ABCB

AUSTRALIAN BUILDING CODES BOARD

Annual Business Plan 2017-18

THE ABCB

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

FOCUS OF BUSINESS PLAN

In order to help address the risks associated with high rise building fires, the Building Ministers' Forum (BMF) has endorsed a suite of measures that will be further developed and implemented in the course of the ABCB's 2017-18 work program. In addition, the BMF has directed that the ABCB expedite these measures to help prevent the non-compliant use of cladding on buildings.

In accordance with a work program approved in 2016, the ABCB will deliver a package of measures designed to significantly improve the energy efficiency of new commercial buildings and revise the methodology used for residential buildings as a backstop to any future stringency increase. This will be accompanied by further work on how the NCC can respond to the challenges presented by condensation in buildings.

The ABCB's administration of the WaterMark and CodeMark product certification schemes will reach a milestone in 2017, with the transition to new scheme rules for both. Whilst some changes have already been introduced, the key enhancements will be progressively implemented in the case of CodeMark over the next 12 months and WaterMark, the next two years.

Following on from the theme of last year's Business Plan, the ABCB will continue its work on a number of long-term transformational projects that will provide the NCC's expanded user base with improved access, awareness and understanding of the three Volumes. This involves work in the areas of quantifying the performance requirements, development of education tools, digitisation of material and improving the useability of the NCC.

A significant body of work will be involved in producing the NCC 2019 public comment draft for release in February 2018, representing the first edition of the three year amendment cycle. Apart from a range of potential content changes, it is envisaged that NCC 2019 will include a number of enhancements arising out of the initial work undertaken as part of the transformational projects.

Additionally, the BMF has identified the analysis of accessible housing, prevention of jumping suicides from heights in buildings and sanitary facilities for people with profound disabilities as priority projects.

NCC AWARENESS, UNDERSTANDING AND USE

Having been successful in increasing the number of registered NCC users to 140,000, it is an important priority to develop appropriate education material that caters for the needs of, and supports, existing practitioners and new users.

Working with tertiary education providers and professional practitioner associations, the ABCB is helping develop course content for teaching purposes. The ABCB has already developed a suite of ready-made online teaching material that any education provider can utilise in course delivery. Known as NCC Tutor, and accompanied by YouTube clips developed by the ABCB, this off-the-shelf material for educators and practitioners will continue to be developed during 2017-18.

The ABCB will continue to deliver a high level of stakeholder engagement, including through the annual NCC National Seminar Series and participation in numerous events convened by peak associations.

The ABCB is also developing a NCC 'course portal' that will enable practitioners to locate and identify courses nationally that they can attend to gain qualifications or maintain professional development, as required by many jurisdictional regulators and industry associations.

A program to improve the useability of the NCC acknowledges that it is a complex instrument to use, which has to be off-set against the technical and legal nature of its application. Through clarifying features of the NCC, such as its readability, format, structure and digital presentation, it is anticipated that there will be higher levels of compliance with its requirements. The 2017-18 Business Plan contains several projects to address these matters.

INCREASED USE AND QUANTIFICATION OF PERFORMANCE

The Board's important work on the quantification of the NCC's Performance Requirements has advanced with the following topics being prioritised in 2017-18: Quantified Risk, Fire Safety, Bushfires, Access, Plumbing and Energy Efficiency. Significant code changes have or are being drafted and will be included in the public comment draft of NCC 2019 (to be released February 2018).

With respect to the increased use of Performance, significant supporting and education material has been developed and made available on the ABCB website, at various events and distributed to regulators. Actively encouraging a performance mindset amongst practitioners has resulted in the development of targeted material and communication activities. A campaign aimed at architects is underway, with future campaigns encouraging other key industry influencers planned for 2018-19.

FIRE SAFETY IN HIGH RISE BUILDINGS – IMPLEMENTATION OF COMPREHENSIVE PACKAGE OF MEASURES

At the BMF meeting in December 2016, Ministers agreed that the ABCB undertake a package of comprehensive measures to help address the risks specifically associated with cladding used in high rise buildings and more broadly the non-compliant use of building products. This work comprises a mix of non-regulatory measures and work to improve the clarity of relevant NCC provisions. At the 30 June 2017 BMF meeting, the ABCB was directed to expedite the implementation of these measures.

In addition to issuing a national advisory note regarding external wall cladding and assemblies, and the production of Australian Standard AS 5113 for use in a NCC Verification Method, other measures include: revisions to the NCC's evidence of suitability provisions; revised NCC provisions for external wall cladding and assemblies; development of an evidence of suitability handbook; improved compliance documentation; education material on appropriate selection and use of cladding; enhancements to the CodeMark Scheme; and possible recognition of industry certification schemes.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY – NATIONAL ENERGY PRODUCTIVITY PLAN

The ABCB's energy efficiency project continues to gain traction as part of the Council of Australian Government's National Energy Productivity Plan, which aims to improve Australia's energy productivity by 40% by 2030. The benefits of the energy efficiency project are widespread and include: improved interpretation; more compliance options for practitioners; consideration of the incorporation of existing rating tools such as NABERS and Green Star; and reduced 'red tape' overall.

Significant consultation will take place during 2017-18 to ensure the energy efficiency project results in measured changes to the NCC. Regulation Impact Analysis will assess the viability of the new provisions for commercial and residential buildings ahead of the public comment period for the 2019 edition of the NCC. Along with quantified energy efficiency Performance Requirements, NCC 2019 is proposed to include simplified Deemed-to-Satisfy Provisions, as well as increased options by way of new Verification Methods.

PRODUCT CERTIFICATION SCHEMES

The revised building (CodeMark) and plumbing (WaterMark) product certification schemes will be progressively implemented from July 2017 following comprehensive reviews of both schemes conducted in 2013-16. Some features of the new WaterMark scheme commenced on 1 January 2017 with the introduction of a cost recovery model, and a new Certificate of Conformity has been the subject of trials under the CodeMark scheme ahead of new Scheme Rules being in place for the new financial year.

Education and awareness strategies are being finalised and implementation, including the development of tools and resources, has commenced to support transition to the improved schemes, address risk and improve scheme compliance, including for CodeMark, the outsourcing of scheme administration to JAS-ANZ. For the WaterMark scheme, an investigation of the feasibility of point-of-sale controls will be undertaken.

2016-17 ACHIEVEMENTS	2017-18 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
Ministerial endorsement of 2016-17 Business Plan received	Received Ministerial endorsement of 2017-18 Business Plan
Preparation for NCC 2019 commenced, including introduction of new NCC authoring and publishing software	Produced NCC 2019 public comment draft
Provided recommendations to Ministers on fire safety in high rise buildings initiatives	Condensation in Buildings Scoping Study completed
Advanced review of Volume Two Acceptable Construction Practices (ACPs) and commenced development of Volume Three APPs for NCC 2019 consideration	Scoping / desktop analysis to inform RIS for accessible housing commence.
Program for improved NCC readability agreed, commencing with NCC 2019	Research plan into measures to reduce incidences of jumping suicides from newly constructed buildings commenced
Advanced quantification of Performance Requirements for NCC 2019 consideration	NCC quantification content for NCC 2019 completed
Identified and commenced implementation of NCC digitisation pro-gram for 2018	Improved WaterMark and CodeMark Schemes implemented
Completed holistic review of Class 2 and 3 fire safety requirements for NCC 2019 consideration	Program of improved NCC Useability including: readability, digitisation and education, progressed
Advanced energy efficiency measures for NCC 2019 consideration	Expedited comprehensive package of measures to help address fire safety in high rise buildings
Achieved 100,000 registered NCC users	Implementation of website information regarding non-conforming building products.
	Scoping / desktop analysis to inform RIS for sanitary facilities for people with profound disabilities completed.

Increased NCC Compliance and Understanding through Improved Digitisation, Education and Readability

Transformational projects to cater for 140,000+ users in a free NCC environment

DIGITISATION

Enhanced Code useability through a range of technologies including a more dynamic online NCC; instant access to supporting material including instructional YouTube clips; improved accessibility and navigation for all mobile and desktop devices.

EDUCATION

Improved practitioner education through advisory notes, seminars, handbooks, infographics, case studies, calculators, NCC Tutor, NCC Course Portal plus many more.

READABILITY

To cater for an expanding NCC user base, the Code's readability will be improved with clearer language, enhanced formatting and better content flow.
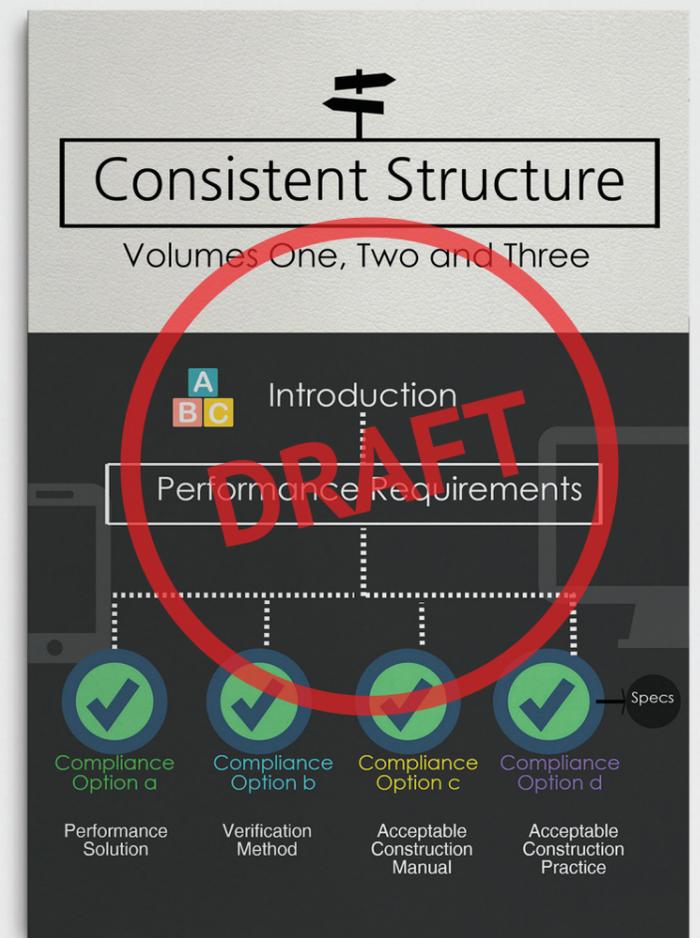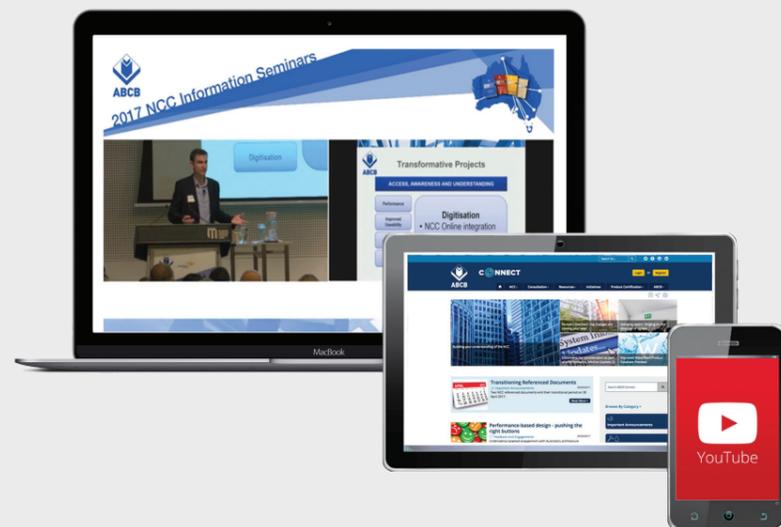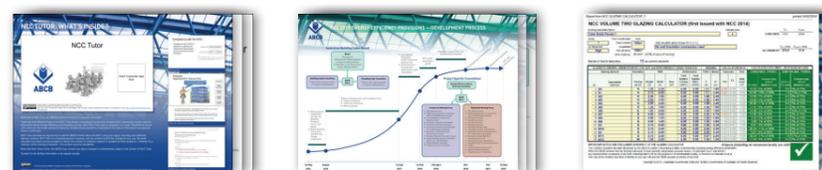
100+ free education materials at your fingertips.

ABCB 2017-18 WORK PROGRAM

PROJECT NAME	PROJECT OUTPUT
NCC Development	
NCC Amendment Process	National Construction Code (NCC) changes developed and considered for implementation under agreed timeframes for release of new NCC editions/amendments.
Standards Coordination and Committees	Documents, including Australian Standards, which are suitable for regulatory use and referencing in the NCC and the WaterMark Certification Scheme.
Impact Assessment Process on Regulatory Change Proposals	Regulatory advice to decision-makers on proposals to amend the NCC; Effective regulation impact analysis processes undertaken in consultation with the Office of Best Practice Regulation (OBPR) and in accordance with COAG regulatory principles.
Access for Adults with Profound Disability - Sanitary Facilities	Research report and regulation impact analysis for the provision of accessible change facilities for adults with profound disability.
Extreme Weather Events and other Natural Hazards	Consideration of the heating and cooling load project outcomes and whether additional work is required to mitigate the effects of heat stress in buildings; Assessment of the adequacy of the current NCC earthquake provisions; Natural disasters monitored to determine whether current NCC provisions are appropriate.
Energy Efficiency - National Energy Productivity Plan - Measure 31	Revised energy efficiency provisions for NCC 2019, which will include the following: - for commercial buildings (Class 2 common areas, Class 3 buildings and Class 5 to 9 buildings), consideration of an economically feasible stringency increase and other improvements to facilitate greater compliance; - for residential buildings (Class 1 buildings, Class 2 sole- occupancy units and Class 4 parts of buildings), improvements to facilitate greater compliance with current requirements in preparation for reviewing stringency (possibly in NCC 2022).
Energy Efficiency - NatHERS MoU Obligations	Memorandum of Understanding with the Nationwide House Energy Rating Scheme (NatHERS) Administrator monitored; Changes made to NatHERS accredited software carried out in accordance with the ABCB's requirements for NCC referenced material, including the necessary impact analysis; the work of the Department of the Environment and Energy with respect to national energy efficiency initiatives that may impact upon the NCC or its application, monitored.
Plumbing Code Development Research	Changes to the PCA included in the NCC 2019 public comment draft; Guidance material on backflow prevention; rainwater capture and use; and warm water systems; Progress preliminary recommendations on the current fixture unit rating methodology and its suitability for contemporary plumbing practice.
Condensation in Buildings	Stage one NCC condensation management provisions for residential buildings included in NCC 2019.
Fire Safety in High-Rise Buildings - Comprehensive Package	Measures to address safety issues associated with high risk building products as directed by building Ministers, including NCC amendments and the development of an Evidence of Suitability Handbook, implemented.
NCC Volume Two Acceptable Construction Practice (ACP) Review	Revised and contemporary Acceptable Construction Practice provisions for inclusion in NCC Volume Two.
NCC Volume Three Acceptable Plumbing Practice (APP) Development	An alternative set of Deemed-to-Satisfy Provisions for inclusion in NCC Volume Three (PCA).
Bushfire Provisions for Non-Residential buildings	NCC bushfire protection provisions for high risk Class 5 to 9 buildings.
Prevention of jumping suicides from heights in buildings	Research report and regulation impact analysis into possible measures to reduce jumping suicides from buildings.
Use of Class 2 and 3 buildings	Report to Board on the short term use and associated classifications of Class 2/3 buildings including a review of the success and ongoing use of the Holiday Rental Code of Conduct.
International Fire Engineering Guidelines (IFEG) - review	A review of the 2005 edition of the International Fire Engineering Guidelines.
Balustrade Heights	Research report regarding the adequacy of the NCC's balustrade requirements.
Accessible Housing	Research report on the provision of minimum requirements for accessible housing in the NCC.
Increased Use and Quantification of Performance	
Quantification (including Verification Methods)	Measurable NCC Performance through quantified Performance Requirements or Verification Methods; Increased opportunity for industry to utilise Performance Solutions.
Engendering a Performance Mindset	Communicating to core stakeholders what a performance based NCC means, which leads to a well understood and utilised code; Empowering stakeholders to communicate this message more broadly through strategic and influential leadership; Increased acceptance of performance based design, leading to increased productivity and better building outcomes.
Capacity Building	Improved practitioner skills to develop and deliver performance solutions and better understand the code; Increased awareness of the benefits of performance based design practice; Targeted capacity building based on key influential audiences.
NCC Awareness, Understanding and Use	
Improved NCC Readability	To facilitate a well understood and utilised code, implement improved NCC language, structure and format changes.
Digitisation	Re-development of NCC Online to integrate with ABCB website and provide a stable, more navigable, easier to use site with the potential to provide additional functionality over time; Scope potential new tools and technologies to deliver the NCC on a wider range of devices and for a wider range of use to a broader audience.
Education Strategy	Engagement with all institutions teaching relevant subjects; Improved understanding of the education sector's needs; New training and education products scoped with institutions input; Partnership opportunities scoped to deliver existing or new training and education products with stakeholders.
Material Development	New, enhanced materials and activities based on need, stakeholder feedback and the education strategy to facilitate a well understood code.
Stakeholder Engagement Model	Stakeholder engagement model developed and implemented; Increased stakeholder engagement to target an increased and active user base.
National Events	Delivery of 2018 National Seminar Series and other events, in support of a well understood and utilised Code.
NCC Consolidation, Harmonisation and Regulatory Review	
Variation Management	A reduction in existing State/Territory variations to the NCC and scrutiny of proposals for new variations in accordance with IGA principles; Variation management progress report to BMF; Preparation for the Plumbing component of a Variation Reduction Conference.
BCA/PCA Harmonisation	Inclusion of cross volume links between the BCA and PCA for matters applicable to both building and plumbing sectors; Harmonisation of technical matters currently regulated by both the BCA and PCA.
PCA Consolidation of State and Territory NCC-related Requirements	Relocation of technical plumbing requirements from State and Territory regulations and other instruments to the PCA.
Holistic review of NCC Fire Safety	Review of the NCC fire safety provisions for Class 2 and 3 residential buildings completed; Fire safety-related sub-projects initiated under the Regulation Reduction Review project, completed.
Product Certification	
WaterMark - Administration	Materials and products complying fully with the applicable requirements of the WaterMark Certification Scheme are certified by a WaterMark Conformity Assessment Body (WMCAB) and listed on the WaterMark Product Database.
CodeMark - Administration	Management and facilitation of Australian voluntary third party building product certification scheme.
WaterMark - Improved Scheme	Transition to an improved mandatory WaterMark Certification Scheme.
WaterMark Point-of-Sale	Investigation of point-of-sale regulation for the WaterMark Certification Scheme for Board consideration.
Review of Watermark Standards	Appropriate technical specifications for the evaluation of products within the scope of the improved WaterMark Certification Scheme.

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

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