

30 September 2011

Director of Social and Progress Reporting
Australian Bureau of Statistics
Locked Bag 10
BELCONNEN ACT 2616

Email: measuringprogress@abs.gov.au

**RE: Submission to Measures of Australia's Progress – MAP 2.0 –
Future Directions for Measuring Australia's Progress**

Dear Sir/Madam

Acknowledgement

This submission is made by the Green Building Council of Australia (GBCA) in response to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) invitation to provide input on future directions for measuring Australia's progress.

The GBCA would like to acknowledge the contribution already made by the ABS through the release of Measures of Australia's Progress (MAP) and for taking the initiative to engage with the Australian community in determining its future directions.

Our submission acknowledges that the purpose of the consultation is to focus on the aspirations Australians hold for national progress, rather than on personal aspirations or statistical measures. We do, however, wish to draw attention through this submission to opportunities for how information collected can be enhanced and applied, particularly in the areas of progress for which we have a direct interest.

About the GBCA

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, 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 89 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.

There are currently nine Green Star rating tools which address a range of building types and more than 360 projects have achieved Green Star ratings, with a further 540 developments registered. The Green Star rating system is designed to take a 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.

The GBCA engages with all levels of government and advocates its 'green building agenda', which outlines the five priorities that it believes will place Australia on a clear, long-term pathway to sustainability.

These five green building priorities are to:

- Provide visionary government leadership
- Retrofit and improve existing buildings
- Green education and healthcare facilities
- Move beyond buildings to communities and cities
- Embed green skills across all industry training

The GBCA believes these priorities, if addressed effectively, will help transition Australia's green building practices 'from voluntary to vital'.

Background

The GBCA, along with other key built environment industry players, has advocated for many years that the built environment is critical to the future of Australia's productive capacity, the wellbeing of communities and the health of natural ecosystems.

This has culminated in a shift in national policy that provides increasing recognition of the built environment's role and the need to respond to a range of significant challenges, such as population growth and demographic change, transport congestion, global competition, climate change, resource depletion, housing affordability, infrastructure deficit, access to services, biodiversity conservation, energy and water.

In our view, a key to progress will be the successful adaptation of our built environment to these and other key challenges, most of which have inter-dependencies and all of which have outcomes that can impact on social, economic, environmental and governance progress.

The GBCA is a member of the Australian Sustainable Built Environment Council (ASBEC) and as Chief Executive of the GBCA I am currently the Chair of the ASBEC Cities Taskgroup. In partnership with other industry groups, ASBEC has commissioned work to measure the performance of Australia's cities through the synthesis of key national and international indicators.

Submission

If the UNICEF aspiration that nations will be judged in the future “...by the well-being of their people, by their levels of health, nutrition and education; by their opportunities to earn fair reward for their labours; by their ability to participate in the decisions that affect their lives; by the respect shown for their civil and political liberties; by the provision made for those who are vulnerable and disadvantaged; and by the protection afforded to the growing minds and bodies of their children”, then measuring the progress of the built environment as part of this evolution will be essential.

It is recognised that the scope of MAP goes well beyond the built environment to measure progress across all aspects of society. This is appropriate and will ensure that governments, industry, education and research institutions, professional associations, not-for-profit organisations and individuals have access to reliable and comparable information over time.

Having regard to how these measures can be enhanced into the future, we would submit that the hard-wiring of aspirations and outcomes for the built environment, beyond those that already exist, would significantly enhance the importance and usefulness of MAP.

In this respect, the aspiration is for Australia’s major cities and urban areas to be well-administered, globally competitive, providing for a high quality of life, using fit-for-purpose infrastructure, making efficient use of resources, easily accessible, inclusive and minimising their impacts on the health of natural systems.

How this translates into outcomes is in large part reflected in the *Measuring Cities Performance* work that ASBEC commissioned, which has resulted in the compilation of 76 draft indicators. The ASBEC Cities framework measures align with the COAG Capital Cities Strategic Plan mission and complements the principles, goals and objectives of the National Urban Policy (please find enclosed a copy of the draft ASBEC paper, *Cities in Context*, which includes a list of the 76 draft indicators).

Whilst it is not anticipated that all 76 indicators would need to be measured, the current list does provide an evidence base from which to derive a short-list. Nevertheless, we believe that these indicators reflect important aspects of life to be informed by the collection of data.

This complements and can draw from the work of the World Bank’s *Global Cities Program*, UN Habitat’s *State of the Cities Report*, C40 Cities’ *Climate Leadership Group*, GBCA’s *Green Star - Communities* (referenced later) and the Property Council of Australia’s *Growth and Nation Building – Assessing the liveability of Australian Cities*.

By using the themes and indicators contained within this work, it is possible to derive an intended outcome, which can then be measured, in this case to determine the relative health of our cities. It can also be seen through the themes that there is a strong correlation with the relationship MAP draws between society, economy, environment and governance.

We consider this particularly important in the context of the future directions for MAP, as there are a number of other significant exercises being conducted by the Australian Government, which if they are to be optimised in the future, would benefit greatly from an alignment with work conducted by ABS for MAP.

Amongst these, the most significant are:

- *Capital City Strategic Planning Systems* – through the COAG Reform Council, states and territories are reporting on improvements in strategic planning against 9 criteria. Whilst not part of the current COAG brief, we believe that this work will be greatly enhanced by measuring the on-going performance of these improvements.
- *State of Australian Cities* – the Major Cities Unit anticipates routinely updating this report, which provides a snapshot of the health of Australia's major cities against a number of key topics. The opportunity will be to monitor this against the themes of productivity, liveability, sustainability and governance in the recently released *Our Cities Our Future – a National Urban Policy for Australia*.
- *Measuring Sustainability Program* – the 2011 budget contained \$10.1 for the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities to develop a set of sustainability indicators to measure Australia's progress towards more sustainable communities.

Green Star – Communities

In addition, in 2009 the GBCA commenced work 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 (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 (a copy of the draft credits is 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. Coordination of government initiatives such as MAP, and the others mentioned above, with Green Star - Communities offers an opportunity to capitalise on the work already undertaken and will contribute to more streamlined policies for the built environment.

In respect to the questions posed by the ABS in the public submission guidelines, we would note the recurrence of subjects associated with the built environment and support the goals that are offered as examples under each of the progress themes. We could add to these or suggest alternative forms of wording; however, they broadly cover the outcomes that we would aspire to through improvements to the planning, design, development and operation of our cities and the built environment in general.

Conclusion

As cities, which are an interlocking network of layered systems, become larger and more complex, it will become increasingly important to measure their performance to determine how they are contributing to Australia's progress and enable them to be more responsive to changing conditions.

To do this we need indicators anchored on baseline data, which in turn needs to be sufficiently broad to capture social, economic and environmental performance. We believe that this dovetails with the role of the ABS and the aims of MAP.

Our submission therefore draws attention to the importance of the built environment to the future of Australia's progress, its inter-dependency with the four key themes for national progress and the opportunity to engage with others actively working in this area at present in order to align how best to collect, apply and report on information.

We would welcome the opportunity to discuss, clarify and elaborate on this submission with the ABS and its expert panel.

Yours sincerely,

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Romilly Madew
Chief Executive