

Strategic Plan 2022-27

Building a better Australia



**Australian
Building
Codes Board**

Contents

Acknowledgment of Country

In the spirit of reconciliation the Australian Building Codes Board acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to their elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

Contact

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Foreword



As the Chair of the Australian Building Codes Board (ABCB), I am pleased to present our Strategic Plan for 2022-2027.

The ABCB, on behalf of all Australian jurisdictions, is a standards writing body responsible for the National Construction Code (NCC), and administration of the WaterMark and CodeMark Certification Schemes. Education and support materials are provided to ensure these initiatives are contemporary and meet emerging challenges in the construction industry.

This strategic plan will see the Board delivering significant reform to the NCC to reflect the emerging needs of society such as energy efficiency, accessible housing, and exploring changes to improve resilience, while also consolidating its ongoing utility for industry.

The strategic plan relies on the ongoing effective partnerships and support of jurisdictional ministers through the Building Ministers Meeting, the building and plumbing industry, state and territory regulators, international counterparts and the wider community.

The ability of the ABCB to be connected, responsive and world leading in the development of building code standards is at the core of this strategic plan.

I would like to thank my Board colleagues and the Office of the ABCB in developing this plan, and on behalf of the Board, we look forward to working collaboratively and effectively across industry, government, and community stakeholders to deliver buildings that meet safety and health; amenity and accessibility; and sustainability for our communities.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "G. A. Beauchamp". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Glenys Beauchamp PSM
Chair, Australian Building Codes Board

Our vision



Principles guiding the way we work

The ABCB achieves its purpose through its relationships across governments and the building and plumbing sector.

The Office of the ABCB and the ABCB Board act with the highest integrity and impartiality in its interactions with all its stakeholders. The work of the ABCB is guided by a core set of principles:



Collaborative and supportive

We take a facilitative approach in the work we do and ensure we support stakeholders in understanding and adhering to the NCC.



Genuine engagement

We are committed to authentically engaging and listening to others knowledge, expertise and experience.



Trust and respect

We appreciate and respect the contributions from our diverse range of stakeholders.



Embrace diversity

We seek a diverse range of views and representation from our stakeholders to ensure our advice is comprehensive and balanced and ministerial decision makers have all the information they need to make considered decisions.



Open and transparent

We work to build a shared understanding of the issues, and changes required to develop world class standards and we believe that the more open we are the better the decisions.



Shared outcomes

We work toward the goal of shared outcomes recognising this is a process of balancing all points of view alongside the objectives of the ABCB's Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA). We are driven to achieve shared value for our stakeholders.



Strategic context

The building and plumbing sector is one of Australia's largest industries in terms of GDP contributions and employment. The vast majority of construction business in this sector are considered small to medium enterprises, and employ the highest number of apprentices and trainees in Australia. As such, building and plumbing activity contributes significantly to the social and economic prosperity of our country.

The regulatory framework governing the industry is highly complex — incorporating requirements around planning, certification, practitioner licensing, work health and safety, product assurance and payment security — and centres on the constitutional authority held by state and territory governments.

The Australian Government and state and territory governments work collaboratively to ensure a nationally consistent and cost effective approach to building and plumbing regulations and model guidance. The ABCB is an important vehicle for regulatory reform, creating value through the consolidation of on-site construction requirements into the National Construction Code (NCC), administering the WaterMark and CodeMark Product Certification Schemes and providing support services for practitioners.

Further, the building and plumbing sector is experiencing rapid change arising from a number of megatrends and strategic issues that will continue to impact the industry and society in general. It is necessary for the ABCB to be in a position to consider the implications and respond where there is a demonstrated need.

The extent to which the ABCB can assist in addressing these issues through code content, educational and support materials and collaboration with industry and regulators will remain a core challenge, particularly as new code amendments add to the complexity of building.

Principals within this operating context are:

- Buildings are becoming increasingly more complex and home to a range of interdependent systems that require the design and construction of buildings to be considered as a whole. This is exaggerated by the increasing densification of cities, resulting in more and significantly taller high-rise buildings, using a variety of innovative products and typically with a mix of occupancies (i.e. not single-use).
- Rapidly changing nature of product technologies, construction methods and supply chains has created potential vulnerabilities in the area of product safety and requires different approaches to how the suitability and use of products is established.
- Extreme weather events and the impacts of climate change, leading to the need to both mitigate the factors contributing to global warming and assist communities in being more resilient to its effects.
- Demographic change and in particular an aging population bring with it the need to better prepare housing and residential care buildings for the needs of these groups.
- COVID-19 prompts a review of the suitability of different types of buildings and systems within them to prevent the spread of pathogens. This experience highlights the importance of indoor environmental quality and the opportunity to consider the extent to which the NCC mitigates the spread of pathogens.
- Technology is also dramatically changing the way the NCC and its referenced standards are accessed and used. Ensuring the NCC is digitally available in a form that is easy to navigate, search and understand on a range of devices, and capable of interfacing with value-add applications, such as educational materials, needs to be at the heart of a new publishing paradigm.

Our part in the regulatory context

The ABCB is a joint initiative of the Australian Government and state and territory governments, together with the building and plumbing industry to improve productivity through the consolidation of all on-site construction requirements into a single national code.

The NCC is Australia's primary set of technical design and construction provisions for all buildings and plumbing installations in Australia. As a performance-based code, it sets the minimum required level for the safety, health, amenity, accessibility and sustainability of buildings.

The ABCB produces and maintains the NCC on behalf of the Australian Government and in conjunction with each state and territory government and industry. The ABCB reports to the Australian Government Minister and state and territory Ministers responsible for building and plumbing regulatory matters.

Two of the key strengths of the ABCB are the breadth and diversity of its Board members and the way in which the ABCB Office collaborates and engages with a wide range of stakeholders across the building and plumbing industry, regulators, research and academia, governments, and international bodies..

The ABCB strives to build positive and productive stakeholder relationships.

The key stakeholders of the ABCB are:



Building Ministers



Certification bodies



Building and plumbing practitioners



Product manufacturers and suppliers



Industry and professional associations



Education and training providers



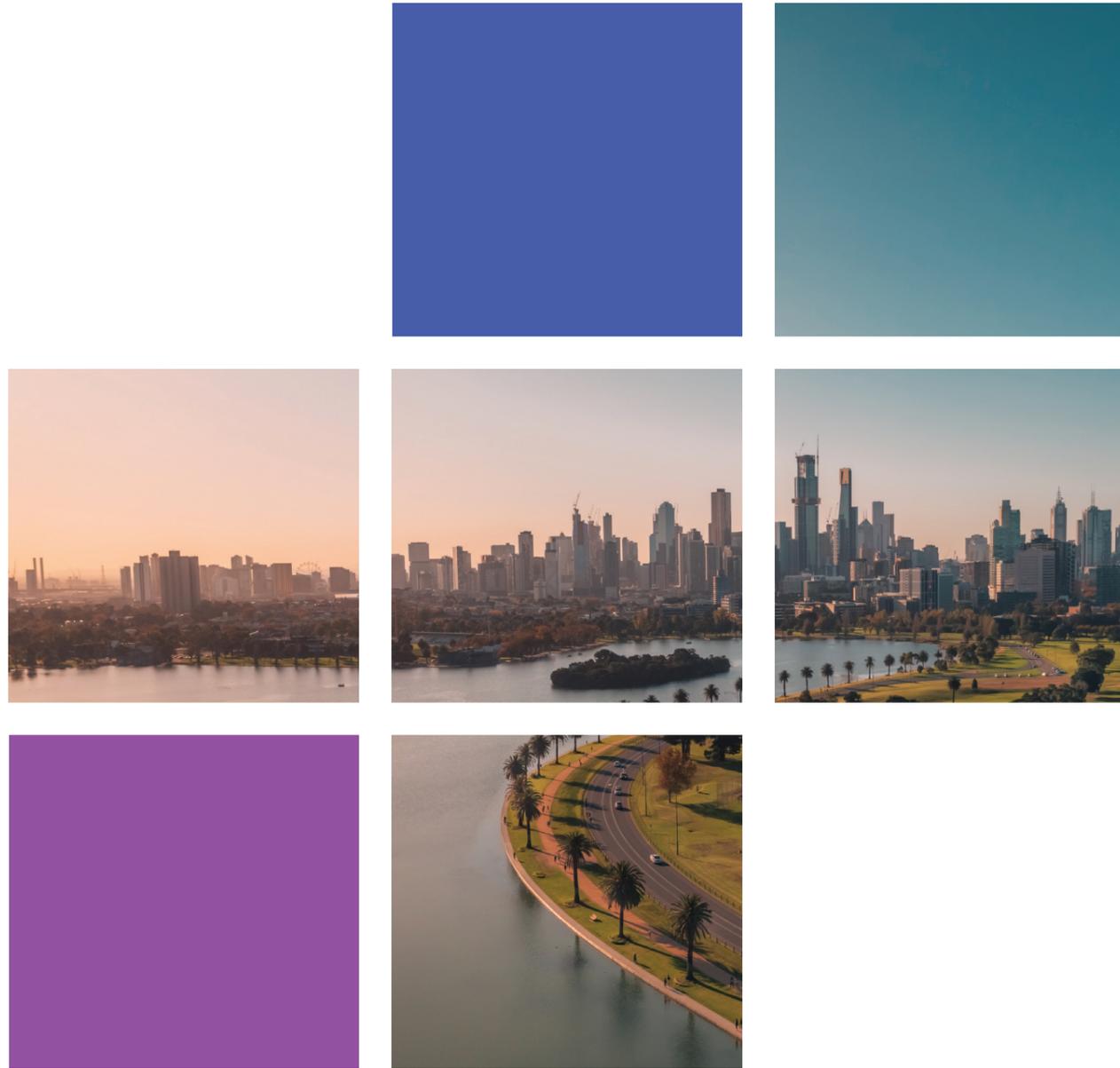
Other government agencies



The general public



Special interest groups



Our strategic priorities

The building and plumbing sector is highly complex and is a fundamental part of the country's social and economic prosperity. The ABCB recognises its responsibility and strategic purpose is to influence the building and plumbing industries at a macro level and respond to emerging challenges that are within its remit.

| Our Strategic Priorities

- 1 A commitment to national consistency, thereby increasing productivity and reducing the compliance burden on industry by ensuring one NCC across Australia

- 2 Delivering education and support materials to building and plumbing practitioners, directly and in partnership with state and territory regulators and training institutions to improve compliance with the code, thereby helping ensure all buildings built are safe and livable

- 3 Providing impartiality and integrity in the sector to restore confidence in Australia's built environment and help protect the interests of end users; by setting clear standards and working with governments and industry to improve the chain of responsibility across the design, construction and certification of buildings

- 4 Remaining agile to anticipate and respond to emerging issues and deliver cost effective and proportional responses to improve buildings and plumbing systems; thereby ensuring the NCC remains relevant and up to date and reinforce the ABCB's reputation as a leader of reform

- 5 Ongoing relationship and engagement with building and plumbing practitioners, industry/professional associations; suppliers and other relevant stakeholders ensures we are quick to identify and anticipate areas for change to the NCC to meet the needs and expectations of community and key stakeholders

- 6 Shape and influence the policies that affect the building and plumbing sector through engaging and representing key issues through the Building Ministers and other forums

- 7 Provide robust governance to ensure the ABCB remains effective, efficient and transparent at all times

Strategic objectives and performance

The ABCB is committed to 4 strategic outcomes in the delivery of its role as the standard setting organisation for the building and plumbing sector. We will achieve these outcomes through ongoing collaboration with, and the collective efforts of, many stakeholders. We intend to measure our performance over the next 5 years by progressively achieving the success indicators.

A NCC that proportionally and proactively meets community expectations for health and safety; amenity and accessibility; and sustainability.

Success

- National confidence in the NCC
- Internationally recognised benchmark
- Demonstrated anticipation and response to challenges facing the building and plumbing sector

Indicators

- Stakeholder confidence in ABCB fulfilling its role
- Cited and referenced by other standards bodies internationally in terms of best practice.
- Provisions benchmarked against comparable international Codes

A NCC that delivers net societal benefit, is responsive and keeps pace with emerging challenges.

Success

- Foreshadowed future needs and changes and have made amendments to reflect emerging trends that are proportional and cost effective
- Having regard to the objectives of the IGA, introduced new measures into the NCC in a timely and in-cycle pattern
- The NCC reflects the strategic policy priorities of governments and those identified through extensive stakeholder engagement

Indicators

- Reduced number of variations/departures from the NCC
- Industry and governments have a high level of confidence in the NCC (reduction in out of cycle amendments)
- Satisfy best regulatory practice guidance

The ABCB is a recognised and respected part of the regulatory landscape.

Success

- Responsive to justified technical changes to the NCC proposed by Industry
- The NCC is recognised as a single source of truth by practitioners for building and plumbing standards
- Trusted source of information and advice to jurisdictional regulators
- Recognised as a trusted, impartial, objective and credible player in the regulatory context

Indicators

- Reduced number of variations/departures from the NCC
- High levels of confidence in ABCB by State and Territory regulators
- Positive public profile
- Sought after participation in respected public events, forum and media

A NCC that is integral, usable and useful to all industry practice through enabling practitioner competence.

Success

- High levels of compliance with the NCC
- Take-up and embedded use by Industry of educational materials
- The NCC standard is trusted, compelling and easy to use

Indicators

- High levels of compliance with the NCC (collaborate with the jurisdictional regulators to measure industry compliance)
- High levels of digital access to the NCC
- Uptake and use of CPD programs, educational and support materials

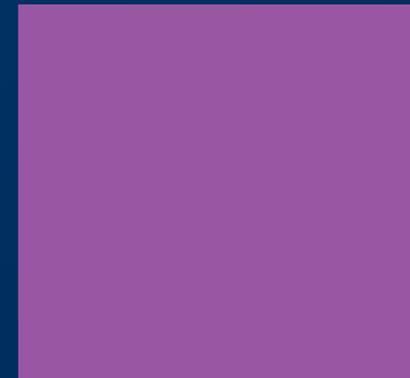
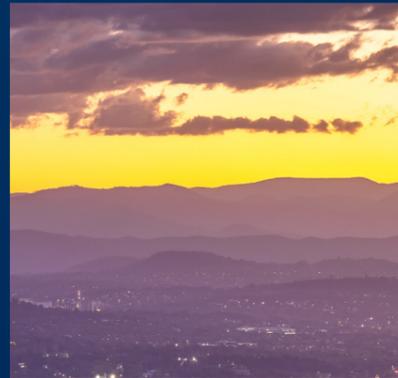


Governance

The ABCB Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) sets out the governance guidelines for the Board and associated advisory groups.

On behalf of governments, the Board is responsible for setting the content of and maintaining the currency of the NCC; operating specified product certification schemes; providing education and support materials; and monitoring progress against plans.

The Board consists of up to eighteen members including a Chair independent of sectoral interests, representatives of the head of the Australian Government, and each State and Territory Administration, up to 7 industry representatives, and a representative of the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA). The Chair is appointed for up to 5 years and may be reappointed for up to 12 months. Industry and ALGA representatives are appointed for a term of up to 5 years and may only have a maximum of 2 consecutive terms.



Office CEO and functions

In accordance with the IGA, the CEO supports and enacts the decisions of the Board and administers the work of the Office of the ABCB in accordance with delegations provided by the Secretary of the Department.

The Board can also delegate decision-making authority to the CEO having regard to its responsibilities and risk appetite. The ABCB Office supports the Board and employs a range of highly skilled staff across 4 work streams:

- 1 Developing and refining new and existing technical requirements of the NCC to ensure the Code remains fit-for-purpose, through the incorporation of contemporary standards and consideration of proposals for change, etc.
- 2 Exploring and assessing new strategic and emerging challenges to ensure the NCC continues to meet community expectations and respond to emerging challenges
- 3 Embedding practitioner understanding through new education and support materials
- 4 Essential operations—such as marketing and communications, digital publishing of NCC Online, etc.—and the administration of the WaterMark and CodeMark Product Certification Schemes.



Committees

The Board and Office obtain support through two standing committees: Building Codes Committee (BCC) and Plumbing Code Committee (PCC).

The BCC and PCC are chaired by the ABCB CEO and provide advice on technical matters relevant to the ABCB, including amendments to the NCC, reference documents for NCC inclusion, and non-regulatory materials that support the NCC.

The Board can also convene Steering Committees as required to address specific and important issues. The criteria for establishing a steering committee includes: significant emerging issue facing the industry, topic requiring significant review and analysis, or response to an external review or royal commission.

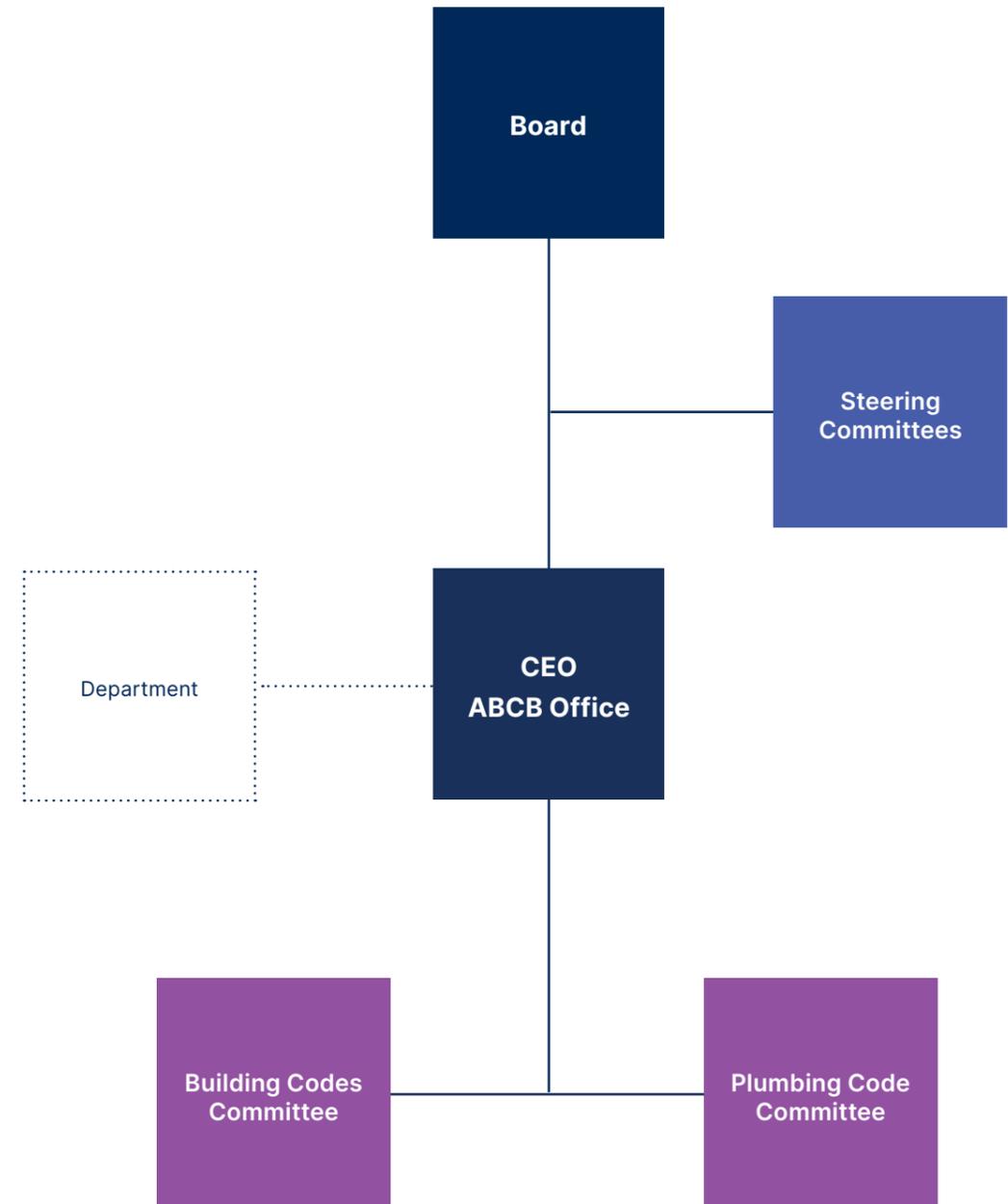
Steering Committees are intended to comprise Board members, and have their own Chair and Terms of Reference, agreed to by the Board.

Steering Committees are primarily established to help support and guide the Office in work relating to the topic. These committees are not expected to engage in project management.

Committees are subject to Terms of Reference and comprised of government and industry members agreed to by the Board.

The ABCB Office can establish working groups to provide more comprehensive and technical support/advice associated with a particular topic. Working groups comprise representatives of the respective technical committees, supplemented by relevant subject matter experts. The activities of the working groups are reported to the technical committees for consideration of final advice.

Governance structure



Accountability and transparency

The ABCB is accountable to Building Ministers, providing all significant strategic policy matters to Ministers for consideration and direction.

The ABCB submits to Building Ministers its proposed Business Plan that details its work program and budget for the next financial year.

The ABCB provides annual reports to the Building Ministers setting out its financial performance and progress towards achieving outcomes in accordance with the ABCB's strategic objectives.

This ensures its operations remain transparent to Ministers, and provides the opportunity to governments to make amendments where agreed and in the national interest.

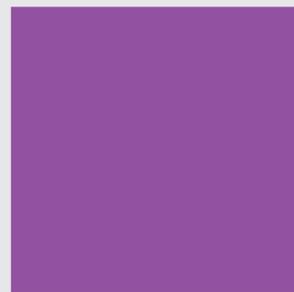
The CEO and ABCB Office report to the Board. The Board meets in person and virtually when collective decisions are required. As such, the frequency of meetings varies, but at a minimum 3 times a year.

Board meetings prioritise consideration of matters brought forward by the Office and any issue suggested by a Board member, consistent with the Board's responsibilities. Deliberations and decisions of the Board are recorded in writing.

The ABCB Office reports progress of ongoing work including the deliberations and actions of the technical committees, financial performance statements and risk management.

Reports are regularly provided to the Board out of session. Board members can identify any matters they consider would benefit from a discussion at a meeting or directly with the Office.





Stakeholder engagement

The ABCB is a leader in effective stakeholder consultation and collaboration between governments, industry, consumer groups and other organisations.

The composition of the Board and the two standing committees (BCC and PCC) reflects the importance of industry representation and partnership in the decision-making process.

Stakeholder engagement facilitates transparency in decision-making, increases productivity and improves building outcomes in Australia.

To ensure stakeholders have confidence in the decisions and actions of the Board — and to subject itself to external scrutiny — all major decisions, regulatory impact analysis and consultations are conducted through open public consultation. Stakeholders are engaged throughout the analysis of regulatory proposals to improve understanding of the problem and identify feasible options capable of addressing the issue.

We aim to provide ways for stakeholders to contribute meaningfully to our work. Proposals for changing (PFC) the Code can be submitted by the public, community groups, industry, or governments at any stage. 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.

The ABCB uses an online consultation platform (Consultation Hub) as a single source for all public consultations relevant to the NCC, CodeMark and WaterMark product certification schemes, and regulatory reform work. The ABCB then releases all research, policy analysis and proposed NCC amendments for public comment and scrutiny. This allows stakeholders to have direct input to decision-makers through a transparent regulatory decision-making process.



We asked



You said



We did

Risk management

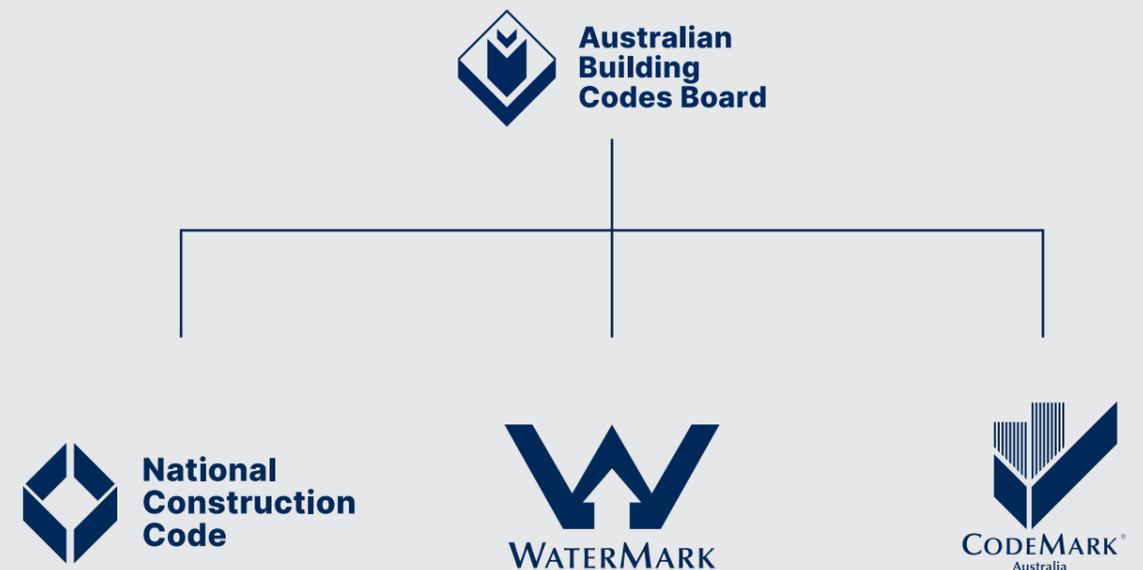
As a portfolio entity within the Department of Industry, Science, and Resources, the Office of the ABCB maintains a risk management approach aligned to the Department's risk management framework and reporting arrangements.

The ABCB is an integral vehicle of regulatory reform, creating value through the consolidation of on-site construction requirements into the National Construction Code, and administering the WaterMark and CodeMark Australia Product Certification Schemes.

The ABCB's Risk Management Framework sets out its approach to managing strategic risks and its risk appetite. The framework is designed to ensure risks are effectively anticipated, understood and managed in a purposeful way, embedded in governance and business processes, and integrated in day to day Office operations and decisions.

Effectively engaging with and managing risk is central to achieving our mission of ensuring safe and sustainable building and plumbing systems throughout Australia.

As a portfolio entity within the Department of Industry, Science and Resources, the ABCB maintains a risk management approach aligned to the Department's broader risk management framework and reporting arrangements.



Integrity and stewardship

As a government entity, the Board is bound by whole of government arrangements and the high standards of propriety, honesty and objectivity, and probity in the stewardship of public funds and resources.

Non-government members enter into conflict of interest and confidentiality deeds and all members are bound by various code of conduct requirements.

It is paramount the ABCB remains effective and efficient, and operates in a transparent way at all times.

In addition to having a high level of government involvement — in its composition, accountability and source of funding — the Board complies with the governmental endorsed principles in addressing regulatory reform to prevent undue influence and maintain trust.

The ABCB assesses all major proposals through Regulatory Impact Assessments, to understand and decide and/or provide advice on the impact of potential government action. This approach embodies the governmental Principles of Better Practice Regulation vetted by the Office of Best Practice Regulation and maintains a strong level of engagement with stakeholders.

The ABCB's high standard of transparency provides stakeholders with the opportunity to consider the inputs to potential government actions and regulatory decisions. This promotes trust between governments and the industry and the community; and an open opportunity to participate in developing policy solutions and encourages broad ownership of solutions.

Funding

The IGA sets out the funding contributions by the Australian Government, State and Territories to support the ongoing operation of the ABCB, and includes:

\$4 million

An annual appropriation by the Australian Government of \$4 million per annum;

\$4 million

State and territory contributions to a combined total of \$4 million per annum, with each jurisdiction's contribution based on a fixed component of \$75,000 per annum and a pro rata amount based on the total value of building approvals in their respective jurisdiction.

The \$8 million in total funding contributions is received into the ABCB Special Account, administered by the Australian Government. The ABCB also supports operations through revenue generated from WaterMark License fees, national events, and funding granted by other government entities for commissioned projects.



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