



ABCB

AUSTRALIAN BUILDING CODES BOARD

Annual Business Plan 2013-14



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 effective and proportional codes, standards and regulatory systems that are consistent between States and Territories.

For more information about the ABCB and the NCC, refer to page 8 of this document.

FOCUS OF BUSINESS PLAN

Activities in 2013-14 and the out years aim to improve access to and understanding of the NCC, which will increase compliance with its provisions and result in further productivity gains.

A key feature of activities in 2013-14 and at least into 2014-15, will be the review of some of the Code's content with a view to consolidating and clarifying areas that have been identified as difficult to interpret. This will help improve consistency in interpretation, which in conjunction with other measures such as quantification of performance and a concerted effort with the States and Territories to reduce variations, can be anticipated to enhance compliance and increase productivity.

The future direction of the Plumbing Code of Australia (PCA) will be discussed at a stakeholder Planning Day in July. Matters for discussion will include delineation within plumbing regulation; expanding the Deemed-to-Satisfy (DTS) in the PCA; improving national consistency; future research and the PCA/WaterMark relationship. The PCA has formed Volume Three of the NCC since 2011 and was the first step in COAG's broader plan to incorporate all onsite regulatory building requirements. The ABCB has progressed the next step in COAG's plan, with a scoping study to include onsite gasfitting under the NCC now complete and options for its inclusion being considered by Governments.

CLIMATE CHANGE ADAPTATION

The ABCB has further refined its approach to climate change adaptation following the release of the recent Productivity Commission Report – Barriers to Effective Climate Change Adaptation. The Report recommended to government that the Building Ministers' Forum (BMF) should provide formal direction to the ABCB to:

- Monitor projections of climate change risks to buildings; and
- Revise the standards in the NCC to take into account these projections where this delivers a net benefit to the community.

To address the recommendations, the ABCB is undertaking several activities including:

- Comprehensively reviewing and considering the impacts of climate change in relation to all relevant new regulatory initiatives;
- Developing an ABCB policy paper outlining the ABCB's position in relation to adaptation to climate change;
- Engaging with stakeholders to identify issues and opinions;
- Continuing to monitor natural disasters to determine whether current NCC provisions are appropriate;
- Reporting annually to BMF on work undertaken by the Board on climate change adaptation; and
- Transparently and formally incorporating climate change adaptation activities in the ABCB's annual work program.

TOWARDS THE INCREASED USE AND QUANTIFICATION OF PERFORMANCE

This project was established in response to the 2004 Productivity Commission Report Reform of Building Regulation which recommended that: "the ABCB should enhance efforts to make the performance-based requirements in the BCA more effective. This should include providing measurable criteria to aid judging compliance and clarifying the assessment process to be used."

While important progress has been made, including quantification of certain weatherproofing and fire safety criteria, more needs to be done. The ABCB recently commissioned the study Benefits of Building Regulation Reform, which found the potential for significant additional benefits of the NCC can be realised. The study also found that a number of stakeholders were concerned that contingent risks may be rising relating to how performance-based solutions are being implemented. The results of this project will help capture the potential benefits by increasing the use of performance while reducing the contingent risks.

PRODUCT CERTIFICATION SCHEME REVIEWS

CodeMark

The Board agreed to review the CodeMark Scheme five years after its 2005 introduction, however following agreed scheme rule changes in November 2008, it was acknowledged that the review should be postponed until 2011-12. The review is now complete, and highlighted the following areas for consideration: poor uptake and awareness of the scheme, acceptance of CodeMark certificates, implementation of CodeMark in Legislation, industry views and comparisons with international certification/evaluation schemes. The ABCB consulted with all Certification Bodies and JAS-ANZ, met with most Certificate holders, surveyed all scheme participants, held workshop forums in Sydney and Melbourne with industry and met with the Building Administrations in a workshop environment. An external firm have been engaged to carry out audits to evaluate the financial, risk and technical aspects of the scheme and this information will also assist in developing a way forward.

WaterMark

The ABCB is in the early stages of finalising the Project Management brief for the review of WaterMark. It is intended to follow a similar process as that used for the CodeMark review, including an international desktop study of plumbing certification schemes, meetings with Certification Bodies, JAS-ANZ and Certificate holders. A survey of scheme participants, workshops in relevant capital cities with industry and meetings with the Plumbing Administrations will also take place. It is also proposed to study the recent review of the WELS Scheme for any similarities, synergies or opportunities it may present. An external firm has been engaged to carry out a Risk Assessment of the WaterMark Scheme, as received from Standards Australia, and to develop a Risk and Compliance Framework which will identify effective mitigation strategies and controls. It is anticipated that the review will take approximately 12 months.

NCC AWARENESS AND EDUCATION INITIATIVES

The ABCB acknowledges the important contribution awareness and education plays in helping shape, maintain and improve the content and quality of the NCC. Broader awareness, understanding and compliance with the NCC leads to a better standard of construction experienced across Australia.

In 2013-14 the ABCB will again conduct its popular NCC Information Seminars in all capital cities. It will also host its biennial National Conference, which will bring together for the first time building and plumbing delegates.

Other awareness and education activities include the further development of non-mandatory handbooks, Awareness Resource Kits (training modules) and NCC webcasts, all of which can be accessed free of charge from the ABCB website. Regular communication through the new ABCB Facebook page also ensures that participating practitioners receive up to the minute updates on ABCB activities.

With the consolidation of building and plumbing under the NCC and associated new product certification responsibilities, the ABCB's stakeholder base has broadened considerably in recent times. A review of current engagement processes has been undertaken and new measures developed.

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.

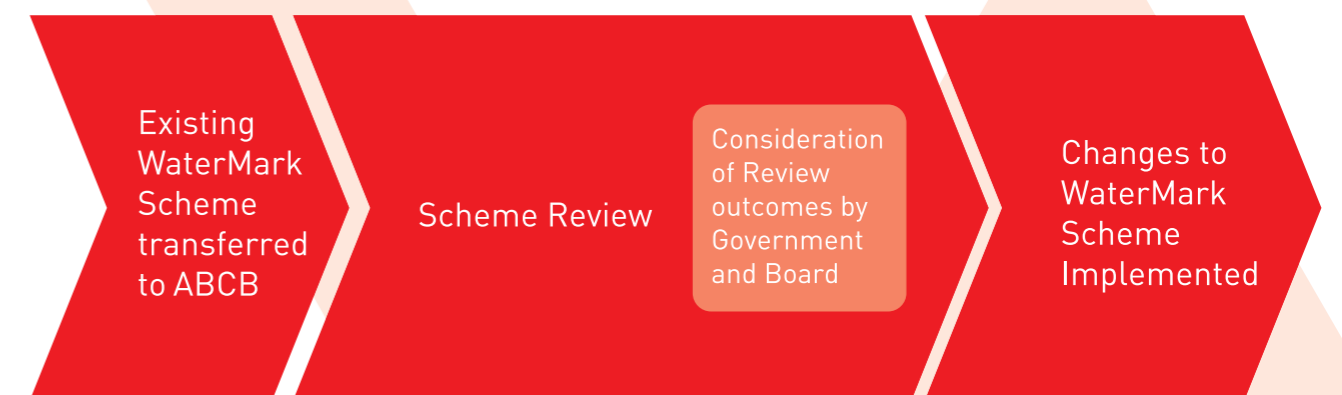
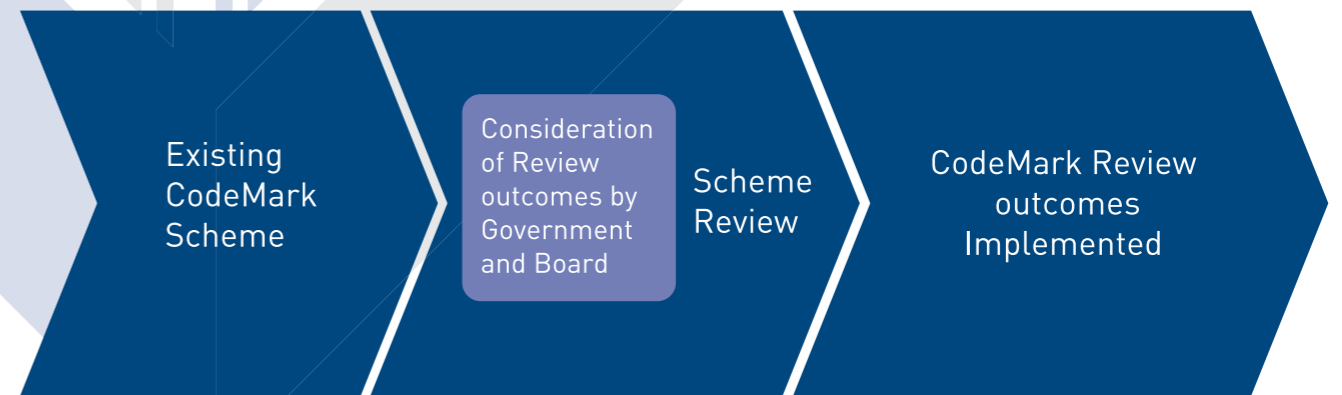
2012-13 ACHIEVEMENTS

Ministerial endorsement of 2012-13 ABCB Business Plan received
ABCB five year Strategic Plan endorsed
NCC 2013 delivered on budget and in line with COAG principles
Inclusion of gasfitting in NCC considered by governments
Benefits of Building Regulatory Reform study completed
Continued response to Government direction on Adaptation including natural disasters and climate change, including development of a Board position statement
WaterMark Plumbing Product Certification Scheme transitioned to ABCB and review commenced
Review of CodeMark Building Product Certification Scheme commenced
Flood Standard and non-mandatory Handbook Building in Flood Prone Areas released
Awareness and education activities enhanced
NCC 2013 Information Seminars and webcast delivered

2013-14 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

Ministerial endorsement of 2013-14 ABCB Business Plan by September 2013
Successful delivery of the Building Australia's Future Biennial Conference in September 2013
CodeMark review complete by November 2013
Regulation Impact Statement (RIS) on Emergency Egress for all Occupants by December 2013
Increased Use and Quantification of Performance Directions Report developed by December 2013
Existing buildings discussion paper developed by December 2013 and released for public comment in 2014
Climate Change Adaptation Policy paper developed by December 2013 and released for public comment in 2014
WaterMark review complete by February 2014
NCC 2014 delivered on budget and in line with COAG principles by May 2014
Stakeholder agreement on future plumbing regulatory reform initiatives June 2014

Review of Building & Plumbing Product Certification



2013

2014

2015

ABCB WORK PROGRAM 2013-14

	PROJECT NAME	PROJECT OUTPUT
NCC (CODE) DEVELOPMENT	Maintain and Update the NCC	2014 edition of the National Construction Code (NCC) finalised for publication; Draft of NCC 2015 released for public comment
	Standards Coordination and Committees	Documents, including Australian Standards, which are suitable for regulatory use and referencing in the NCC
	Future Direction of NCC Volume Two	Report to the Board on options for the future direction of NCC Volume Two
	Access for People with a Disability	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
	Towards the Increased Use and Quantification of Performance	Strategy to increase the use of performance; Measurable NCC performance
	Emergency Egress for All Occupants	A Directions Report identifying a strategy for further analysis and proposing egress measures for all occupants for future inclusion in the BCA; A Consultation RIS to inform proposals to provide emergency egress for all occupants in the Deemed-to-Satisfy provisions of a future NCC
	Climate Change - Adaptation and Resilience (inc. Natural Disasters)	A policy statement outlining the principles used by ABCB to guide its approach to climate change adaptation when considering proposals for change to the NCC; An assessment of the adequacy of the current earthquake provisions; Natural disasters monitored to determine whether current NCC provisions are appropriate
	Class 1b Buildings - Occupant Safety	Research to support the development of an expanded Class 1b building classification for occupants requiring assistance to evacuate
	False Alarms - Reduction in Frequency	Advice to decision-makers on options available to resolve issues related to the frequency of false alarms from smoke detection systems required by the NCC
	Sustainability - Energy Efficiency	Improved engagement and education of stakeholders; Evaluation of the suitability of the existing NCC provisions for HVAC services; Evaluation of existing tools, schemes and programs; Monitoring the development of relevant building energy efficiency policy through the National Framework for Energy Efficiency (NFE) and the National Strategy for Energy Efficiency (NSEE)
	Building/Planning Interface	Improved communication with planning regulators and identification of any gaps or inconsistencies between the building and planning regulatory systems
	Existing Buildings	Discussion paper on Existing Buildings released
	NCC Provisions for Multi-Classified Buildings	Discussion paper on the application of the NCC to buildings containing multiple classifications
	Termite Management	Termite management provisions in the BCA reviewed in conjunction with the revision of the AS 3660 series to ensure the current requirements meet the needs of industry and stakeholders
	REGULATORY EFFICIENCY & EFFECTIVENESS	Sound Pressure Level of Smoke Alarms
Photoluminescent - Exit Signs		An examination of international regulatory approaches to Photoluminescent technology in buildings; Development of impact analysis to determine the merits of the inclusion of technically suitable provisions for adoption through the NCC
Impact Assessment Process on Regulatory Change Proposals		Advice to decision-makers on the impacts of regulatory proposals, following approval by the Office of Best Practice Regulation (OBPR); Effective regulation impact assessment processes in consultation with the OBPR and in accordance with COAG regulatory principles
NCC Provisions for Temporary Structures		Nationally consistent NCC technical provisions for temporary structures used for public assembly
Gasfitting - Code Development (subject to Government support)		Facilitation of development of a Gas Code of Australia by the Gas Technical Regulators Committee for consideration of inclusion in the NCC
Plumbing Planning Day Outcomes - Future PCA Development		Plumbing project work arising from the Plumbing Code Planning Day
BCA/PCA Harmonisation		Clarification of areas of regulatory responsibility with regard to building/plumbing requirements contained within both Volumes One or Two and Volume Three
CODE DELIVERY & SUPPORT	Variation Management	A reduction in existing State/Territory variations in NCC 2014, and scrutiny of proposals for new variations in accordance with IGA principles; Consolidation of plumbing requirements into NCC Volume Three
	Facilitation of National Consistency in Technical & Administrative Systems	Interaction with existing national forums and administrations to facilitate a nationally consistent approach to building regulations
	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
	WaterMark Review	Final Report with recommendations on the future of WaterMark presented to the Board
	CodeMark Administration	Management and facilitation of Australian/New Zealand third party product certification scheme
	CodeMark Review	Final Report with recommendations on the future of CodeMark presented to the Board
	NCC Advisory Service	NCC clarification/advice to subscribers
	Non-mandatory Handbooks	Development, publication or revision of non-mandatory Handbooks on matters not suitable for regulation
	NCC Awareness and Education	National information seminars and education materials to enhance awareness and understanding of the NCC among practitioners, the tertiary sector and community
ORGANISATIONAL ADMINISTRATION	NCC Marketing and Promotion	Raised awareness of the NCC and other ABCB activities
	National Conference	Delivery of an ABCB Conference supported by industry
	ABCB Cadetship	Program offering ABCB employment experience for building and plumbing professional students
	Research Scholarship	Research to inform decisions on future NCC and non-regulatory measures delivered through research bodies such as Universities and technical colleges

STRATEGIC PLAN 2012 – 2016

The 2013-14 ABCB Work Program will assist the Board in achieving the targets and outcomes of its 2012-16 Strategic Plan, which is outlined below:

2016 Targets

- IGA commitments met
- NCC plumbing/building inconsistencies resolved
- 2016 Code deals with high priority economic, social and environment risks
- If cost effective, Code extended into other relevant on-site regulation (e.g. gas fitting, telecommunication, electrical)

- Case put for greater national consistency, less local government intervention through promotion of the Gateway Model
- National leadership role in advocating NCC role in society
- Influential papers released on adaptation, risk assessment, existing buildings and other priorities

- Acknowledged for consultation best practice
- High stakeholder support for NCC
- NCC a role model for existing buildings

- Early identification of issues, including internationally
- Premises Standard / BCA access reviewed
- Risk assessment model in place
- Met COAG/BMF needs, including on adaptation and NSEE

- 100% compliance with COAG best practice regulatory guidelines
- Regular and early industry / community engagement on change proposals
- ABCB decisions well informed by sound impact analysis

- Up to date NCC awareness and education material available
- NCC free and accessed industry-wide

2016 Outcomes

Progressive and Cost Effective National Code

Recognised Thought Leader

Strong Collaborative Relationships

Timely and Effective Response to Contemporary Issues

Balanced Community Costs and Benefits

Informed and Responsive National Construction Industry

Pathways

Increase Strategy Capability

Closer to End User

Improved Advocacy Role

Value Adding to Code

Best fit Technical Solutions

Streamline the Code Production Process

Focus on Adaptation of Existing Buildings

Continual Innovation

Well Skilled & Resourced Office

ABOUT THE NCC AND THE ABCB

The National Construction Code

The NCC is a COAG initiative developed to incorporate all on-site construction requirements into a single code. The NCC comprises the BCA, Volume One and Two; and the PCA as Volume Three. **Volume One** pertains primarily to commercial buildings (Class 2 to 9 buildings), **Volume Two** pertains primarily to residential buildings (Class 1 and 10 buildings), while **Volume Three** pertains primarily to plumbing and drainage associated with all classes of buildings. All three volumes are drafted in a performance format allowing a choice of Deemed-to-Satisfy Provisions or flexibility to develop Alternative Solutions based on existing or new innovative building, plumbing and drainage products, systems and designs.

To assist in interpreting the requirements of Volume One, the ABCB also publishes a non-mandatory Guide to Volume One each year. Variations to Volume One are published separately in the Volume One Appendices: Variations & Additions. Volume Two is published differently with all Explanatory Information and Variations included within Volume Two itself, and the Additions located at the back of the document as Appendices.

The BCA contains technical provisions for the design and construction of buildings and other structures, covering such matters as structure, fire resistance, access and egress, services and equipment, and energy efficiency as well as certain aspects of health and amenity.

The PCA contains the technical provisions for the design, construction, installation, replacement, repair, alteration and maintenance of: water services, sanitary plumbing and drainage systems, heating, ventilation and air conditioning systems, and on-site wastewater management.



The Goals of the National Construction Code

The goal of the NCC is to enable the achievement of nationally consistent, minimum necessary standards of relevant safety (including structural safety and safety from fire), health, amenity and sustainability objectives efficiently. This goal is applied so—

- there is a rigorously tested rationale for the regulation;
- the regulation generates benefits to society greater than the costs (that is, net benefits);
- the competitive effects of the regulation have been considered and the regulation is no more restrictive than necessary in the public interest; and
- there is no regulatory or non-regulatory alternative that would generate higher net benefits.

Development of the National Construction Code

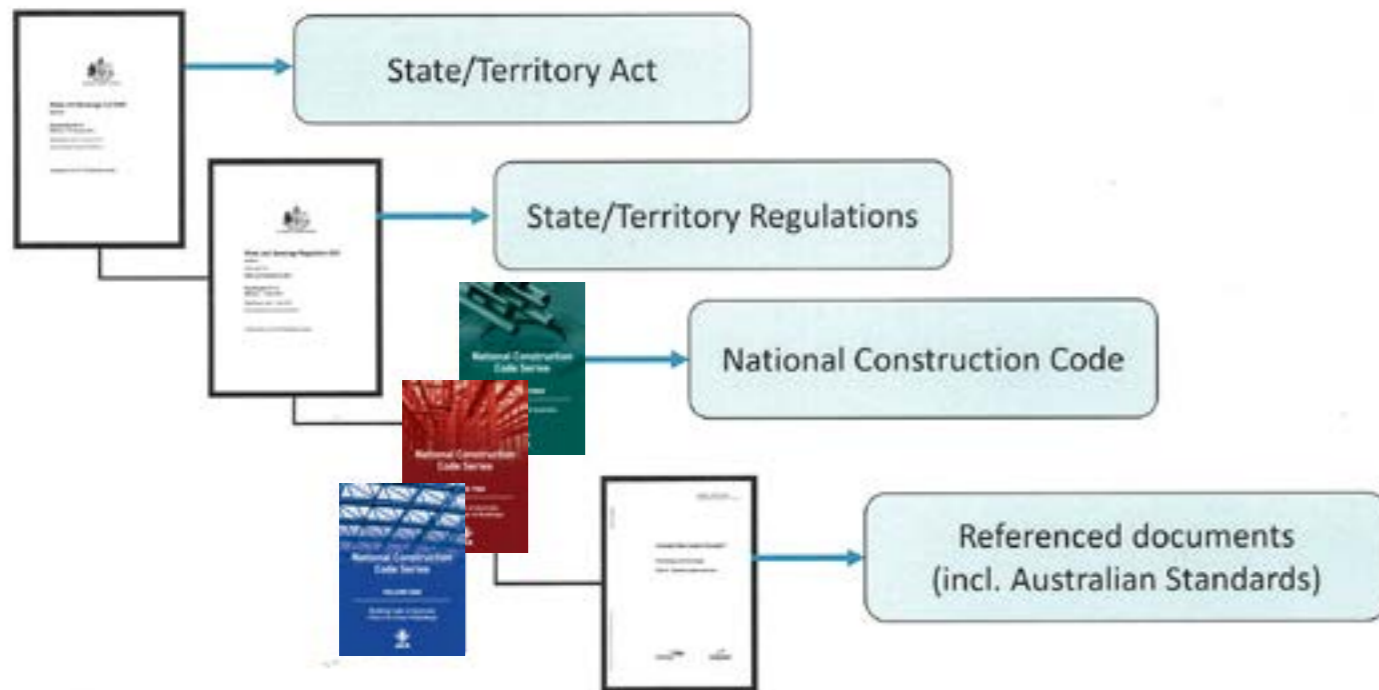
The NCC is a living series of documents that can change in response to government policy, changing industry practices, improvements in technology and outcomes of research. A change can be instigated via the Proposal for Change (PFC) process, a process whereby the ABCB considers technical proposals to change the NCC. Proponents of change are required to provide justification to support their proposal. This justification should be proportionate to the size of the proposed change or its potential impacts. The process is consistent with the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) regulatory principles to ensure appropriate rigour is used in the assessment of proposals. The ABCB has consistently demonstrated good regulatory practice and has an exemplary record with the Office of Best Practice Regulation (OBPR).

Proposals affecting NCC Volumes One and Two are considered by the Building Codes Committee (BCC), while proposals affecting NCC Volume Three are considered by the Plumbing Code Committee (PCC). The role of the technical committees, which consist of representatives of all levels of government as well as industry, is to provide advice and guidance, and make recommendations relating to technical matters relevant to the NCC.

Application of the NCC

The ABCB develops the NCC in conjunction with the eight States and Territories and the Australian Government. The States and Territories are responsible, under their various building and plumbing Acts and Regulations, for administering the NCC. In most cases, certain powers under these Acts and Regulations have been delegated to either local government authorities or private sector building certifiers, including the power to issue, approvals licences or permits for building and plumbing work. The administering authorities are responsible for determining whether a building or plumbing solution complies with the NCC in the first instance.

Regulatory Framework



The ABCB

As a COAG standards writing body, the ABCB is a joint initiative of all three levels of government and was established by an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) signed by the Australian Government and the States and Territories on 1 March 1994. A renewed IGA was signed by Ministers on 30 April 2012. The ABCB is jointly funded by the Australian Government and the States and Territories and derives approximately 50% of its operating budget from sales of the NCC.

The ABCB is governed by a Board which reports to the Australian Government Minister and State and Territory Ministers responsible for building regulatory matters (known as the Building Ministers' Forum). The ABCB provides a vital link for industry between building and plumbing practice, and government building and plumbing regulatory policy.

The Board consists of sixteen members including a Chair, up to five industry representatives, the head of each Commonwealth, State and Territory Administration responsible for building and plumbing matters, and a representative of the Australian Local Government Association.

The ABCB Office's primary role is to carry out and manage the implementation of the Board's decisions in accordance with the IGA. The office is based in Canberra and is located within the Australian Government Department of Industry.

How the ABCB engages with industry and the community

Engagement with stakeholders is of vital importance. The ABCB annually invites comment on forthcoming changes to the NCC through the Public Comment process and consults with industry on technical matters affecting the NCC through RIS processes that the OBPR has consistently lauded. The ABCB also seeks to raise awareness of the NCC through a variety of means including the annual NCC Seminar series held in all capital cities, through the biennial National Conference and through our newer initiatives including webcasts, YouTube demonstration videos and social media.



The Hon. John Thwaites, ABCB Chairman



Matters that the ABCB is not responsible for:

There are a number of building and plumbing matters that the ABCB has no responsibility for. These include the following:

- Rulings, interpretations or classifications, advice or dispute resolutions on specific construction projects or regarding State or Territory variations to the NCC;
- Occupational health and safety guidelines and legislation;
- Workmanship, quality or durability of materials;
- Construction matters such as demolitions, site-related industrial matters and asbestos removal;
- Administrative documents such as building contracts, building permits, compliance inspections and reports, stop-work notices and certificates;
- Licensing and auditing of building and plumbing practitioners;
- Regulatory offences and penalties and appeal processes;
- Planning issues such as sub-division allotment orientation, minimum set-backs and fence heights; and
- Building security matters.

For enquiries relating to these matters please contact the building control administration in your jurisdiction.

Contact us

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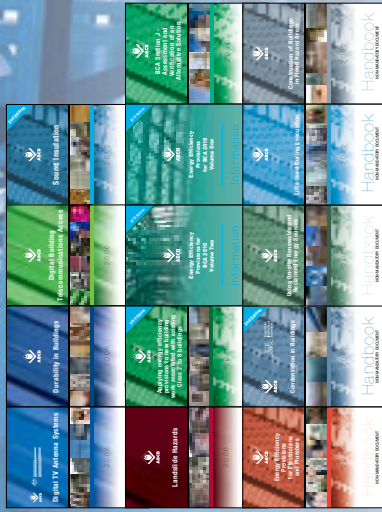
States and Territories
Informed Practitioners

Building Australia's Future Biennial Conference



BUILDING AUSTRALIA'S FUTURE 2013

Non-mandatory Handbooks (free)



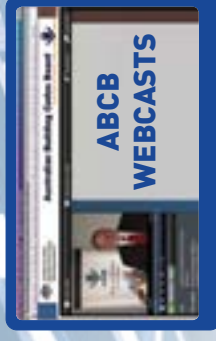
National Construction Code Series



Annual Awareness Seminars in capital cities



ABC Awareness Webcasts (free)



ABC Standards (free)



Official ABC Facebook Page



NCC Educational Awareness Resource Kits (free)



For more information visit www.abc.gov.au