

A SUSTAINABLE POPULATION STRATEGY FOR AUSTRALIA
SUBMISSION FROM THE GREEN BUILDING COUNCIL OF AUSTRALIA

01st March 2011

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GENERAL COMMENTS: GBCA SUBMISSION - 'SUSTAINABLE POPULATION' PAPER

Executive Summary

The GBCA supports the Federal Government's work in developing a Sustainable Population Strategy, and supports the vision of a more sustainable Australia with a more sustainable population. The GBCA particularly supports the detailed consideration and discussion about:

- Environmental Sustainability – Water resources, Food security, Biodiversity Conservation, and Climate Change;
- Economic Sustainability – Population, Growth and Prosperity, Australia's ageing population, and Availability of Skills and Labour; and
- Sustainable Communities – Infrastructure, Housing Affordability and Supply, and Liveability.

In addition, and in line with today's ASBEC release, the GBCA strongly urges the Australian Government to appoint a Minister for Cities and Urban Development in order to deliver integrated building, precinct and city policy and programs, supported by:

- A Federal Minister for Cities and Urban Development
- A Cities and Urban Development Cabinet Committee
- A COAG Cities and Urban Development Ministerial Council
- A Cities and Urban Development NGO Roundtable
- A Cities and Urban Development Department.

Further information on these areas can be found in Section 5 of the 'General Comments' part of this submission. As outlined in Section 3, the GBCA believes that a Sustainable Population Strategy, as well as national urban policy, should be guided by five principles:

PRINCIPLE 1: Enhance liveability for the population

Sustainable communities are liveable. They are diverse, affordable, inclusive and healthy; they enhance social interaction and ownership, are safe and caring and improve people's well-being.

PRINCIPLE 2: Create opportunities for economic prosperity for the population

Sustainable communities prosper. They encourage opportunities for investment, business diversity, innovation and economic development that support local jobs for people in the region.

PRINCIPLE 3: Foster environmental responsibility within the population

Sustainable communities respect the environmental systems that support them. They protect and restore the natural environmental values of their bio-regions. They are less resource intensive. They promote infrastructure, transport and buildings that reduce their ecological footprint.

PRINCIPLE 4: Embrace design excellence for the population

Sustainable communities are places for people. They are desirable, accessible and adaptable. They have their own distinct character and identity and evolve over time.

PRINCIPLE 5: Demonstrate visionary leadership and strong governance

Sustainable communities are characterised by leadership and strong governance frameworks that are transparent, accountable and adaptable. They enable active partnerships to build capacity and achieve a shared vision and deliver stakeholder benefit.

General Comments

The GBCA's 'General Comments' section of its submission to the 'Sustainable Population' Paper can be divided into six sections:

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Section 1: About the Green Building Council of Australia

The Green Building Council of Australia (GBCA) is Australia's leading authority on green buildings and communities. The GBCA was established in 2002 to develop a sustainable property industry in Australia and drive the adoption of green building practices through three key objectives; to rate, educate and advocate.

The GBCA has more than 900 member companies who work together to support the Council and its activities. The GBCA promotes green building and community programs, technologies, design practices and processes, and operates Australia's only national voluntary, comprehensive environmental rating system for buildings and communities - Green Star.

Green Star was developed to establish a common language and set a standard of measurement for green buildings, to promote integrated, whole-building design, to recognise environmental leadership, to identify building life-cycle impacts and raise awareness of green building benefits. Green Star rates the attributes of a building rather than its performance (please refer to Section 4 for the Green Star – Communities tool), although a Green Star – Performance tool is currently under development, for use with any type of building.

There are now Green Star rating tools for commercial office buildings and interiors, education and healthcare facilities, multi-unit residential developments, industrial and retail centres, and tools are under development for public buildings, for the 'custom' rating of projects, and for the rating of communities and neighbourhoods. As of February 2011, there are 306 Green Star certified projects across Australia, and another 510 Green Star registered projects across the country.

The GBCA is a member of the Australian Sustainable Built Environment Council (ASBEC), which is the peak body of key organisations committed to a sustainable built environment in Australia (for more information on ASBEC and the Call to Action, see Section 5).

The GBCA is also a member of the World Green Building Council, which brings together Green Building Councils from around the world, making it the largest international organisation influencing the green building marketplace. The GBCA is an active participant in the Common Carbon Metric project, ensuring that green buildings are a part of any comprehensive strategy to deliver global carbon emissions reductions.

Section 2: The GBCA's five green building priorities – 2011-2013

Green building priorities for 2011-2013

The next few years will determine whether green building practices become 'normal practice', rather than just 'best practice'. The GBCA provides this Sustainable Population submission to encourage greater commitment to green buildings, communities and cities. These five priorities will help transition Australia's green building practices from voluntary to vital, and spell out the deliverables needed to achieve this change:

- Priority 1: Provide visionary government leadership
- Priority 2: Retrofit and improve existing buildings
- Priority 3: Green education and healthcare facilities
- Priority 4: Move beyond buildings to communities and cities
- Priority 5: Embed green skills across all industry training

PRIORITY 1: Provide visionary government leadership

Strong leadership is needed to ensure we tackle climate change. Our challenge – and our opportunity – is to realise the full economic and environmental potential of the building sector by overcoming some of the market failures, skills deficits and institutional barriers that impede action. Each federal, state and territory government department should demonstrate commitment and leadership by:

- **achieving environmental ratings for every building** they own, occupy or develop, at the time of either refurbishment, retrofitting or development. Such buildings should have both Green Star and NABERS ratings where possible, and case studies should be developed to communicate the business case and outcomes. Government should also demonstrate leadership through a commitment to achieve ratings for public sector buildings such as education and healthcare facilities (see also Priorities 2 and 3), in order to encourage best practice developments, retrofits and operations. Green Star rating tools already exist for education and healthcare facilities, and a Green Star rating tool for public buildings is nearly complete.
- **implementing regulatory change** in order to continually raise standards in the Building Code of Australia (BCA) and to set clear, contemporary targets. The BCA should work with Green Star and NABERS to set complementary minimum standards for compliance alongside incentives for projects achieving best practice and above. The role of government is to ensure minimum compliance; the role of the GBCA is to reward best practice; and the two must work together to realise real change and reduce environmental impacts in the most effective manner.
- **working with industry to establish a clear, long-term pathway** towards a sustainable built environment for Australia. This pathway must have both financial and non-financial incentives available, whilst ensuring that neither regulation nor ratings limit projects' desire or ability to pursue innovation. Buildings are one of the most cost-effective target areas for climate change action and the Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change (IPCC) concluded that, with proven and commercially-available technologies, the energy consumption in both new and old buildings could be cut by an estimated 30-50% without significantly increasing investment costs. Such opportunities must be outlined, with details of incentives available, to agree to a clear, long-term pathway for the industry.

Deliverables for Priority 1:

- **a. Commitments gained from federal government departments** to achieve environmental ratings for buildings they own, occupy or develop, and to broaden the sustainability focus beyond energy efficiency for their own accommodation requirements.
- **b. BCA Working Group established** 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 practice.

- **c. Long-term pathway mapped out** 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.

PRIORITY 2: Retrofit and improve existing buildings

Each year, only around 2% of Australia's buildings are considered 'new'. The remaining 98% represents the built environment's 'next frontier' – greening our existing stock. However, cost-effective improvements to existing buildings can only be achieved if the market has access to:

- **Systems, technologies and information:** ClimateWorks' 2010 Low Carbon Growth Plan argues that Australia can reduce its greenhouse gas emissions to 25% below 2000 levels by 2020 at an average annual cost of AUD\$185 per household, and that this reduction can be achieved using technologies that are available today. The most cost-effective abatement opportunity, according to ClimateWorks, is retrofitting commercial buildings such as offices, shopping centres, schools, public buildings and hospitals. The easiest 'win' would be removing, replacing or downsizing inefficient equipment to reduce energy waste. This is followed by retrofitting heating, ventilation and cooling systems, appliances, lighting, water heating and insulation. Case studies must be freely available which explain the use of regulations, and encourage the use of rating tools, such as Green Star and NABERS, for all types of existing buildings. Case studies should explain the incremental improvements that are possible, and should be based on the financial benefits as well as environmental impacts.

- **Energy efficiency assessment and communication,** as a key part of improving the performance of existing buildings. However, the focus should be widened beyond energy efficiency to include greenhouse gases and other voluntary and auditable metrics such as water, indoor environment quality, waste and materials. An integrated strategy is essential, with partnerships between departments to lead to better policy and more opportunities for streamlined funding.

- **Funding, incentives and innovation:** There are a variety of funding sources that could contribute to the retrofitting effort, which will complement the recently-announced 'Tax Breaks for Green Buildings' initiative. In the absence of an emissions trading scheme, other policy mechanisms are needed to motivate buildings owners and tenants to reduce Australia's greenhouse gas emissions. The Australian Sustainable Built Environment Council's research argues that green depreciation could provide one of the few ways to influence investment in existing buildings. It suggested that green depreciation would only need to influence a relatively small proportion of refurbishment investment to be brought forward (over that which is already projected to occur in the normal refurbishment cycle) to make a significant reduction to energy demand and greenhouse gas emissions. Financial incentives and industry support for innovation is also critical if we are to improve upon the technologies that are available today; the Built Environment Innovation Council must be assisted in its promotion of new approaches and systems.

Deliverables for Priority 2:

- **a. Joint industry and government existing building pathway established** which 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.

- **b. A green depreciation scheme established as one of a range of key incentives** to encourage retrofits in existing buildings, alongside the recently-announced 'Tax Breaks for Green Buildings' initiative.

PRIORITY 3: Green education and healthcare facilities

The GBCA believes every Australian student deserves a school environment that is conducive to learning, while also saving energy, resources and money. Every teacher also deserves a workplace which offers a safe, comfortable and effective learning environment. Patients and staff of healthcare facilities similarly deserve spaces which are conducive to better health outcomes, greater comfort and staff productivity.

There is no good reason why the facilities for Australia's pupils, teachers, patients and staff should not be constructed to best practice standards. Perceived cost increases remain the most-quoted barrier to best practice, yet the benefits would be numerous and long-term economically and environmentally-sustainable facilities should simply represent fiscal responsibility. International research has confirmed that simple green building principles such as good passive design, access to natural light and fresh air can deliver exceptional increases in health, productivity and happiness of students and teachers, patients and staff. See the GBCA's 'Green Schools' policy paper online at the 'Advocacy' section of the GBCA's website: http://www.gbca.org.au/uploads/221/3293/Green%20Schools_Lowres.pdf

One international review of 30 green schools, *Greening America's Schools: Costs and Benefits*, found that green schools and universities deliver a 41.5% improvement in health of students and teachers (through reduced incidence of asthma, 'flu, respiratory problems and headaches), a 15% improvement in student learning and productivity and a 25% improvement on test scores from good lighting and ventilation. The Heschong Mahone Daylighting Study of more than 21,000 students showed a dramatic correlation between daylight school environments and student performance, including a 20% faster progression in maths, a 26% faster progression in reading and a 10% increase in overall performance simply by having access to views out of windows.

Green buildings are also healthy buildings. Natural light and cleaner, fresher air are the foundation stones of green buildings, and healthcare professionals are seeing accelerated recovery rates as a result. A number of international studies have confirmed that green healthcare facilities enable better patient care and reduce the length of stay required in hospital. Studies include:

- The Bronson Methodist Hospital in Michigan, which found that applying green design principles such as improved ventilation, private rooms, music, light and nature in its redevelopment project led to an 11% reduction in secondary infections and a decrease in nursing turnover rates to below 7%
- The Inha University Hospital in Korea, which found a 41% reduction in average length of stay for gynaecology patients in sunlit rooms over patients in dull rooms. The study found a 26% reduction similarly for surgery ward patients.

Deliverables for Priority 3:

a. Governments referencing 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% of projects.

b. A dedicated Green Education Campus roundtable established, creating an alliance between governments, the GBCA and education associations such as the Tertiary Education Facilities Management Association (TEFMA) to assist in disseminating case studies and best practice guidelines, as well as identifying funding opportunities for projects wishing to achieve more sustainable outcomes.

c. A dedicated Green Healthcare roundtable established, creating an alliance between governments, the GBCA and healthcare providers to assist in disseminating case studies and best practice guidelines, as well as identifying funding opportunities for projects wishing to achieve more sustainable outcomes.

PRIORITY 4: Move beyond buildings to communities and cities

Many of Australia's challenges, such as population growth, transport congestion, housing affordability, energy and resource limitations, will be most severely felt in our major cities, which will accommodate around 85% of our 35 million plus population by 2050. Sustainable and more liveable Australian cities will deliver a stronger Australian economy and an enhanced lifestyle for all. However, the nation's capital cities lack an holistic approach to climate change mitigation and environmental issues, and cohesive urban policy is needed to seize opportunities while they are still available.

Australia needs to design, build and manage environmentally sustainable communities, precincts and neighbourhoods as well as individual buildings. The GBCA would welcome government support for the current work on a Green Star Communities tool, including financial backing, data and intellectual property. The GBCA understands the need to include existing rating tools and systems in this work, to ensure current metrics are used, and to capitalise on the work already undertaken around Australia. The GBCA's Green Star – Communities Framework is referenced at Section 4 of this submission, and can be seen at: http://www.gbca.org.au/uploads/152/2712/GBCA015_Framework_Final_SinglePages.pdf

There is a clear emergence of the Australian Government's interest in the planning of our major cities. The Major Cities Unit (MCU) within Infrastructure Australia is developing national policy which will seek strategic investment opportunities in our cities, enabling them to be productive, connected, affordable and sustainable. These objectives align with the outcomes being sought by the GBCA's Green Star Communities project and the GBCA has therefore increased the level of engagement with Infrastructure Australia, the MCU and many other key stakeholders in an effort to build support for the Green Star Communities project. The GBCA's intent is to develop the Green Star Communities tool in a way that acknowledges and translates this national sustainable cities agenda into practical guidance for our member companies that are planning and delivering sustainable communities, precincts and places, and in line with the Council for Australian Governments' (COAG's) Strategic Plan. The GBCA will also be making submissions on the 'Our Cities' National Urban Policy Strategy and the 'Sustainable Population Strategy'.

In June 2010, the Built Environment Meets Parliament (BEMP) Alliance released Spotlight on Australia's Capital Cities: An Independent Audit of City Planning Systems. The report, which involved an independent audit of Australia's capital city planning systems by KPMG, made several recommendations, supported in-principle by the BEMP alliance, which included an expanded role for the Australian Government in urban policy, the establishment of metropolitan authorities in capital cities to improve decision-making and delivery, and setting city-based performance targets and national reporting on progress.

The Green Precincts Fund was announced in the 2008-09 Federal Budget with funding of \$15 million over four years to support high-profile demonstration projects. While the Green Precincts Fund is welcome, the fund should be substantially increased for projects that prove they can deliver a retrofit of an entire precinct as a demonstration project.

Deliverables for Priority 4:

a. Government support provided for the Green Star Communities project, with both financial backing and provision of data and information.

b. Green Precincts Fund increased to provide more support for precinct, community and neighbourhood projects showing lower environmental impacts and sharing case study information.

c. Cohesive urban policy formulated to provide an holistic, integrated approach to climate change mitigation and environmental issues across Australia's capital cities.

PRIORITY 5: Embed green skills across all industry training

As Australia transitions to a low carbon economy, we can expect a booming demand for 'green collar workers' across the property and construction industry. But our industry must have the skills to ensure we fully capitalise on this green collar growth. In the same way

that Occupational Health & Safety has become an integrated part of industry training, green skills must be embedded into the curriculum to ensure we develop better, safer, greener buildings.

In addition, these green skills must be recognised as integral to the delivery not only of environmentally sustainable buildings, but also of buildings that deliver health, productivity and financial benefits for owners and occupants.

Green skills must not be considered in isolation, however. Provision of expertise around water efficiency or energy efficiency is to be encouraged, but such skills should be seen as part of a larger picture. In this way the relationship between these skills, and their effects upon the building, its occupants and its performance, can be fully understood. A more holistic approach to those skills associated with the design, construction, maintenance and refurbishment of buildings will ensure more economically and environmentally sustainable outcomes.

The government and private sector must work together to encourage the uptake of green skills. A sustained education effort is needed so industry can be clear on the role, and differences, between regulation (BCA, mandatory disclosure, BASIX, etc.) and rating schemes (Green Star, NABERS, etc.), and how industry participants can use the different measures and systems.

Case study information from Australian and internationally-certified green buildings (in particular Germany, Scandinavia, US and UK), can help to demonstrate the business case and the capabilities, systems and innovation that are available.

The GBCA is a leading learning resource. Our membership represents the majority of the knowledge and skills in the industry and our case studies represent the best examples across the country. The GBCA has successfully run courses for government previously, and would welcome the opportunity to do so again.

Deliverables for Priority 5:

a. An holistic approach taken to green skills, with integration of sustainability into the nation's skills base as part of an overall approach, rather than with green skills being seen as an 'add-on' to current curricula.

b. Government support provided to development of learning programmes, case studies and examples of innovation which demonstrate the opportunities and explain the benefits of green building.

c. 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.

Section 3: The GBCA's Urban Policy

Since its inception in 2002, the Green Building Council of Australia (GBCA) has held three clear objectives:

- 1) to **RATE** green building projects with a robust, relevant and easy-to-use assessment tool
- 2) to **EDUCATE** the industry in green building practices, techniques and approaches
- 3) to **ADVOCATE** strong leadership, contemporary regulation and a range of incentives to drive green building growth.

The Green Star environmental rating system for buildings, which was launched in 2003, has provided clear guidance on the planning, design and construction of our buildings, through best practice standards that can be both measured and monitored.

The Green Building Council of Australia has successfully provided the Green Star tools and industry leadership required to deliver green outcomes at the individual building level. Now, as national policy emerges from the Australian Government around the planning of our major cities to enhance productivity, liveability and sustainability, the GBCA recognises that industry leadership must be re-calibrated to take on the challenge of greening our cities.

To reflect this shift, and because every city is in essence a combination of its buildings, infrastructure, places and people, the GBCA has broadened its focus to include communities. The GBCA's Urban Policy reflects the role of buildings, as well as the Green Star - Communities rating tool currently under development (more detail in Section 4).

The GBCA's approach references the Australian Government's urban cities agenda, which acknowledges that our cities must grow efficiently with respect to major infrastructure networks (such as transport and communication networks), are affordable and liveable, and shape a sustainable legacy for future generations.

"Australia's cities have high but declining standards of amenity, low population density, growing congestion, worsening housing affordability and low levels of industrial clusters. Many of these outcomes result from fractured and ineffective governance arrangements. Getting it right with cities has significant potential, not just from a pure economic perspective, but also from a social and environmental perspective. Getting it wrong is likely to be very costly economically, socially and environmentally."

Treasury Incoming Government Brief Red Book, 2010

Principles for sustainable cities and communities

The Green Building Council of Australia's urban policy is guided by five principles, which support the creation and evolution of new and existing sustainable cities and communities:

PRINCIPLE 1: Enhance liveability

Sustainable communities are liveable. They are diverse, affordable, inclusive and healthy; they enhance social interaction and ownership, are safe and caring and improve people's well-being.

PRINCIPLE 2: Create opportunities for economic prosperity

Sustainable communities prosper. They encourage opportunities for investment, business diversity, innovation and economic development that support local jobs for people in the region.

PRINCIPLE 3: Foster environmental responsibility

Sustainable communities respect the environmental systems that support them. They protect and restore the natural environmental values of their bio-regions. They are less resource intensive. They promote infrastructure, transport and buildings that reduce their ecological footprint.

PRINCIPLE 4: Embrace design excellence

Sustainable communities are places for people. They are desirable, accessible and adaptable. They have their own distinct character and identity and evolve over time.

PRINCIPLE 5: Demonstrate visionary leadership and strong governance

Sustainable communities are characterised by leadership and strong governance frameworks that are transparent, accountable and adaptable. They enable active partnerships to build capacity and achieve a shared vision and deliver stakeholder benefit.

Opportunities for sustainable urban environments

Based on these five principles, the Green Building Council of Australia advocates for cities and communities that:

- are **diverse and affordable**, and that both the capital and ongoing living costs for communities are considered in our decisions
- are **healthy, safe and inclusive**, encourage active and healthy living practices and are well serviced to enable community interaction and cohesion
- can **adapt over time** and meet future challenges
- **foster skills development** to ensure a wide range of employment and economic development opportunities
- **attract and reward innovation** that enables business and community connectivity, encourages competitiveness, increases productivity and generates jobs
- make **informed investment decisions**, have access to relevant information and value lifecycle sustainability
- are **resilient to climate change** and can adapt to the challenges of a changing climate
- have a **net positive environmental impact**, are ecologically restorative and are supported by healthy ecosystem services
- **reduce their greenhouse gas emissions**, encourage reductions from all emission scopes and reduce ambient air pollutant levels
- have underpinning **integrated land use** and **transport planning frameworks** and have well considered densities, uses and connections that serve the needs of the community
- create beautiful **places for people** to live, work and play, and have a **coherent urban structure** that responds to the design constraints and opportunities of the site, precinct and city
- embody **coordinated decision-making approaches** to ensure stakeholders and city decision-makers are engaged early and that governance structures are integrated and robust
- have a **shared vision**, where responsibilities are articulated and a commitment to implementation is paramount.

Green building benefits

There are many economic, social and environmental reasons why green building is now one of the world's fastest growing industries. These include:

- Lower operating costs
- Higher return on investment
- Greater tenant attraction
- Enhanced marketability
- Productivity benefits
- Reduced liability and risk
- A healthier place to live and work
- Demonstration of Corporate Social Responsibility
- Future-proofed assets
- Competitive advantage
- Reduced environmental impacts
- Increased biodiversity and ecological outcomes.

All of these benefits can be experienced by the wider urban community, rather than simply by each green building or tenancy, and the Green Star - Communities rating tool will establish the criteria against which such best practice outcomes can be assessed.

Section 4: The GBCA's Green Star – Communities project

By 2050, most of Australia's population - nearly 85 per cent - will choose to live in cities and towns. The quality of life experienced by this vast majority of Australians will be influenced by ecological limits and natural resource constraints, a changing climate, the growing need for employment and access to affordable, liveable and enjoyable places.

We are, however, in the enviable position of being able to shape the evolution of our existing and future communities. Acknowledging the challenges faced by our nation, in 2009 the GBCA consulted with its members and other industry and government stakeholders to identify potential opportunities to support the national cities agenda. With its core business the development and administration of comprehensive and robust rating tools, the GBCA was asked by government and industry to lead the development of a rating tool for sustainable communities.

Stakeholder feedback has identified that the underpinning objective of the Green Star - Communities rating tool should be to help industry achieve best practice in community development projects. Green Star - Communities will establish best practice sustainability standards for development projects and allow proponents to have their projects assessed and independently verified by a third party. Whilst the audience of the Green Star - Communities rating tool is likely to be diverse, stakeholder feedback has identified that the target users of the rating tool should be those involved in the planning, design and development of communities. These include, but are not limited to:

- Planners (regional, town, urban, social, environmental, infrastructure and economic);
- Designers (architects, landscape architects, urban designers, urbanists and engineers);
- Developers (development companies, constructors, financiers); and
- Government agencies (Commonwealth, State, Local and government owned corporations).

The development of Green Star - Communities involves a two-staged process:

- **Stage 1:** development of **a national framework for sustainable communities** that establishes five national best practice principles to guide sustainable communities in Australia and the development of the Green Star - Communities rating tool (THIS STAGE COMPLETED MID-2010); and
- **Stage 2:** development of the **Green Star - Communities rating tool that assesses sustainable communities** against best practice sustainable benchmarks (THIS STAGE NOW UNDER WAY).

The Green Star Communities project is engaging with a wide range of stakeholders, including government policy makers, designers, utility providers, planners, financiers, health professionals, sociologists, real estate agents and constructors. The project is supported by project partner VicUrban, together with principal project sponsor, Rock Development Group, other sponsors Grocon, Brisbane City Council, Barangaroo Delivery Authority, Lend Lease, Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority, Brookfield Multiplex, Aurecon, University of Melbourne, Stockland, Sustainability Victoria, City of Sydney, City of Melbourne, Mirvac and BlueScope Steel. Every state government land organisation in Australia has also agreed to participate in the tool development process.

The Green Star - Communities rating tool will play a fundamental role in shaping sustainable cities of the future. Green Star - Communities will help us to manage our natural resources, minimise our environmental footprint and create places that are healthy, liveable and provide opportunities for people and economies to prosper.

After all, we are not building cities for tomorrow, but rather cities for generations. Our built environment must be enduring, viable and sustainable for the next fifty or possibly the next one hundred years. Green Star - Communities will help us understand and innovate to achieve the best practice standards of today and imagine those possible for the future.

Section 5: The ASBEC Call to Action

The Australian Sustainable Built Environment Council (ASBEC) is the peak body of key organisations committed to a sustainable built environment in Australia. ASBEC members consists of industry and professional associations, non-government organisations and government observers who are involved in the planning, design, delivery and operation of our built environment, and are concerned with the social and environmental impacts of this sector. The GBCA is one of those members.

ASBEC is a non-profit volunteer organisation; a full list of members can be seen at http://www.asbec.asn.au/members/current_members. Members commit their time, resources and energy to developing practical opportunities for a more sustainable built environment. Currently ASBEC is working on a 'Cities for the Future' which seeks to develop alternative frameworks for land use, transport, economic and environmental outcomes and community planning.

In a coordinated document released on 1st March 2011, ASBEC calls for a streamlined, co-ordinated approach to urban management policy. ASBEC strongly urges the Australian Government to appoint a Minister for Cities and Urban Development to deliver integrated building, precinct and city policy and programs, supported by:

- A Federal Minister for Cities and Urban Development
- A Cities and Urban Development Cabinet Committee
- A COAG Cities and Urban Development Ministerial Council
- A Cities and Urban Development NGO Roundtable
- A Cities and Urban Development Department.

Australia is one of the most urbanised nations on the planet. It is estimated by Treasury that by 2050, our cities could accommodate around 85 per cent of our 36 million plus population. These cities will also be the drivers of the nation's economy and productivity. The challenges our cities face, such as population growth, traffic congestion, housing affordability, climate change and environmental disasters, demographic change, social marginalisation, infrastructure decline and environmental degradation, will only be successfully addressed through an efficient, effective and nationally-harmonised government response.

Bold leadership is required to foster greater consistency and alignment across the policy and planning initiatives affecting our built environment. An integrated and collaborative approach is necessary to encourage innovation and excellence, break down silos, use resources more efficiently and ensure our cities are liveable, affordable and sustainable. ASBEC calls immediately for:

- **A Federal Minister for Cities and Urban Development** – A Federal 'champion' is urgently required for Australia's major cities to drive the transparent, accountable and adaptable reforms needed to better connect urban built environment policies and programs across all levels of government.
- **A Cities and Urban Development Cabinet Committee** – to include key federal ministers whose portfolios involve decisions or activities pertaining to urban centres.
- **A COAG Cities and Urban Development Ministerial Council and IGA** – chaired by the Federal Minister for Cities and involving representation by state and territory Treasurers and Planning Ministers, as well as local governments. The Council's agenda should be established through an Intergovernmental Agreement and should include a five yearly review of cities' metropolitan planning systems (building and embedding the current capital cities review underway by COAG).
- **A Cities and Urban Development NGO Roundtable** – Our cities are the result of decisions, investments and activities by governments, businesses and communities. Business and community groups should have a direct voice to government on issues involving our cities. The Regional Development Australia (RDA) network should be transferred to the new Federal Minister for Cities and provide an active and effective, ongoing advisory mechanism.

- **A Cities and Urban Development Department** – The Major Cities Unit should be transformed into a Department tasked with developing and coordinating policy which involves urban outcomes. This can draw on the example of the US Office of Sustainable Communities which co-ordinates federal housing and transport investment with local land use decisions to reduce transport costs for families, improve housing affordability, save energy, and increase access to housing and employment opportunities.

The Australian Government's move to develop a national urban policy is a welcome step towards an integrated approach to issues affecting urban areas. ASBEC believes this should involve measurable and achievable actions, as outlined above.

The design and development of our cities must not be left to chance. Urban policy should not be spread across numerous disparate federal agencies working in isolation. Nor should it be inconsistently-managed across eight state and territory governments, and more than 500 local governments.

ASBEC has identified nearly 40 Australian Government programs, strategies and initiatives which impact the built environment (See Diagram 1 on following page). These traverse eight ministers and their portfolio departments encompassing:

1. Prime Minister and Cabinet (including COAG)
2. Climate Change and Energy Efficiency
3. Infrastructure and Transport
4. Sustainability, Water, Environment, Population and Communities
5. Resources, Energy and Tourism
6. Innovation, Industry and Science
7. Regional Australia
8. Finance.

Clearly, a coordinated approach to urban policy development is required to lift the performance of our cities, to meet Australians' desire for sustainable and liveable cities, to make our cities more resilient to climate change and environmental disasters and to maximise the opportunities of our cities as drivers of Australia's productivity and innovation. A strategic and streamlined approach to the policies and programs which apply to our cities and their built environment will lead to efficiencies, cost savings, and will ensure Australian cities are better equipped to tackle the challenges of a growing population and the associated stresses placed on our city eco-systems.

International best practice: The European Union

The EU states that "cities and metropolitan areas are the engines of economic development", as outlined in the EU 'The urban dimension in European Union' policies, released in 2010. The EU established the Inter-service Group on Urban Development in December 2005. It is chaired by the Regional Policy DG and pursues the following three objectives:

- To promote an integrated approach to sustainable urban development when programming and implementing the assistance of the Structural Funds
- To identify the initiatives under the various EU policies aiming to support sustainable development of urban areas and to ensure the necessary cooperation between the Commission services in this respect
- To ensure partnership between the Commission, the European Parliament, the Committee of the Regions, the associations of towns and urban areas and to establish regular dialogue allowing the exchange of views and the gathering of observations from these bodies on the consideration given to the urban dimension.

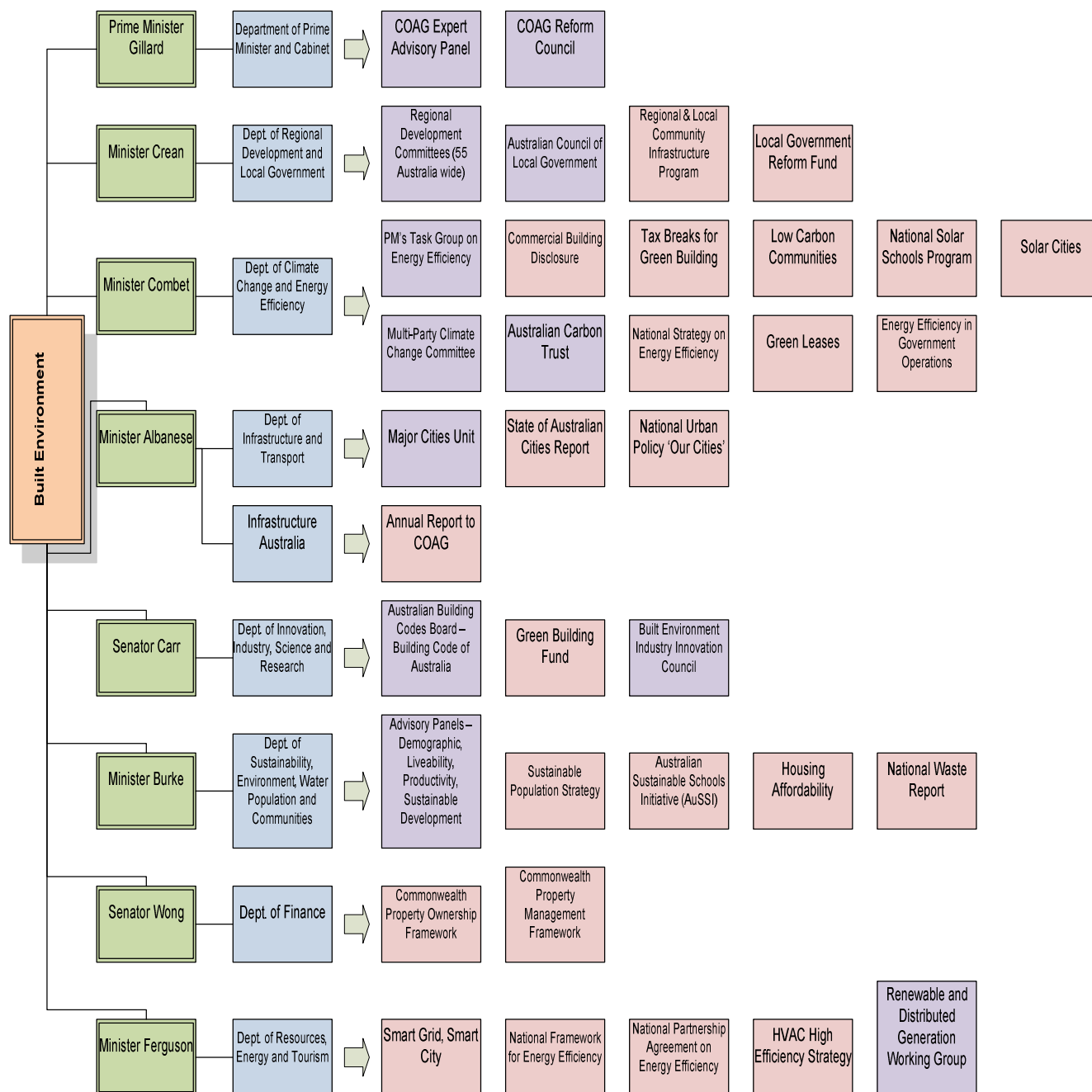


Diagram 1: Built Environment Policy and Program Matrix as at 24 February 2011

Section 6: GBCA contacts for further information

For more information on any of the sections outlined, or any of the policy documents mentioned, please contact:

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