

31 August 2011

Mr Geoff Underwood
Chairperson
Victorian Planning System Ministerial Advisory Committee
C/- Statutory Planning Systems Reform
Department of Planning and Community Development
GPO Box 2392
MELBOURNE VIC 3001

Email: advisory.committee@dpcd.vic.gov.au

Dear Mr Underwood,

RE: VICTORIAN PLANNING SYSTEM REVIEW

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission regarding the Victorian planning system. The Green Building Council of Australia (GBCA) supports a planning system that integrates sustainability principles into every stage of the process and we welcome the chance to provide comment.

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 940 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 88 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 350 buildings have achieved Green Star ratings, with a further 540 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, Transport, Water, Materials, Land Use and Ecology, Emissions and Innovation.

Green Star Performance

A significant step in the evolution of Green Star is the development of the Green Star – Performance tool. This tool is due to be released next year and will be designed to assess the operational performance of existing buildings, complementing other rating tools already in operation. Green Star – Performance will address the gap between ‘Design’ and ‘As Built’ certifications, by assessing the operational impacts in the built environment that follow the design and construction of buildings.

Green Star Communities

Green Star is also looking beyond individual buildings to precincts and communities. 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:

1. Enhance liveability
2. Create opportunities for economic prosperity
3. Foster environmental responsibility
4. Embrace design excellence
5. Demonstrate visionary leadership and strong governance

We are now working on Stage 2 of the project which involves establishing best practice benchmarks for assessing and certifying sustainable communities. A copy of the Green Star Communities framework and a list of the tool’s draft credits are enclosed.

Embedding sustainability principles in policy and planning

The GBCA believes it is vital that sustainability principles are considered during the earliest stages of planning in order to achieve the best long-term outcomes for communities. Government has a responsibility to embed sustainability principles in its policies and has a significant opportunity to encourage industry and the broader community to adopt more sustainable practices through implementing a range of incentives.

Incentives can be financial and non-financial and can be used to encourage green building and sustainable planning practices in a range of ways. For example, the Queensland Government has recently established the *Green Door for High Performance Developments* which aims to ‘fast-track’ sustainable developments using dedicated case managers and expanded Ministerial powers to expedite development decisions. In Victoria, the City of Melbourne’s *1200 Buildings* program encourages and supports building owners, managers and facility managers to improve energy and water efficiency and reduce the waste to landfill of commercial buildings. A range of policies and programs are used around the world to encourage and reward green building. The GBCA has collected information on a range of initiatives in use in Australia and overseas and we would be happy to provide further details.

It is important that government and industry work together on building more sustainable communities and cities. The GBCA has been a strong supporter of the Australian Government's national urban policy and we have been working together with government on developing the Australian Urban Design Protocol. The GBCA also has strong relationships with the Victorian Government through associations with Sustainability Victoria and several other departments and agencies.

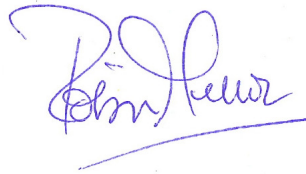
We encourage you to look upon the GBCA as the primary green building resource and we would welcome the opportunity to brief you on the work we are doing. Please do not hesitate to contact either of us if we can provide more information on green buildings and communities.

The GBCA looks forward to working with the Victorian Government to ensure Australia's transition to a low-carbon future through greener, healthier more sustainable communities, and supports a planning system that integrates sustainability principles into every stage of the process.

Yours sincerely,



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