



ABCB



AUSTRALIAN BUILDING CODES BOARD

Annual Business Plan 2014-15



THE ABCB

The Australian Building Codes Board (ABCB) is a joint initiative of all levels of government in Australia, together with the building industry. 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 through the National Construction Code (NCC), and the development of effective regulatory and non-regulatory approaches. The Board aims to establish minimum effective and proportional codes, standards and regulatory systems that are consistent between States and Territories.

FOCUS OF BUSINESS PLAN – NEXT INSTALMENT OF REGULATORY REFORM

The construction sector is a significant industry for Australia and represents the second largest sector of small business in the economy. As a result, constraining cost growth and improving productivity has the potential to deliver significant economic benefits nationally. A 2012 report by the Centre for International Economics (CIE) found that current building regulatory reforms implemented progressively over the last 20 years are delivering \$1.1 billion per annum in benefits, with an additional \$1.1 billion per annum in potential benefits yet to be realised.

The next instalment of building regulatory reform which is detailed in the 2014-15 ABCB Business Plan has a number of initiatives to reduce the costs of compliance whilst maintaining health and safety standards; further consolidate consistency in regulatory arrangements across and within jurisdictions; and enhance access to and the utility of key tools needed by users of the building and plumbing control systems to improve outcomes.

The next instalment of building regulatory reforms aims to:

- enhance access through a free online NCC, increase stability through an extended amendment cycle timeframe and improve the document's useability;
- quantify the NCC's performance measures to facilitate greater uptake in their use and therefore the application of new, innovative and cost effective solutions to building design and construction improving the quality of outcomes;
- reduce State and Territory departures from the NCC, and both consolidate and harmonise regulation to improve national consistency;
- limit the imposition of higher prescriptive standards for building design and construction than those agreed to nationally through the NCC by other authorities, such as local governments; and
- continue expansion of the NCC to cover all on-site building regulations into a single source document for national consistency and remove unnecessary overlaps in regulation.

The goal is to increase awareness and adherence to the NCC, improve building outcomes through higher levels of compliance and deliver the identified national economic benefits.

Free online National Construction Code

Providing free online access to the NCC will enable an extended amendment cycle of every three years to be introduced, result in a reduction in red tape, improvements to the stability, useability and penetration of the NCC and help deliver better, more affordable buildings. Free online access will extend the reach of the NCC from 12,000 registered users to approximately 200,000 practitioners in the building and plumbing industry, as well as to consumers that have an interest in building and plumbing regulations.

Industry has long expressed concerns that the regulatory requirements of the NCC being paid for by a relatively small number of users, leads to non-compliance and an inequitable distribution of costs, particularly for existing users from small businesses.

Increased use and quantification of performance

The Productivity Commission Report on Reform of Building Regulation recommended, "The ABCB should enhance efforts to make the performance-based requirements in the BCA more effective. This should include providing measurable criteria to aid verifying compliance and clarifying the assessment process to be used." More recently the CIE report into the Benefits of Building Regulation Reform found that only 50% of the potential benefits (\$1.1 billion per annum) of the NCC have been realised.

This project, which is targeted to be completed in FY2016-17, aims to achieve an important part of the additional benefits through the increased use of the performance-based approach. The overarching objective for this project in 2014-15 is to continue to develop and implement measurable performance in the NCC, with a particular focus on capacity building and engendering a performance mindset within the sector.

Improved NCC Useability

This initiative, which will span more than one year, is one of the more significant undertakings under the package of reforms and is central to being able to improve practitioner understanding and therefore competency in the application of the NCC. It will involve the re-packaging of the document to simplify its use and therefore make it more accessible to the wider audience that will be exposed to it as a result of making the NCC free. It also has a significant relationship to the development of new information technology that will be used to assist in facilitating the availability of the NCC through different mediums. In this respect the format and structure of the current paper based document does not readily lend itself to the number and the types of practitioners that operate on the ground.

Contemporary Acceptable Construction Practices

This project involves the systematic review of the on-going relevance and appropriateness of all Acceptable Construction Practice provisions for domestic construction in Volume Two of the NCC. The project parallels the quantification of performance work by recognising that there are different users of the NCC that have different requirements depending on the type of buildings they construct.

The project will span more than one year and will identify where the content of Volume Two can be refined and modernised, which should result in a more useful and contemporary document for practitioners in the housing sector, again enhancing understanding and useability of this part of the NCC.

Enhanced training and awareness

Enhanced access through making the NCC available free online, needs to be complemented by improving practitioner awareness and understanding of its contents. The ABCB will examine the needs of users (new and existing) with a view to developing appropriate education and training opportunities such as interactive seminars or workshops, subject-specific webcasts and hardcopy materials. These tools will be developed in consultation with and to assist registered training organisations, the tertiary sector, industry associations and regulators in delivering fit for purpose education and training materials, complementing the reform agenda by lifting practitioner competency and understanding of the NCC.

Regulatory Reduction Review of the NCC

Over time, with changing technology, construction techniques and community expectations, some of the NCC provisions have become redundant or unnecessary. An audit of the NCC will be conducted to identify potential opportunities to reduce regulatory content, which would include redundant or unnecessary material. The Administrations will be engaged in this process, as will the technical committees, and will involve cost/benefit analysis of any subject matter identified, as required by the Office of Best Practice Regulation.

Natural disaster mitigation

Following the Productivity Commission's 2012 report, Barriers to Effective Climate Change Adaptation, the ABCB will finalise a paper on the Resilience of Buildings to Extreme Weather Events, which will include consideration of stakeholder feedback and identify further work that could be undertaken. This will also inform the development of a policy statement outlining the principles to be used to guide an approach to adaptation to extreme weather events when considering proposals for change to the NCC.

For example, past earthquakes in New Zealand and Japan highlight the destructive power of earthquakes and the importance of building codes in risk mitigation. A study is being undertaken in conjunction with Geoscience Australia to evaluate whether current seismic maps reflect the understanding of seismic risk in Australia.

Delivery of Board Core Code Writing Business

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 of 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 means of achieving the desired result, including alternatives to regulation. If intervention is necessary, the NCC sets minimum acceptable regulatory requirements that are proportional to the issue being addressed.

2013-14 ACHIEVEMENTS	2014-15 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
NCC 2014 published and delivered on budget	NCC 2015 delivered free online and on budget
Ministerial endorsement of 2013-14 ABCB Business Plan received	Ministerial endorsement of 2014-15 ABCB Business Plan received
CodeMark Review completed and WaterMark Review progressed	NCC expanded to include Telecommunication Spaces and Pathways
Increased Use and Quantification of Performance Directions Report developed and projects commenced	NCC useability review commenced to improve format, structure and presentation of document in a more user friendly package using different mediums
Community Bushfire Shelters Handbook finalised, completing the ABCB'S responses to the VBRC recommendations	Assist with development of the new IGA which will include a strengthened commitment to Next Instalment of Building Regulatory Reform initiatives
Resilience of buildings to extreme weather events discussion paper developed and released for public comment	Stage Two of WaterMark Scheme Review finalised and modified CodeMark Scheme introduced
Stakeholder agreement on future Plumbing Code reform initiatives received	Resilience of buildings to extreme weather events discussion paper finalised
Board endorsed inclusion of sprinkler protection provisions for new residential aged care buildings for NCC 2015	Following consultation, new tools under development to enhance understanding and increase NCC usage among practitioners
Online NCC training pilots developed	Identification of regulatory measures for removal from the NCC commenced
Successfully delivered 2013 Building Australia's Future Conference	Quantify all health and safety performance requirements of the NCC

THE EVOLUTION AND FUTURE DIRECTION OF NATIONAL BUILDING REGULATION REFORM

Significant Reform to date

<p>Building Code of Australia (BCA) created</p>	<p>National Performance-based Building Code introduced</p>	<p>National Construction Code (NCC) Implemented (consolidation of building and plumbing)</p>
--	---	---

<p>The next instalment of Building Regulation Reform agreed</p>
--

Implement Next Round of Reforms

<p>NCC Free Online and commencement of NCC review</p>
--

<p>Move to a 3 year amendment cycle and last annual NCC edition</p>
--

<p>Move to digital NCC and new technology applications</p>

<p>Next NCC amendment due with Quantification of Performance Measures & Improved Useability</p>
--

Benefits

<p>Development and adoption of a single nationally consistent building Code reduced differences across Jurisdictions.</p>

<p>Introduction of Performance-based requirements into the BCA: Performance requirements specify mandatory levels of building performance and provide optional means of compliance for the designer or builder to decide how this is achieved. Allows for flexibility and innovation.</p>

<p>Consolidation of building and plumbing into a single National Construction Code aimed to reduce inconsistency and overlap between the BCA and the PCA, streamline regulatory approaches across jurisdictions.</p>
--

<p>To realise the full benefits of a national performance-based construction code the next instalment of reforms involve free online access to the NCC, quantification of the NCC's performance requirements, enhanced useability of the NCC, inclusion of other onsite building regulation, continued reduction of State and Territory variations and limiting local government interventions.</p>

<p>Provides immediate benefits to small business, building and plumbing practitioners through increasing access to the NCC, removing a cost of regulation estimated to deliver a productivity benefit of up to \$55m per annum and removes an inequity in who pays for the development of the NCC. Making the NCC free also unlocks other reform opportunities.</p>

<p>Introduces a higher level of stability into the content of the NCC by reducing the frequency of change. This will reduce costs and improve productivity through consistency over time. It will reduce the volume of changes to the NCC, allow resources to focus on the operability of the NCC and not just its content; and provide more time for changes to the NCC to be evaluated and consulted on.</p>
--

<p>Will further enhance practitioner access to the NCC through a range of technologies. This will also increase awareness of the NCC and with new features, understanding of its contents. In turn this is anticipated to result in improved building outcomes, increased compliance and enhanced productivity.</p>

<p>Significantly increases practitioner understanding of the NCC and its requirements, resulting in increased consistency of interpretation, compliance and improved building outcomes. It will improve access to the expanded NCC audience through simpler and easier to measure documentation.</p>
--

1994

1996

2011

2014

2015

2016

2018

2019

ABCB WORK PROGRAM 2014-15

PROJECT NAME	PROJECT OUTPUT
Maintain and Update the NCC	2015 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, following approval by the OBPR; Effective regulation impact assessment processes in consultation with OBPR and in accordance with COAG regulatory principles
Variation Management	A reduction in existing State/Territory variations to the NCC, scrutiny of proposals for new variations in accordance with IGA 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; A report on wheelchair spatial dimensions for consideration as part of the Premises Standards 5 year review
Temporary structures code of practice	Code of practice for temporary structures used for public assembly
Increased Use and Quantification of Performance	Measurable NCC Performance; Increased capacity of stakeholders to use performance; improved outcomes from use of Performance
Emergency Egress for All Occupants	A Consultation RIS to inform proposals to provide emergency egress for all occupants in a future NCC
Non-mandatory Handbooks	Development, publication or revision of non-mandatory Handbooks on matters not suitable for regulation
Extreme Weather Events - Building Resilience	Consideration of the ABCB's framework to guide an approach to adaptation to extreme weather events consistent with the IGA; A final discussion paper outlining options for further work in relation to resilience to extreme weather events; An assessment of the adequacy of the current NCC earthquake provisions; Natural disasters monitored to determine whether current NCC provisions are appropriate
Sustainability - Energy Efficiency	Monitor the development of relevant building energy efficiency policy through the National Framework for Energy Efficiency (NREE), including the National Strategy for Energy Efficiency (NSEE); Maintain the relationship with the Nationwide House Energy Rating Scheme (NatHERS) Administrator with respect to house energy rating software and assist in impact assessment of proposed changes to the Chenath engine for the house energy rating software; Participate in the National Building Energy Efficiency Project (NEEBP); Improve education and awareness of stakeholders; Research summer Energy performance of buildings
Building/Planning Interface	Improved communication with planning regulators and identification of any gaps or inconsistencies between the building and planning regulatory systems
Research Scholarship	Research to inform decisions on future NCC and non-regulatory measures delivered through bodies such as universities and technical colleges
WaterMark Administration	Materials and products complying fully with the applicable requirements of the WaterMark Certification Scheme are certified by a WaterMark Conformity Assessment Body (WMCAB) and listed on the WaterMark Product Database
CodeMark Administration	Management and facilitation of Australian/New Zealand third party product certification scheme
NCC Advisory Service	NCC clarification/advice to users
IT Infrastructure	Continued development of ABCB's IT infrastructure including NCC Publishing and Authoring System replacement, establishment of a Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system, NCC Online redevelopment, maintenance of legacy systems prior to free NCC, local hardware and network, and web site hosting including strategy to move to cloud-based arrangements
ABCB Cadetship	Program offering ABCB employment experience for building professional students
NCC Awareness and Education	National information seminars and education materials to enhance understanding and increase usage of the NCC among practitioners, the tertiary sector and community
NCC Marketing and Promotion	Increased awareness of the NCC, its supporting activities and the ABCB
National Conference	Delivery of an ABCB Conference supported by industry
Facilitation of National Consistency in Technical & Administrative Systems	Interaction with existing national forums and administrations to facilitate a nationally consistent approach to building regulations, including existing buildings
Farm buildings	NCC provisions specifically applicable to buildings used for agricultural purposes (farm buildings)
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 a report and recommendations for possible changes to the PCA
Effective Height of buildings	Clarification on the method of measuring effective height of buildings, for inclusion in the NCC
Free NCC Implementation	
S&T Regulatory application of free NCC and Other Measures	All necessary pathways for the implementation of measures arising out of the next instalment of building regulation reform package in place within the administrations at the appropriate points in time
New Professional Publishing Platform	Provision of a structured collaborative content authoring system that utilises an easy to use and familiar interface to create single-source XML content for the NCC; Implementation of streamlined production processes; Provision of a common drawing tool to establish in-house diagram development capability and standards; Ability to create multiple outputs incorporating digital delivery for mobile devices
Stakeholder engagement and strategic communication	Work with key stakeholders and develop mechanisms for stakeholder engagement to increase uptake of the NCC, and awareness of the ABCB
NCC Advisory Service - in a free NCC environment	NCC clarification/advice to users
Third party service providers	Manage legal and financial arrangements with current third party publishers
New Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA)	Provide input into the development of a new IGA for consideration by June 2015
State & Territory Interaction	
'Gateway' model to limit local government intervention	Reduction in local government variations to the NCC
NCC Expansion	
Scope Gasfitting inclusion (subject to Govt support)	Agreement to possible inclusion and governance arrangements; Subject to the need, development of a RIS
Scope Telecommunication Spaces and Pathways	Detailed analysis of the problem and possible solutions in consultation with affected stakeholders; Technical solutions to ensure the supply of telecommunication spaces and pathways through in-building pathways developed for inclusion in a future NCC
Communication & Engagement	
Customer Relationship Management (CRM)	Design and manage the utilisation of the centralised Customer Relationship Management (CRM) system that will significantly enhance in house capabilities to communicate with stakeholders
Enhanced training and awareness in a free NCC environment	Commence the review and development of new materials to complement the move to a free NCC; Scope and develop enhanced training and awareness activities for the increased market, with a particular emphasis on RTO's, tertiary institutions, industry and regulators
NCC Useability	
NCC Useability review	Draft amendments for consideration by the Board/BCC/PCC as appropriate
NCC Vol.2 ACP review	Revised and contemporary Acceptable Construction Practice provisions for inclusion in NCC Volume Two
Consolidation & Harmonisation	
BCA/PCA harmonisation	Inclusion of cross volume links between building and plumbing for matters applicable to both
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
Product Certification Scheme Improvements	
WaterMark	Provide a final review report to BMF for consideration post ABCB 2014-3
CodeMark	Proposal for modified CodeMark voluntary scheme to be considered at ABCB 2014-3
Transitional Change	
Extended amendment cycle including real-time mechanism for NCC major policy changes	A reduction in the frequency of changes to the NCC; Implementation of 3 year amendment cycle

*Expansion of existing projects and new projects.

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

INFORMED PRACTITIONERS – BETTER BUILDING OUTCOMES



NCC available Free Online

Building Australia's Future Biennial Conference



BUILDING AUSTRALIA'S FUTURE



Non-mandatory Handbooks (free)



Awareness and Education Workshops & Seminars



ABCBC Awareness Webcasts (free)



ABCBC Standards (free)



Official ABCBC Facebook Page



NCC Educational Awareness Resource Kits (free)



NCC Online Training



www.abcb.gov.au
ncc@abcb.gov.au

1300 134 631

Postal Address

GPO Box 9839

CANBERRA ACT 2601

facebook.com/ABCBC.NCC