



AUSTRALIAN BUILDING CODES BOARD

Annual Business Plan 2015-16

THE ABCB

The Australian Building Codes Board (ABCB) is a joint initiative of all levels of government in Australia, together with the building and plumbing industries. Its mission is to oversee issues relating to health, safety, amenity and sustainability in building. The ABCB promotes efficiency in the design, construction and performance of buildings and plumbing systems through the National Construction Code (NCC), and the development of effective regulatory and non-regulatory approaches. The ABCB aims to establish minimum performance based and proportional codes, standards and regulatory systems that are consistent, as far as practicable, between States and Territories.

FOCUS OF BUSINESS PLAN

The 2015-16 Business Plan demonstrates the ABCB's commitment to implementing the regulatory reform agenda agreed by Governments in May 2014. Delivery of free online access to NCC 2015 was a major milestone, positioning the Board to achieve even more in future years by way of increased compliance with the code, further productivity gains and ultimately a safer built environment. Other key features of the reform agenda include:

- less regulatory change resulting from the new three year amendment cycle commencing in 2016
- a review of unnecessary and redundant regulation;
- encouraging greater use of performance solutions to design and construction;
- reviewing the NCC to ensure issues arising from the Lacrosse fire incident are considered;
- implementation of improved building and plumbing product certification schemes; and
- investigation of options for a mandatory product certification scheme.

NCC DEVELOPMENT

A primary role of the ABCB is to maintain and update the NCC to ensure it is part of an effective regulatory system. Within this framework the ABCB must carefully manage the complex demands associated with issues that impact on life safety, health, amenity and sustainability. All potential changes to the NCC must be considered in accordance with COAG best practice regulatory principles and be subject to impact assessment. The initial presumption for the ABCB is not to introduce new or increased regulation and instead, investigate alternative means of achieving the desired result. If intervention is necessary, the NCC sets minimum acceptable regulatory requirements that are proportional to the issue being addressed. NCC 2016 heralds the implementation of the new three year amendment cycle which will provide stability for industry through reducing churn in regulatory change.

Sustainability is an area of the NCC that is still developing and includes policy ranging from energy efficiency through to adaptation particularly for extreme weather events. The ABCB continues to monitor the effect of extreme weather events on buildings. In April 2014 the ABCB released the Discussion Paper *Resilience of Buildings to Extreme Weather Events* for public comment. Responses provided by stakeholders and subsequent consideration by governments has led to the inclusion of scoping studies in the areas of hail and heat stress on the work program.



INCREASED USE AND QUANTIFICATION OF PERFORMANCE

The NCC has been a performance based code for almost 20 years. As highlighted in an independent report in 2013, 70% of the identified \$1.1 billion per annum productivity gains delivered by past ABCB reforms are derived from having the current performance-based code. The report also identified that future gains are possible if there is an increased use of performance solutions.

The strategy to increase the use of performance includes three main components:

- engendering a performance mindset;
- capacity building; and
- quantifying the NCC Performance Requirements.

These components will encourage greater use of performance solutions and each plays a vital role in delivering the identified national economic benefits.

Industry also requires further education and information on how increased use of performance will provide benefit to industry and consumers.

It is evident through a survey of NCC users and feedback from the ABCB national seminar series that practitioners and regulators require further quantification of the NCC's performance requirements. Combined with complementary training and guidance documentation to better utilise and unlock the benefits of a performance based code, these components will need to be delivered in a co-ordinated manner to achieve maximum benefit.

NCC EXPANSION

Further to a decision by Governments which previously agreed that all onsite construction requirements should be included under a single national code provided a net benefit can be demonstrated. Having all onsite requirements under a single framework provides greater national consistency, cost savings for industry and greater levels of code compliance.

To date, building and plumbing have been consolidated into the NCC and telecommunications is currently under consideration by governments. Provisions for gasfitting are currently being developed for inclusion in a model gasfitting code, for possible adoption by State and Territory governments. Over time it is anticipated that the NCC will also include an electrical code but a timeframe and process for its inclusion has not been determined by Ministers.

NCC AWARENESS, UNDERSTANDING AND USE

The NCC being made freely available has resulted in a larger and broader cross section of practitioners and other users accessing the Code. While the current format may be appropriate for the traditional practitioner base, a revised and more 'user friendly' NCC, accessible to a broader audience is needed in the future. To this end, the ABCB is undertaking a number of projects designed to improve the NCC's useability. This includes improved online functionality, scoping work for digital applications and technologies, improved compatibility for mobile devices and refinement of language and overall format.

The ABCB is also pursuing increased awareness and use of the NCC through the evaluation and re-development of existing education materials and the identification of new supporting products and activities. Explanatory material, non-mandatory Handbooks, Seminars and YouTube clips all continue to be popular and are being expanded and promoted to new and existing users. The Board continues to work with academia and industry and is exploring partnering arrangements to expand the distribution of education materials to ensure future practitioners are appropriately skilled to understand and optimise the use of the NCC.

The current review of Acceptable Construction Practice provisions (ACP) in NCC Volume Two is a project that has the potential to significantly enhance practitioner understanding and useability of the NCC. The review will identify where Volume Two content can be refined and modernised, which should result in a more useful and contemporary document for practitioners in the housing sector. The project will be ongoing over a 5 year period.

NCC CONSOLIDATION, HARMONISATION AND REGULATORY REVIEW

A nationally consistent code that serves as the source of all mandatory provisions affecting the design, construction and performance of buildings is an underlying principle of the ABCB Inter-governmental Agreement. The harmonisation of State and Territory variations to the code, wherever practicable, together with consolidation of all technical building and plumbing requirements, will contribute to increased industry and national productivity.

Since the inclusion of building and plumbing codes under the NCC in 2011, a number of areas of potential overlap have been identified. Measures have been put in place to raise practitioner awareness of cross-code matters as a first step, and further work will be undertaken to resolve any overlap or inconsistency.

Appropriately, code development includes periodic review. An audit of the NCC has been conducted to identify potential opportunities to reduce regulatory content. The audit was informed by a stakeholder survey which sought to identify redundant or unnecessary material in the NCC. Over the coming years, consultation and impact analyses will be undertaken to confirm those areas of the NCC that have potential for deregulation without reducing life safety or amenity and which deliver net benefits to the industry and community.

PRODUCT CERTIFICATION

The ABCB continues to administer building (CodeMark) and plumbing (WaterMark) product certification schemes and has completed reviews of both schemes. The outcomes from both reviews are now being implemented.

2014-15 ACHIEVEMENTS	2015-16 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
NCC 2015 delivered free online and on budget	NCC 2016 delivered free online and on budget
Ministerial endorsement of 2014-15 Business Plan received	Ministerial endorsement of 2015-16 Business Plan
Scoping work and impact assessment to expand the NCC to include telecommunications completed	Implementation of new NCC three year amendment cycle
NCC useability review conducted to improve format, structure and presentation of document in a more user friendly package using different mediums	Obtained Board agreement to the program for and scope of redundant and unnecessary regulation to be considered for removal from the NCC
Next Instalment of Building Regulatory Reform developed and agreed	Expedite key initiatives endorsed in response to issues arising out of the Lacrosse fire with progress monitored by the Board.
WaterMark and CodeMark Scheme improvements progressed	Improved Codemark Scheme commenced in 2015-16 and WaterMark Scheme improvements agreed and implemented for commencement in 2016-17
Resilience of buildings to extreme weather events discussion paper finalised	Further Quantification of NCC Performance Requirements and ACP review improvements progressed
New tools developed to enhance understanding and increase NCC use among practitioners	Scoping study considering inclusion of hail and heatwaves in the NCC considered by the Board
Identification of regulatory measures for removal from the NCC commenced	Delivery of the ABCB 2015 BAF Conference



NCC expansion for telecommunications and gas fitting considered by governments.

Establish a program that identifies a process for a net reduction in State and Territory variations, consolidation of building and plumbing regulation and the harmonisation of regulation
(This indicator can be facilitated by the ABCB, but is entirely dependent on the States and Territories to resource and undertake).

EVOLUTION AND FUTURE DIRECTION OF NATIONAL BUILDING REGULATION REFORM

PRODUCTIVITY GAINS

IMPROVED BUILDING OUTCOMES



This chart and the representations depicted above are indicative only and should be used in a conceptual manner rather than for an actual reflection of data.

ABCB WORK PROGRAM 2015-16

PROJECT NAME	PROJECT OUTPUT
NCC Development	
Maintain and Update the NCC (including PFC assessment)	2016 edition of the National Construction Code (NCC) finalised for publication
Standards Coordination and Committees	Documents, including Australian Standards, which are suitable for regulatory use and referencing in the NCC
Impact Assessment Process on Regulatory Change Proposals	Advice to decision-makers on the impacts of regulatory proposals; Effective regulation impact assessment processes in consultation with the Office of Best Practice Regulation OBPR and in accordance with COAG regulatory principles
Access for People with a Disability - Premises Standard Review	Respond to Government policy direction on disability access to buildings as it applies to the NCC
Extreme Weather Events - Building Resilience (Monitoring)	Consideration of the ABCB's framework to guide an approach to adaptation to extreme weather events, consistent with the IGA and OBPR guidelines; An assessment of the adequacy of the current NCC earthquake provisions; Natural disasters monitored to determine whether current NCC provisions are appropriate
Hail and Heatwaves - Scoping Study	A scoping study investigating whether it would be appropriate to include in the NCC consideration of hail and heatwaves
Energy Efficiency - Monitoring and Compliance	Monitor the development of relevant national building energy efficiency policy; Maintain the relationship with the Nationwide House Energy Rating Scheme (NatHERS) Administrator with respect to the accreditation of house energy rating software and assist in impact assessment of proposed changes to house energy rating software; Participate and monitor the wider work of the Department of Industry and Science with respect to energy efficiency which impacts upon the NCC or its application; Monitor the National Building Energy Efficiency Building Project (NEEBP); Review and explore options to improve the process outlined in the Protocol for Building Energy Analysis Software 2006.1.
Tropical Energy Efficiency - summer performance	Ensure NCC residential energy efficiency provisions are suitable in assessing all building designs and use
Residential Care Facilities	Investigation into whether fire safety options such as the installation of sprinkler protection is required for buildings that accommodate occupants requiring assistance to evacuate
Plumbing Code Development Research	The provision of research reports and recommendations for possible changes to the PCA; Implementation of report recommendations, as appropriate
Three Year NCC Amendment Cycle Implementation	A reduction in the frequency of changes to the NCC; Implementation of 3 year amendment cycle
Code Application to Roof Top Spaces	NCC and/or Guide changes to address occupied roof-top spaces that are not covered by the definition of 'storey'
Condensation in Buildings - Scoping Study	Scoping study to consider the role of the NCC for the mitigation and risk reduction associated with condensation in residential buildings
Protection of Gas Penetrations in Fire Resisting Construction	Confirmation of a suitable test method for gas pipe penetrations through fire rated building elements; A deemed to satisfy solution for gas pipe penetrations through fire rated building elements
Domestic Smoke Alarms – Suitability of Ionisation Technology	Monitor independent peer-review research and undertake targeted testing if necessary
Improved Useability of Smoke Hazard Management Provisions	Revised and improved smoke hazard management provisions for inclusion in NCC Volume One
Review of NCC provisions for Acceptance of Design and Construction	Revised and improved provisions for acceptance of design and construction for inclusion in NCC Volumes One, Two and Three
Review Requirements for Non-Combustible External Wall Assemblies	Suitable NCC requirements and test methods for non-combustible external wall assemblies
Research Scholarship	Research to inform decisions on future NCC and non-regulatory measures delivered through bodies such as universities and technical colleges
ABCB Cadetship	Program offering ABCB employment experience for building, plumbing and construction graduates
Increased Use and Quantification of Performance	
Quantification (including Verification Methods)	Measurable NCC Performance; Increased capacity of stakeholders to use performance; improved outcomes from use of performance
Engendering a Performance Mindset	Communicating to core stakeholders what a performance based NCC means; Empowering stakeholders to communicate this message more broadly to practitioners; Increased acceptance of performance based design, leading to increased productivity and better building outcomes
Capacity Building	Practitioners that are appropriately skilled to develop and deliver performance solutions; and Increased awareness of the benefits of performance based design practice
Role of Fire Authorities in the Application of the NCC	Independent review on the current role; Strategy for the future role of fire authorities in the application of the NCC
NCC Expansion (subject to Government support)	
Gasfitting (Possible NCC inclusion)	Subject to impact analysis outcomes and BMF agreement: development of a draft Gasfitting Code for consideration for NCC 2019; and revised ABCB/NCC governance arrangements, as appropriate
Telecommunications Spaces and Pathways (Scope & RIS)*	A Regulatory Impact Statement assessing possible solutions to ensure occupant amenity through the provision of telecommunication spaces and pathways in NCC 2016
NCC Awareness, Understanding and Use	
NCC Useability	Scope potential NCC language, structure and format changes for consideration by the Board/BCC/PCC as appropriate (post-NCC 2016 release)
NCC Awareness & Promotion	Increased awareness of NCC, supporting resources and the ABCB
NCC Education and Resource Materials	Education strategy for 2016 and beyond; Updated materials to reflect the contemporary building regulatory reform agenda; New, enhanced materials and activities based on need, stakeholder feedback and the education strategy
Product Development (including product rebrand for three year amendment)	The identification and creation of new products to assist in a greater understanding and broader market uptake of the NCC within all industry sectors
Digital NCC Online - Redevelopment and Examination of New Technologies	Identification and investigation of new technologies for digital NCC delivery
NCC Vol.2 ACP Review (subject to six month revision)	Revised and contemporary Acceptable Construction Practice provisions for inclusion in NCC Volume Two
National Conference	Delivery of an ABCB Conference supported by industry
NCC Advisory Service	NCC clarification/advice to users
Development of National Practice Notes - Scoping Study	A scoping study that establishes the viability, governance and format of the ABCB developing a suite of non-regulatory National Practice Notes
Egress for All Occupants - Handbook	A non-mandatory Handbook to provide suitable guidance to industry on how to incorporate emergency facilities for occupants with disability within buildings
NCC Consolidation, Harmonisation and Regulatory Review	
Variation Management	A reduction in existing State/Territory variations to the NCC, and scrutiny of proposals for new variations in accordance with IGA principles; Annual variation management progress report to BMF
BCA/PCA Harmonisation	Inclusion of advisory cross volume links between the BCA and PCA for matters applicable to both building and plumbing sectors; Harmonisation of technical matters currently regulated by both the BCA and PCA
BCA Consolidation of S&T NCC-related Requirements	Relocation of technical building requirements from State and Territory regulations and other instruments to the BCA
PCA Consolidation of S&T NCC-related Requirements	Relocation of technical plumbing requirements from State and Territory regulations and other instruments to the PCA
Regulatory Reduction Review	The identification and removal of measures currently featured in the NCC that are either redundant or unnecessary
Harmonised Building Regulation Administration	Increased national consistency in the administration of building regulations, including the NCC
Existing Buildings - Non-Mandatory Handbook / National Practice Note	Produce a handbook or national practice note and provide greater clarity within the NCC where appropriate
Building/Planning Interface	Improved communication with planning regulators and identification of any gaps or inconsistencies between the building and planning regulatory systems
Product Certification	
WaterMark - Administration	Materials and products complying fully with the applicable requirements of the WaterMark Certification Scheme are certified by a WaterMark Conformity Assessment Body and listed on the WaterMark Product Database
CodeMark - Administration	Management and facilitation of Australian/New Zealand third party building product certification scheme
WaterMark - Implementation of Improved Scheme	Establish an improved mandatory WaterMark Certification Scheme
CodeMark - Implementation of Improved Scheme	Proposal for modified CodeMark voluntary scheme to be considered at ABCB 2014-3
Investigate options for mandatory building product certification	A report to the Building Ministers' Forum (BMF) on options for a possible mandatory certification scheme for high risk building products with life safety implications, including the need for any regulation impact assessment.

Note: there are other projects that assist in the facilitation of the Board's Reform Agenda and the daily management of the ABCB Office. Full details of these projects have been provided to Commonwealth, State and Territory officials.

**Project currently paused and awaiting further advice from Department of Communications as to how to proceed.*

ABCB AWARENESS AND EDUCATION FRAMEWORK



NCC available Free Online



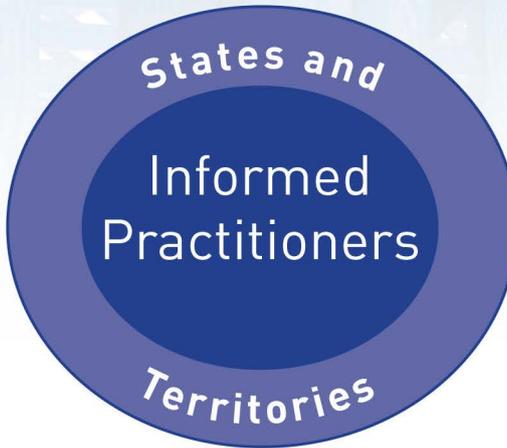
ABCB YouTube clips



Awareness and Education Workshops & Seminars



Glazing & Lighting Calculators



NCC Seminars Online



ABCB Standards



NCC Educational Awareness Resource Kits



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