



Australian Building Codes Board

Business Plan

2020–2023



National
Construction
Code



WATERMARK



CODEMARK[®]
Australia

Australian Building Codes Board

Constitutional responsibility for the built environment rests with the states and territories, who administer their own administrative frameworks. To unlock the value of the construction industry, all three levels of government have jointly agreed to consolidate all on-site construction requirements into a single national code.

The Australian Building Codes Board (ABCB) was established, in 1994, as the independent standards writing body responsible for developing the National Construction Code (NCC).

The ABCB's focus is on developing and maintaining minimum, proportionate and cost effective technical requirements that provide for the health and safety, amenity and accessibility, and sustainability of buildings.

Moreover, the ABCB endeavours to make sure the Code is an industry staple—working hard to consolidate and simplify the technical requirements, improving industry understanding and ensuring national consistency.

The ABCB reports to Commonwealth, State and Territory Building Ministers, who oversee policy and regulatory issues affecting Australia's construction industries.

The ABCB reviews and amends the NCC on a three-year cycle. The three-year cycle limits the amount of regulatory churn for practitioners, giving industry the ability to keep pace with reforms and regulatory compliance costs.

Proposals to change the Code can be submitted by the public, community groups, industry, or governments at any stage of the cycle; however, the cut off period is typically 18 months in advance of the next edition.

The ABCB considers the merit and potential impact of all proposals for change, seeking specialist advice and undertaking impact analysis to determine whether government intervention is necessary or desirable.

Consultation is the cornerstone of the ABCB's work and analysis of regulatory proposals. As such, on top of seeking expert technical advice, the ABCB releases all research, policy analysis and proposed NCC amendments for public comment and scrutiny.

The Public Comment Draft of the NCC is part of this process—with the ABCB seeking comments and feedback on all proposed updates to the next edition of the Code.

The ABCB then considers and responds accordingly to all feedback received—using comments to inform the development of the final NCC publication and supporting material, or any further research.

The NCC is then given legal effect through adoption into each state and territories building laws and regulations.



Focus of 2020-2023 Business Plan

The ABCB is currently at the half-way point of a three-year amendment cycle that anticipates a substantial amount of new content to the NCC.

Having regard to industry capacity, the impacts of the pandemic, the scope of change and the importance of embedding practitioner understanding of the amendments, this Business Plan is designed with a three-year outlook.

The work program for the 2021-22 financial year centres on the production and publication of the 2022 edition of the NCC. This involves three major stages:

1. Public Comment Draft of NCC 2022 (May 2021 to September 2021)
2. Consideration and incorporation of feedback, and
3. Publication of NCC 2022 Preview (May 2022).

The 2022 edition is expected to deliver on several key policy priorities of Building Ministers' including:

- New accessibility requirements for houses and apartments
- New energy efficiency standards
- New condensation mitigation requirements for residential buildings
- Revised standard for allowable lead content in plumbing products
- Bushfire protection for non-residential buildings
- Updated safe egress provisions for early childhood centres and primary schools, and
- New Deemed-to-Satisfy provisions for weatherproofing and waterproofing for commercial buildings.

Given the scale and breadth of reforms proposed for inclusion in NCC 2022—and to reduce burden on stakeholders—comments are being sought via two separate public comment stages.

The ABCB also anticipates these matters are likely to generate a considerable number of public comments. Accordingly, the ABCB has dedicated a significant portion of the 2021-22 work program to reviewing and addressing public comments in order to bed down the final content of NCC 2022.

NCC 2022 Adoption Date

To support economic recovery following the COVID-19 pandemic and mindful of potential impacts to industry during a difficult economic time, Building Ministers agreed to delay the adoption date of NCC 2022.

The NCC 2022 Preview is expected to be released on 1 May 2022, with the states and territories adoption of the code delayed until 1 September 2022. This date may also be accompanied by transition periods for specific amendments, to be considered by the Board at the time of adopting NCC 2022 changes.

The extended adoption period will assist industry to adjust to the quantum of reforms and become familiar with the changes before NCC 2022 is made mandatory under state and territory legislation. It also allows the ABCB to generate better supporting resources and guidance to help industry and embed practitioner understanding of the Code.

NCC 2022 Understanding

The ABCB is committed to delivering an NCC that is user-friendly and modern, through a range of initiatives that form part of the ABCB's long-term strategy to improve understanding across the broad base of practitioners.

The next round of enhancements are set to come in NCC 2022 and include:

- Improvements to the Code's design and readability—through a consistent and simplified volume and clause structure
- A digital NCC—which builds on the success of making the code free online—with an improved NCC Online portal, search function, and integrated guidance notes, and
- Progressing the competent use of Performance Solutions initiative—including quantification of the NCC's Performance Requirements.

The ABCB will continue to review the language of all three NCC Volumes to ensure it as clear and useful as possible. We will also continue to digitise all our standards and handbooks so they can be accessed through NCC Online on a mobile or desktop, or easily downloaded.

NCC 2025 Guides

As part of the three-year business plan outlook, the ABCB intends to develop guides to Volumes Two and Three of the NCC, as well as review the guide to Volume One.

The purpose of this work is to help explain the intent of key NCC provisions using a digital format to better enable them to be seamlessly placed alongside the relevant NCC provisions.

Education Program

Complementing our work on making the NCC more user friendly, the ABCB's education program delivers a new national online Continuing Professional Development (CPD) package aimed at increasing the competent use of the NCC.

Developed in consultation with industry, government and subject matter experts, this package responds to the recommendations of the Building Confidence Report (BCR) that there be consistent requirements for CPD for key building professional groups, including:

- Compliance practitioners and building surveyors
- Design and engineering practitioners—including architects, designers, draftspersons, specialists and engineers (including fire and hydraulic), and
- Construction and installation practitioners—including builders, plumbers, fire protection practitioners, and site/project managers.





Priorities

Policy

In streamlining its work program, the ABCB will reduce the scope of its work over the next two financial years, focusing on embedding an understanding of the NCC within industry, and only taking on a modest number of new reform projects.

Research and analysis will initially focus on several policy priorities in the 2021-22 financial year, including:

- Building Resilience and the adequacy of the NCC to address future extreme weather events and climate risks—in response to a recommendation of the *Royal Commission for National Natural Disaster Arrangements*
- A holistic review of external envelopes—to develop options to harmonise the numerous governing Performance Requirements
- Further condensation mitigation measures—to counter the effects of condensation as a result of building sealing and thermal bridging
- Plumbing research to establish a means of deriving suitable pipe sizes to support efficient plumbing systems.

The ABCB understand the importance of ensuring the Code is designed to meet community expectations for accessibility and sustainability. From the beginning of 2022, the ABCB expects to continue its work to support the future *National Disability Strategy*, and the *Trajectory for Low Energy Buildings*.

To assist the future National Disability Strategy, following the *Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety*, the ABCB will look to develop accessible and dementia-friendly design principles for residential aged care buildings (Class 9c).

The ABCB will also continue to support the Commonwealth's work to improve the *Disability (Access to Premises – Buildings) Standards 2010* and ensure people with disability, and their family members and carers, have equal access to public buildings.

We will continue to explore 'net zero regulated energy' as a key initiative towards addressing Australia's 40% energy productivity improvement target by 2030. Governments are exploring economically feasible options to support another stepped stringency increase to the commercial energy efficiency provisions, including opportunities for renewable energy to lower net energy use. This work will allow the ABCB to build on the significant changes introduced in NCC 2019 for commercial buildings, and scheduled in NCC 2022 for residential buildings.

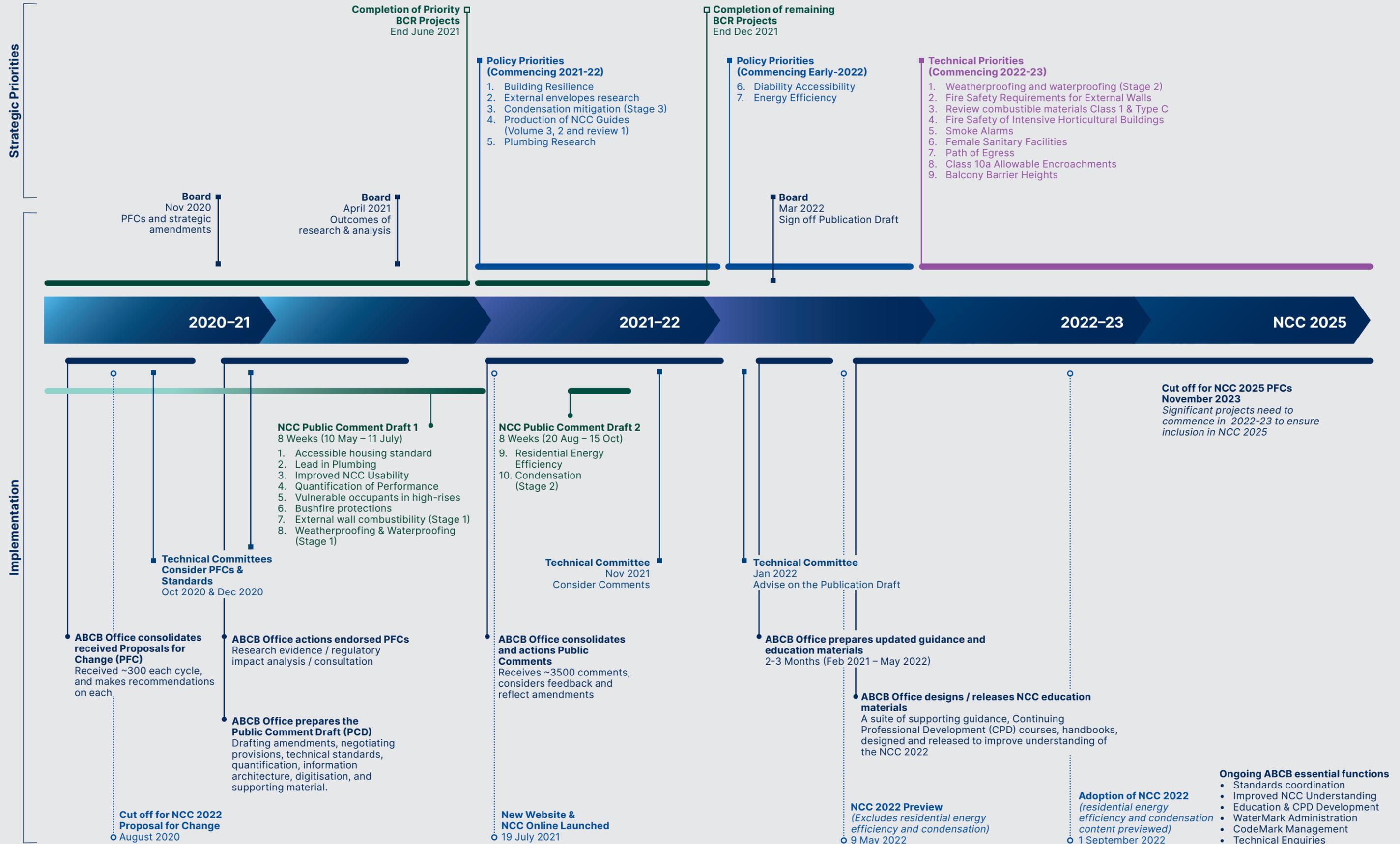
Technical

The ABCB expects to commence several technical projects in 2022-23, including:

- Further measures to improve weatherproofing, waterproofing, and fire safety requirements of external façade systems (following the holistic review of external envelopes)
- Consideration on the number and location of smoke alarms in residential buildings, and
- Other technical changes to the Code, such as an examination of sanitary facility requirements, balcony barrier heights and safe evacuation requirements.

These projects may inform future editions of the NCC, or lead to alternatives to regulation (such as education material or model practice handbooks).

2020-2023 Overview



Improved NCC useability

NCC 2022 has a new Information Architecture, which allows for a consistent volume structure across the entire code.

Improved clause referencing system

Section-Part-Type-Clause (SPTC) has been developed to create a consistent referencing (numbering) system across all volumes, while retaining key aspects of the current system where possible.

Improved clause structure

A simple reorganising of the code's content will mean a consistent clause structure across all volumes, and within volumes, greatly improving the user experience.

Improved web content accessibility

Improvements have been made to the visual display of content within the code, making it easier to read and reference, as well as allowing for greater understanding of its intent.



ncc.abcb.gov.au

Continuing Professional Development

The ABCB has released a suite of supporting materials and designed new Continuing Professional Development (CPD) courses to improve understanding of the NCC 2022.

NCC CPD courses are practical and relevant to your everyday work.

The courses support and supplement other CPD courses provided by industry, government and existing accreditation schemes.

Education material and NCC CPD courses are available online now for some practitioners, and more courses are coming!

You'll find them in either the compliance, design and engineering, or construction and installation course categories.

To receive updates on all courses subscribe to: cpd.abcb.gov.au



Key Achievements and Outcomes

Achievements 2020-21

- ✓ NCC 2019 Amendment 1 released in July 2020, and adopted by states and territories
- ✓ Public Comment Draft 1 released in May 2021
- ✓ Priority recommendations for Building Confidence Report National Framework completed for Building Minister consideration by June 2021
- ✓ National curriculum and education resources released, including NCC CPD courses to increase understanding and competent use of the NCC
- ✓ Regulatory Impact Statement (RIS) completed and options for reducing the contribution of plumbing products and materials to levels of lead in drinking water considered for possible inclusion in NCC 2022
- ✓ Consultation RIS completed and options for residential energy efficiency developed for possible inclusion in NCC 2022.
- ✓ RIS completed and options on accessible housing considered for possible inclusion in NCC 2022.
- ✓ Quantification of fire and structure Performance Requirements completed for possible inclusion in NCC 2022
- ✓ Implementation of new information architecture for NCC 2022
- ✓ Develop baseline DTS for early childhood centres in high-rise buildings as part of NCC 2022

Key Performance Indicators 2021-22 and 2022-23

- 1 Public Comment Draft 2 released in August 2021
- 2 RIS completed for residential energy efficiency
- 3 Remaining BCR National Framework recommendations completed and presented to Building Ministers for consideration by December 2021
- 4 NCC 2022 adopted and preview released in May 2022, including provisions for:
 - Accessible housing standards
 - Energy efficiency
 - Condensation mitigation
 - Revised standard for allowable levels of lead in manufactured copper alloy products
 - Bushfire protections for non-residential buildings
 - Updated safe egress provisions for early childhood centres and primary schools, and
 - Quantified fire and structure Performance Requirements
- 5 Continued improvements in NCC useability and understanding through:
 - Develop and distribute support materials for specific NCC 2022 content
 - increased uptake of NCC CPD courses
 - Production of Guides for all NCC volumes
- 6 Research and analysis undertaken into policy priorities:
 - Building Resilience
 - External Envelopes
 - Condensation
 - Energy Efficiency
- 7 Plumbing research
- 8 Implement disability accessibility amendments established through Disability Discrimination Act review process conducted by the Commonwealth
- 9 Commence project work relevant to identified technical priorities for NCC 2025, including:
 - Weatherproofing and waterproofing
 - Fire Safety Requirements for External Walls
 - Review combustible materials on Class 1 and Type C
 - Fire Safety of Intensive Horticultural Buildings
 - Smoke Alarms
 - Female Sanitary Facilities
 - Gates in the Path of Egress
 - Class 10a Allowable Encroachments
 - Balcony Barrier Heights





BCR National Framework

Another major deliverable for 2021-22 is the completion of the national response to the BCR by the end of 2021.

In July 2019, Building Ministers tasked the ABCB with establishing an Implementation Team and developing a national framework to address the issues identified in the BCR. Since then, the Implementation Team has conducted macro-economic analysis of the BCR recommendations; and developed a package of reform measures that includes NCC amendments, education initiatives, non regulatory tools and model guidance.

Building Ministers prioritised work on recommendations that would deliver the greatest benefit, including:

- A National Registration Framework to support uniform and automatic mutual recognition of critical occupations (recs 1 & 2)
- Measures to address conflicts of interest for private building surveyors (recs 9 & 11)
- Model guidance on design acceptance and approval processes (rec 13-18), and
- Safeguards for more complex buildings.

These projects were completed and delivered to Building Ministers in July 2021. Work on all remaining BCR recommendations is well advanced and scheduled to be presented to Building Ministers for consideration by December 2021.

As per the BCR, the national framework responds to a holistic and coherent package of reforms that would be best implemented in its entirety.

As stated by Building Ministers, adoption of the national framework and ultimate implementation of the BCR recommendations remains the responsibility of the state and territory governments.

BCR Outputs



Registration and training

Nationally consistent initial and on-going registration of building practitioners incorporating training, education and experience, to strengthen implementation of the NCC.

National Registration Framework

Evidence of experience for building surveyor registration

Continuing Professional Development on the NCC

NCC CPD



Building surveyor integrity

Standards of behaviour for building surveyors performing statutory functions to improve accountability and transparency, and to manage expectations of building practitioners and consumers.

Building surveyor integrity and their role in enforcement

Code of conduct for building surveyors



Fire safety

Better integrate fire safety into design, construction and certification processes to lift compliance outcomes.

Code of conduct for fire safety engineers

Fire authorities in the building approval process

Inspection and certification of fire safety systems



Regulatory oversight

Improve regulator collaboration, ensure regulators have powers to enforce compliance with building laws, and provide transparency for industry.

Building regulator collaboration

Building regulator powers

Auditing and compliance



Design, construction and certification

Reduce non-compliance with a robust and transparent system of inspection and certification throughout the building approval process.

Design acceptance

Independent third-party review

Mandatory inspections

Building product safety



Information sharing

Enable better access to building data for regulators and building owners, and improve understanding of building and plumbing terminology.

Data sharing MOU

Building manuals

BCR Glossary

Standards Australia's Construction dictionary

For more information, or to download visit

abcb.gov.au/BCR



WaterMark Certification Scheme Awareness Campaign

The *LOOK for the WaterMark* campaign is a five year ABCB strategic initiative aimed at raising awareness of the WaterMark Certification Scheme.

The campaign seeks to improve compliance with the National Construction Code, specifically the Plumbing Code of Australia, by promoting and increasing understanding of the WaterMark amongst a number of target audiences.

The target audiences for the *LOOK for the WaterMark Campaign* include:

- Product suppliers and staff of retail and trade stores
- Building practitioners such as designers, project managers and contractors who specify and procure plumbing and drainage products
- Plumbing practitioners who specify, procure and install plumbing and drainage products
- Consumers who buy plumbing products

How can you help?

Use campaign content in your communications

The ABCB is producing a range of written and visual resources that can be used across a number of communication channels.

Engage your networks about WaterMark certification

Show your support for WaterMark, highlight your commitment to compliance and your commitment to product safety and suitability by sharing campaign resources.

Engage your networks through social media

Social media can be a powerful way to weave information about WaterMark certification into profiles of products and marketing messages.

Support the campaign offline

Use campaign posters to educate staff, customers and industry.

Check for updates and new campaign materials

The ABCB will continue to build on this campaign and will add to the available resources to give stakeholders new ways to spread the message about the importance of WaterMark certification.

The content and further campaign information is available on the WaterMark website: watermark.abcb.gov.au



