Australian CRC for *Construction Innovation* is a national research, development and implementation centre focussed on the needs of the Australian property and construction industry. *Construction Innovation* takes innovative ideas and turns them into collaborative research to produce industry-relevant results for our partners and the whole industry.

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