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future

Green Star Review Committee report December 2011 meeting

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Executive summary

As part of the continual evolution of the Green Star rating system, the Green Building Council of Australia (**GBCA**) actively seeks feedback on the Green Star assessment and certification process and rating tools. Meetings of the Green Star Review Committee (the **Committee**)¹ of the GBCA Board are part of the feedback process. The Committee met in December 2011 to consider submissions provided by stakeholders directly to the Committee as well as feedback provided to the Green Star team throughout the year.

Outcomes of the Committee can be divided into five areas: items addressed under the Green Star Revolution project (**Green Star Revolution**); changes to Green Star tools; marketing, industry engagement and education; the Green Star certification process; and administration of the Committee. Details of the Committee's recommendations are provided below.

Green Star Revolution

Feedback to the Committee in 2010 led to the development of the Green Star Revolution. Green Star Revolution is a series of projects designed to make Green Star simpler, faster, more consistent and more cost effective. GBCA will provide an update on progress towards the Green Star Revolution projects as a separate document.

Changes to Green Star tools

- The Committee recommended that the GBCA Board be asked to determine if Green Star is an environmental rating tool or if it is more than that. The Board should be asked to consider if innovation credits continue to be limited to environmental initiatives or if they should also reward social and financial benefits.

This matter should be referred to the Technical Steering Committee (**TSC**) in the first instance for consideration.

- A recommendation to introduce an expiration date for Design projects, based on research conducted among stakeholders in 2010, will be taken to the GBCA Board in February 2012, for implementation in January 2013.
- GBCA will provide fair warning to the market prior to Green Star benchmarks changing. The GBCA will consider a "mini" regulatory impact statement approach to changes in benchmarks. Changes to benchmarks could be tested against a model building.
- GBCA will investigate the possible allocation of partial points to reward partial compliance in credits.

The Green Star certification process

- GBCA to conduct a review of the Green Star project management process with recommendations for improvements to be made and implemented, with a focus on reducing the number of round 1 assessment queries and improving customer service.
- A slight change to the registration process in relation to conditional requirements, to ensure project teams have completed the necessary checks at the registration stage to enable early identification of possible problems with eligibility.
- GBCA to review the resource requirements and fee structures to support the provision of

¹ formerly known as the Technical Assurance Committee

telephone discussions between project teams and GBCA technical staff for credit interpretation requests.

- GBCA to conduct a review of the post certification survey with a view to increasing the response rate enabling the provision of timely, accurate data on the certification process.

Marketing and industry engagement and education

- The need for the development of a marketing kit for multi unit residential projects (which is already in progress). This will provide information on the value of Green Star for the residential sector and will consider the sales and resales markets.
- GBCA Industry Engagement and Marketing teams will develop a detailed project plan for Valuing Green (money saved, health outcomes etc of Green Star rated buildings).
- GBCA to provide more education to designers in selecting high performing facades and other alternate design solutions to increase building performance, particularly in relation to energy use.

Green Star Review Committee

- The Committee will meet every 6 months in future (rather than every 12 months). Submissions must be presented to the Committee (either face to face or via telephone) to be considered.

The GBCA would like to thank those who took the time to contribute to the Green Star Review, particularly those who presented to the Committee: Arup, Cundall, Monash University, The University of Melbourne and Rider Levatt Bucknall.

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Introduction

As part of the continual evolution of the Green Star rating system, the Green Building Council of Australia (**GBCA**) actively seeks feedback on the Green Star assessment and certification process and rating tools. Meetings of the Green Star Review Committee (the **Committee**)² of the GBCA Board are part of the feedback process. The Committee met on Monday 12 December 2011. The meeting was attended by the following Committee members and GBCA representatives:

Green Star Review Committee:

GBCA representatives:

Peter Verwer, Chair (Independent Director, GBCA)

Andrew Aitken, Director, Green Star

Rowan Griffin (Director, GBCA)

Helen Bell, Research and Development Manager

Molly Harriss-Olson (Director, GBCA)

Lynne Harman, Corporate Counsel/Company Secretary

Chris Wheeler (Independent)

Orjan Lundberg, Director Green Star Operations

A note advertising the meeting and calling for submissions was published in the September and October GBCA newsletters, in the new Green Star eUpdate and in appropriate places on the GBCA website.

Submissions closed on Friday 21 October 2011. Formal submissions were received from Cundall, Monash University, TRG Properties Pty Ltd, the University of Tasmania, the University of Melbourne and Wood and Grieve Engineers. In addition to the formal submissions, concerns raised and suggestions for improving Green Star provided to the Green Star team throughout the year were incorporated as submissions. These included concerns raised by Arup, dm2architecture, Leighton Properties (through Rider Levatt Bucknall), Monash University, Surface Design, the University of Melbourne, Pitt & Sherry and Umow Lai. A late submission was received from InStyle, which will be considered at the Committee's next meeting.

Stakeholders making submissions to the Committee were invited to present at the Committee's meeting. Six organisations accepted this invitation: Arup, Cundall, Monash University, the University of Melbourne, Rider Levatt Bucknall and Wood and Grieves Engineers.

To facilitate the Green Star Review process the submissions were categorised into a document which was then discussed by the Committee members, GBCA representatives and where relevant, the representatives of organisations making submissions.

Outcomes of the Committee can be divided into five areas: items addressed under the Green Star Revolution project (**Green Star Revolution**); changes to Green Star tools; the Green Star certification process; marketing, industry engagement and education; and administration of the Committee. Details of the Committee's recommendations are provided in the following section.

Issues raised

1. GREEN STAR REVOLUTION

Feedback to the Committee in 2010 led to the development of the Green Star Revolution. Green Star Revolution is a series of projects designed to make Green Star simpler, faster, more consistent and more cost effective. GBCA will provide an update on progress towards the Green Star Revolution projects as a separate document. The expiry of Design ratings, the need to fast track the introduction of online assessment and the training of assessors were specifically discussed by the Committee and have been included in the sections below in addition to being part of the Green Star Revolution.

2. CHANGES TO GREEN STAR TOOLS

The need to differentiate between Design and As Built projects was raised. The expiry of Design ratings, which would address this concern, is a project underway as part of the Green Star Revolution. In 2010 GBCA conducted research among stakeholders which concluded there is strong support for the introduction of an expiration date for Design ratings. A recommendation to introduce an expiration date for Design projects will be taken to the GBCA Board in February 2012, for implementation in January 2013.

Several submissions sought recognition within Green Star for items which have demonstrable social or financial benefits, without quantified environmental benefits. These included the provision of water fountains in education facilities to reduce the demand for bottled water and the social benefits of using bushfire affected timber. Building attributes not currently included within Green Star tools can seek recognition through the use of innovation credits, provided there is a quantifiable environmental benefit. The Committee discussed whether Green Star should be extended to include broader measures of sustainability, such as financial and social benefits. The Committee recommended that the GBCA Board be asked to determine if Green Star is an environmental rating tool or if it is more than that. The Board should be asked to consider if innovation credits should continue to be limited to rewarded environmental initiatives or if they should be extended to also reward social and financial benefits.

The impact of changes to the rating tools, with particular reference to moving from Office v2 to Office v3, was discussed. The Committee recommended that GBCA provide fair warning to the market when benchmarks change. GBCA will consider a "mini" regulatory impact statement approach to changes in benchmarks in the tools. It was agreed that a large sample would be necessary to accurately assess the additional cost of achieving an Office v3 certification. An alternate and ongoing solution would be the construction and maintenance of a model, representing an average building, against which benchmarking scenarios could be tested. GBCA will explore modelling options.

In many credits, the Green Star tools reward a set level of achievement, without regard to incremental improvements. This discourages projects from making small steps towards credits unless the benchmarks can be met, despite the incremental environmental benefits achieved. To address this, GBCA will investigate the allocation of partial points to reward partial compliance in credits.

There was some discussion over the possible inclusion of make good clauses for shell and core fit

outs, where the original fit out does not meet Green Star requirements. It was concluded that this should not be implemented as GBCA would be certifying spaces that may not meet the criteria, particularly for indoor air quality credits.

The rewards offered to shared precinct systems such as energy and water were discussed. The Committee concluded that as most Green Star credits are weighted based on the environmental impact, such systems are already sufficiently rewarded. The environmental impact of shared energy systems is rewarded in the Ene-1 credit (up to 20 points), with the Ene-10 credit providing a bonus point for this design solution. Shared water facilities are rewarded within the water category. These shared systems are only rewarded as part of the Green Star As Built rating tool if they have been built. Green Star does not reward precinct systems planned for the future.

The prominence of individual cogeneration plants in Green Star rated buildings was raised as a concern. While Green Star does not specifically encourage the use of cogeneration within individual buildings, it appears to be a common approach in Green Star buildings, possibly because there is a perception that it is easier to design and implement than a centralised system. Concerns were also raised about efficient design solutions, such as double glazing, being value managed out of projects after cogeneration is selected, due to a perception that the marginal improvement in CO₂ reductions is not worth the investment. The problem with this is that the cogeneration units may be switched off, resulting in a poor performing building. GBCA suggested that a solution could be for GBCA to provide more education to designers in selecting high performing facades and other alternate design solutions. GBCA will also consider amending the commissioning credit to include a requirement for a contractual commitment to commission post construction.

3. THE GREEN STAR CERTIFICATION PROCESS

Many concerns related to frustrations around the assessment process, particularly queries relating to round one project submissions. The two main concerns were GBCA processes for dealing with queries and the need for queries (with the implication being that assessors' comments were not clear and/or an accurate interpretation of the Green Star tools). The Committee recommended a review of the GBCA's project management process with recommendations for improvements to be made and implemented, with a focus on reducing the number of round 1 assessment queries. Auditing of assessors' work and a review of assessor training are already included as projects within the Green Star Revolution. An update on the progress of this will be provided within a separate Green Star Revolution document.

The need for online assessment was discussed. This project is currently under development as part of the Green Star Revolution, however the Committee recommended that it be fast tracked, rather than waiting for the development of a single Green Star tool.

Some project teams expressed frustration at realising their project was ineligible for a Green Star rating after they had began preparing their submissions. While the project teams are responsible for checking that their projects meet the eligibility requirements prior to submitting an application for a Green Star rating, the necessary checks are not always conducted. The Committee recommended a review of the registration process, particularly in relation to conditional requirements, to ensure project teams have completed the necessary checks at the registration stage to enable early identification of possible problems with eligibility. This will include detailed questions from the GBCA case manager regarding eligibility.

Project teams have continued to express a desire to meet with the assessment panel to explain their credit interpretation requests and projects. This was also raised in 2010. It is a requirement of certification that the assessment process be independent. The identity of assessors is not disclosed. As an alternative, GBCA will consider providing telephone discussions between project teams and GBCA technical staff for credit interpretation requests. GBCA will review the resource requirements and fee structures to support this.

The need for accurate, timely information on satisfaction with the certification process was raised. While GBCA currently sends project teams a post certification survey, the response rate is too low for the data to be useful. GBCA will review the post certification surveys with a view to increasing the response rate enabling the provision of timely, accurate data on the certification process. This will be in addition to the annual measure of satisfaction with Green Star, obtained via the GBCA member survey.

4. MARKETING, INDUSTRY ENGAGEMENT AND EDUCATION

Multiple stakeholders raised the unique needs of the residential market as a concern. In particular, the procurement method for apartments is seen as acting as a barrier to green outcomes. A residential marketing kit is being developed by GBCA to assist residential sales teams in articulating the benefits of Green Star, including Design and As Built ratings. This will clearly articulate the value of Green Star for the residential sector. It will consider both the sales and resales markets.

The need for a report identifying the value of Green Star, originally raised in the 2010 Green Star Review, was reiterated by the Committee in 2011. While this project forms part of the Green Star Revolution, GBCA Industry Engagement and Marketing teams need to develop a detailed project plan for Valuing Green (money saved, health outcomes etc). This could include the use of an external consulting firm to measure the value, with the independence providing additional credibility.

5. GREEN STAR REVIEW COMMITTEE

The response to the Green Star Review has been extremely encouraging, with stakeholders taking an active interest in the ongoing refinement of Green Star. From 2011, the Committee will meet twice per year. Late submissions will be held over until the following Committee meeting.

The value of the Committee is in the discussion with concerned stakeholders. As a result, future submissions must be presented to the Committee in order to be considered as part of the Green Star Review. Presentations may be made either face to face or via telephone. Stakeholders continue to be welcome and encouraged to provide feedback to the Green Star team at any time during the year through the Green Star inbox (greenstar@gbca.org.au), case managers and the Green Star Feedback form (available on the GBCA website in the Green Star stakeholder engagement and feedback section: <http://www.gbca.org.au/green-star/stakeholder-engagement-feedback/>).

The GBCA would like to thank those who took the time to contribute to the Green Star Review, particularly those who presented to the Committee: Arup, Cundall, Monash University, The University of Melbourne and Rider Levett Bucknall.

Feedback

Stakeholders are encouraged to contact the GBCA to provide feedback on this report.

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