

23 August 2011

Ms Lisa de Kleyn
Manager – Projects and Engagement
Energy Efficiency Council
490 Spencer Street
WEST MELBOURNE 3003

Email: lisa@eec.org.au

Dear Lisa,

RE: PROPOSED ACCREDITATION FOR ENERGY EFFICIENCY RETROFITS

Thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback on the proposed accreditation for individuals and companies providing integrated energy efficiency retrofit services. While Robin Mellon, Executive Director - Advocacy and International of the Green Building Council of Australia (GBCA) has provided information to you directly during your interview on Friday 5 August 2011, we would also like to take the opportunity to support his comments with this written submission.

The GBCA supports the proposed accreditation for individuals and companies providing integrated energy efficiency retrofit services. However, to ensure stakeholders are better informed and to encourage greater engagement in the development of this initiative, more information must be provided to industry, including the costs and benefits and details about how it will be implemented.

As you will be aware, the GBCA is Australia's leading authority on green building, 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 930 member organisations, including government departments, which work together to support the Council and its activities. The GBCA is also a founding member of the World Green Building Council, 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 86 such councils worldwide.

Green Star

The GBCA engages with the market directly through the Green star rating tools. The first Green Star rating tool was released in 2002 in response to market demand for a comprehensive environmental rating tool that would evaluate the environmental design and construction of buildings. Since then, the GBCA has been constantly engaged with industry to continuously redefine best practice and evolve the Green Star rating tools to meet the needs of the market.

The Green Star rating tool covers nine categories and projects must achieve credits in each category to be able to attain a Green Star certification. The credits in the Energy category target reduction of greenhouse emissions from building operation by addressing energy demand reduction, use efficiency, and generation from alternative sources.

The existing building challenge

Greening existing buildings is one of the greatest challenges facing the property industry and the GBCA supports initiatives that encourage energy efficiency retrofits and help us achieve our mission to develop a more sustainable property industry.

While existing buildings are the greatest challenge, they also represent the greatest opportunity in the market, especially in the areas of achieving greater efficiencies and the minimisation of 'waste'. The proposed initiative will complement the existing drivers for change in this area. There is a continued need for contemporary regulation (including the Building Code of Australia and NABERS Energy through the Commercial Building Disclosure scheme), as well as incentives for voluntary best practice tools such as Green Star.

Green Star – Performance

Green Star has traditionally focused on building attributes for new and retrofitted buildings. Green Star is now looking beyond this with the development of the Green Star - Performance rating tool.

Green Star - Performance will be designed to assess the operational performance of existing buildings. It will extend beyond rating only operational energy and water performance to include all categories currently used in Green Star: Management, IEQ, Energy, Transport, Water, Materials, Land Use & Ecology, Emissions and Innovation.

The GBCA will continue to work closely with the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage to ensure that Green Star – Performance and the NABERS rating tools align and complement each other, to provide both contemporary standards and best practice benchmarks.

Looking beyond energy efficiency

While the GBCA supports the strong government focus on energy efficiency and commends initiatives such as the Prime Minister's Task Group on Energy Efficiency, the National Strategy on Energy Efficiency, the Commercial Building Disclosure scheme and the Tax Breaks for Green Buildings program, we believe it is important that the focus is broadened to include other key environmental impacts. It is vital that the inter-relationship of green building attributes such as indoor environment quality, management, waste and energy are examined, or we will miss opportunities to further reduce greenhouse gas emissions and to create healthier buildings in which people can live, work, learn and play.

Green skills

The GBCA supports initiatives that aim to lift the standards of green skills training and accreditation. The GBCA operates its own continuing professional development (CPD) program to ensure that people working in this industry are keeping up with best practice standards and new developments. We look forward to seeing better accreditation for organisations and individuals who want to deliver the best outcomes in energy efficiency retrofits, and to working with this initiative on training measures which are complementary.

Choosing qualified, experienced contractors and consultants within the market is always difficult, but is made easier when professionals can demonstrate that they have reliable credentials and experience. A trustworthy accreditation such as the proposed initiative will help the market to further build its confidence in industry. As the best practice standards increase, there will be an ongoing need for professionals – from designers and consultants, to installers and technicians, to managers and commissioning agents – to increase their level of green skills in pace with demand.

Green Star Communities

The potential for reducing greenhouse gas emissions building by building is significant, but the opportunities increase considerably when a precinct, neighbourhood or community-wide approach is taken.

In 2009, the GBCA commenced work, in consultation with government and industry, on the development of a rating tool for sustainable development projects on a community scale. The first step in developing the Green Star Communities rating tool was to develop a national framework consisting of five best practice principles. Enclosed is a copy of the Green Star Communities Framework. We are now working on Stage 2 of the project which involves establishing best practice benchmarks for assessing and certifying sustainable communities.

We are continuing to build support and commitment for the project across all levels of government and industry. In 2010, we announced a national sponsorship agreement with every state and territory Government Land Organisation and in 2011, the Major Cities Unit, part of the Australian Government Department of Infrastructure and Transport also became sponsors. We believe this level of support will secure the tool's position as a national benchmark for government and industry projects.

We encourage you to look upon the GBCA as your green building knowledge resource. Please do not hesitate to contact us if we can provide any further information.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to provide comment on this matter. We look forward to working with the Energy Efficiency Council to help transition Australia to a low carbon future, and support the proposed accreditation for energy-efficient retrofit experts.

Yours sincerely,

Romilly Madew
Chief Executive

Robin Mellon
Executive Director – Advocacy and International