green building council australia

Building a sustainable future

Department of Planning and Infrastructure
23-33 Bridge Street
SYDNEY NSW 2000

via email: basixreview@planning.nsw.gov.au

21 February 2014

Dear Sir/Madam

RE: NSW – BASIX TARGET REVIEW - SUBMISSION

Thank you for the opportunity to provide comment on the New South Wales (NSW) *BASIX Target Review*. The Green Building Council of Australia (GBCA) supports initiatives, policies and regulations that contribute to lower greenhouse gas emissions and lower environmental impacts from the built environment. We are supportive of the incremental improvement of sustainability benchmarks and the transformation of the built environment, as such we believe that the proposed increases to the BASIX targets will lead to better outcomes for the built environment and will provide a benefit to the community as a whole. With this submission the GBCA seeks to represent the interests of our members where they align with the mission of the GBCA.

About the GBCA

The GBCA is Australia's authority on green buildings and communities, established in 2002 to develop a sustainable property industry in Australia and drive the adoption of green building practices. The GBCA promotes green building programs, technologies, design practices and processes, and operates Australia's only national voluntary comprehensive environmental rating system for buildings - Green Star.

The GBCA has more than 750 member organisations, including government departments at local, state and federal level, which work together to support the Council and its activities. The GBCA is also a founding member of the World Green Building Council (WorldGBC), which was established to provide a federated 'union' of national green building councils with a common goal to support the sustainable transformation of the global property industry; there are now 98 such councils worldwide.

Green Star rating tools

Green Star is a national, voluntary tool that encourages, recognises and rewards best practice and innovation. The first Green Star rating tool was released in 2003 in response to market demand for a rating tool that would evaluate the environmental design and construction of buildings as well as establishing a common language for green buildings.

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There are currently 10 Green Star rating tools which address a range of building types and 659 projects have achieved Green Star certification across Australia, with a further 450 projects registered. The Green Star rating system is designed to take an holistic approach within each class and building sector, addressing nine categories in total: Management, Indoor Environment Quality (IEQ), Energy, Water, Materials, Land Use and Ecology, Emissions, Transport and Innovation.

Increase to the BASIX Targets

The GBCA is committed to promoting green building practices, design and technologies that will help to develop a more sustainable property industry in Australia. The GBCA is supportive of the BASIX rating tool as a regulatory sustainability rating tool which measures thermal comfort, as well as water and energy efficiency for the residential market. The flexible nature of the tool provides many options for homeowners and building designers to innovate and create dwellings that are suitable to the occupant's needs, whilst ensuring better sustainability outcomes. The GBCA continues to support the approach of the NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure with regard to setting a target for thermal fabric efficiency (Thermal Comfort), as well as setting benchmarks for residential water and energy efficiency. In this regard, NSW are setting a standard which other states should consider adopting.

Many of our members are involved directly or indirectly with utilising the BASIX tool and while this means our membership will have a range of views on the tool and the proposed target changes, this submission intends to represent the interests of our members where they align with the mission of the GBCA.

The GBCA supports government policies that aim to reduce greenhouse gas emissions in the built environment. In 2009, the Council of Australian Government (COAG) released the National Strategy on Energy Efficiency (NSEE). The NSEE recognises that there is significant potential in the built environment to improve energy efficiency and transition to low-carbon energy options. The BASIX Target Review aims to increase the target for energy efficiency within households, as well as providing updates to some energy efficiency policy settings. The GBCA supports these changes and believe they will have a greater impact upon reducing greenhouse gas emissions from the built environment. With regard to the proposed increases to water efficiency targets and policy changes, the GBCA believes the changes will also have a considerable impact to reducing potable water usage. As can be seen by the benefit-cost analysis completed by The Allen Consulting Group, the proposed changes can result in increased water and energy efficiency, all the while delivering a benefit-cost ratio (BCR) to the NSW economy of 1.64.

The BASIX Target Review also aligns the Thermal Comfort targets within BASIX to the equivalency to achieving a 5.5-6.0 star Nationwide House Energy Rating Scheme (NatHERS) rating, dependent on climate zone. Whilst this increase of approximately 1.0 star is commendable, the GBCA recommends that this target should be set in alignment with the minimum standards set as per National Construction Code (NCC) standards for thermal fabric efficiency, whether for single, attached or multi-unit dwellings. The NCC nominates heating and cooling caps appropriate to nationally consistent climate zones, which are adopted under NatHERS tool, for consistency and meeting the minimum building standards set out by the NCC, the BASIX Thermal Comfort methodology should utilise this approach as well.

Along with the proposed increases to the BASIX targets, it is important that the industry is supported appropriately with capacity building initiatives to ensure that the benefits of the increases can be delivered as intended. The GBCA is pleased that information sessions, training and support services have been considered as part of the target review process.

The GBCA commends the work of the NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure in identifying scope to increase the energy, water and thermal efficiency standards of NSW dwellings through increases to the BASIX targets. The GBCA is supportive of the incremental increase of sustainability benchmarks that help to transform the built environment to one that is more sustainable, liveable and productive. The GBCA encourages the NSW Government to call upon the GBCA if there are any resources or support that we can provide. Please do not hesitate to contact me via email at daniel.hartin@gbca.org.au or by phone on (02) 8239 6200 should you require any further information or to arrange further consultation.

Yours sincerely,

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