

25 November 2011

Professional Industry Action Plan Taskforce
Department of Trade and Investment
Level 49, MLC Centre
19 Martin Place, SYDNEY NSW 2000

Via email: professional.iap@business.nsw.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam,

**RE: SUBMISSION TO THE PROFESSIONAL SERVICES
INDUSTRY ACTION PLAN TASKFORCE**

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission regarding the Professional Services Industry Action Plan. The Green Building Council of Australia (GBCA) supports the development of an industry-led taskforce and action plan that focuses on increasing the capacity of professional services to contribute to the NSW economy.

We believe that the green building industry has a significant role to play in increasing NSW's competitiveness, productivity and sustainability. Engineering and associated services are already an integral part of the green building industry and there is a great deal of potential for increasing skills in this area.

About the Green Building Council of Australia

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 900 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 (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 90 such councils worldwide.

The Green Star rating tools

Green Star is a 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.

Green Star rating tools provide clear benchmarks for best practice, Australian excellence and world leadership and can be used as a metric for measuring the standards of a range of projects. There are currently nine Green Star rating tools which address a range of building types, with further rating tools under development.

Across Australia, more than 380 buildings have achieved Green Star ratings, with a further 540 projects registered and in NSW, 91 projects have been certified with a further 98 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, Transport, Water, Materials, Land Use and Ecology, Emissions and Innovation. Buildings such as the Ausgrid Learning Centre in Silverwater, NSW (case study enclosed) demonstrate the ability for buildings to be learning resources and the need to educate professional services in social, financial and environmental issues.

Green Star – Communities

In 2009, the GBCA commenced work on the development of a rating tool for sustainable development projects on a community scale. The first stage in developing the Green Star - Communities rating tool was to develop a national framework consisting of five best practice principles (a copy of the Green Star - Communities Framework is enclosed). Stage 2 of the project involves establishing best practice benchmarks for assessing and certifying sustainable communities. A set of draft credits has been developed and these are currently being tested on a number of projects across Australia (copy enclosed).

Extensive consultation has been undertaken with all levels of government and a wide range of industry stakeholders in the development of the Green Star - Communities tool. Last year, we announced a national sponsorship agreement with every state and territory Government Land Organisation, which we believe will secure the tool's position as a national benchmark for government and industry projects.

Green buildings – a solution for climate change

The built environment offers significant opportunities to reduce carbon emissions. While buildings are responsible for almost a quarter of Australia's total greenhouse gas emissions, the building sector also has the greatest potential to deliver emissions cuts, at the least cost, using technology available now.

One of the most cost-effective abatement opportunities remains the retrofitting and refurbishment of commercial buildings. The GBCA believes a strong focus on improving energy efficiency in the built environment can support any government efforts to reduce greenhouse gas emissions while supporting jobs growth.

Green buildings – a growing industry

Green building is one of the world's fastest growing industries, with tremendous growth in the number of green building councils around the world, from 27 in 2007 to the 90 that operate today. Australia is seen as a leader in sustainability, and Australian green building expertise and experience is becoming increasingly sought-after around the world, particularly in the Asia-Pacific region.

The GBCA, through its involvement in the WorldGBC, plays a mentoring role to a number of countries with emerging green building industries. We have also been working in partnership with Austrade to promote the world-leading experience, systems, products and technologies that Australia's green building industry can export internationally. The GBCA and Austrade have produced a resource to promote Australia's green building capabilities to international markets. A copy of the *Australian Green Building Showcase* and the *Australian Green Building Industry Overview* are enclosed.

NSW has a significant opportunity expand its existing green building industry to become a driving force for the local economy as well as taking advantage of international demand for green building skills, expertise, products and technologies. The GBCA can assist in identifying the global trends and markets for green buildings that may provide NSW with new areas for development.

The GBCA has developed a 'green building agenda' with five priorities that we believe can place NSW on a clear long-term path to sustainability as well as contributing to the economy and increasing productivity. These priorities and recommended key deliverables are listed below:

1. Provide visionary government leadership

Deliverables:

- Commitment from the NSW Government to pursue environment certification (such as NABERS and Green Star) for the buildings it owns, occupies or develops.
- Establish a Building Code of Australia working group to examine minimum standards for compliance alongside Green Star and NABERS, to emphasise the need for both contemporary standards and voluntary ratings in raising industry levels of standard practise.
- Map out a long-term pathway to achieve a sustainable built environment for Australia, with a series of targets, incentives, metrics and increments established in conjunction with key industry associations and stakeholders.

2. Retrofit and improve existing buildings

Deliverables:

- Joint industry and government existing building pathway established with supports a coordinated approach to policy development and information sharing, and the development of one strategy with a clear message, comprehensible case studies and a range of incentives available.
- Government support provided for the development of the Green Star Performance rating tool.

3. Green education and healthcare facilities

Deliverable:

- NSW Government to reference Green Star in education and healthcare building and accommodation guidelines, in order to support the adoption of green building practices in their construction, with certification achieved for at least 50 per cent of projects.

4. Move beyond buildings to communities and cities

Deliverables:

- Government support provided for the Green Star Communities project, with both financial backing and provision of data and information.
- Cohesive urban policy formed to provide an holistic, integrated approach to climate change mitigation and environmental issues across NSW's major cities.
- Commitment by the NSW Government to apply the Green Star Communities Framework and rating tool to all of its urban development area projects.

5. Embed green skills across all industry training

Deliverables:

- An holistic approach taken to green skills, with integration of sustainability into NSW's skills base as part of an overall approach, rather than with green skills being seen as an 'add-on' to current curricula.
- Government support provide to development of learning programmes, case studies and examples of innovation which demonstrate the opportunities and explain the benefits of green building.
- Commitment by the NSW Government to establish a Green Skills partnership with the GBCA to provide training to industry.
- Increased government green skills training undertaken to broaden the current focus on sustainability beyond energy efficiency to other metrics and improve the dialogue between government and industry stakeholders.

More information about each of these priorities can be found in the green building agenda document enclosed.

The GBCA encourages the Industry Action Plan Taskforce to consider the role green building can play in contributing to NSW's economy through the direct investment into green building projects, increases in productivity, skills development and the support of long-term growth for associated services and industries within the NSW economy. There are a number of ways in which the GBCA can assist in developing and implementing strategies to achieve these goals. We would welcome the opportunity to meet with the Industry Action Plan Taskforce to provide a briefing on the work we do and to discuss how the GBCA can contribute to the development of a 10-year strategy for industry, including 2-year and 5-year goals.

We encourage you to consider the GBCA as your primary resource for green building and community information. Please do not hesitate to contact either of us if there is any further information we can provide.

Yours sincerely,

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