

30 August 2011

Department of Local Government and Planning
Building Codes Queensland
PO Box 15009
CITY EAST QLD 4002

E-mail: buildingcodes@dlgp.qld.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam,

RE: IMPROVING BUILDING CERTIFICATION IN QUEENSLAND

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a submission regarding improvements to Queensland's building certification system. The Green Building Council of Australia supports the review and improvement of building standards as well as the up-skilling of industry professionals such as building certifiers. While the GBCA does not have any formal comments on the questions outlined in the discussion paper, the GBCA believes that building certification plays a vital role in maintaining and improving the safety, health, amenity and sustainability standards in the building and construction sector and we welcome the chance to provide comment.

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.

Prior to the 2010 federal election, the GBCA developed an agenda with five green building priorities to help transition Australia's green building practices from voluntary to vital. A copy of this document is enclosed. Embedding green skills across all industry training was identified as one of these priorities.

We believe that building certifiers play an important role in maintaining and improving the standards of buildings and it is important that they have access to training that enhances their ability to perform their role. In addition, it is vital to provide training that will give them a greater understanding of how sustainability principles can be integrated into the design and construction of buildings.

The GBCA supports the application of minimum standards and mandatory requirements that strengthen the quality of Australia's built environment. In particular, the GBCA encourages the provision of contemporary regulations that require more sustainable building practices. We believe it is important that regulations are regularly reviewed and revised in order to reduce the environmental impact of buildings steadily and also to ensure that regulations do not become outdated and hinder advances in technology and industry practices.

To develop the highest quality buildings and to achieve the best outcomes for safety, health, amenity and sustainability, contemporary regulation must also be complemented by incentives and support for voluntary measures and tools. In this way the industry will look beyond simply meeting minimum requirements and towards aiming for best practice benchmarks and achieving better outcome. The GBCA also supports in principle the Queensland Government's recently-released 'Green Door' policy as a way of fast-tracking exemplary sustainable development proposals.

Green Star is a voluntary tool that recognises, rewards and encourages 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 now 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.

Green Star is designed to take an holistic approach within each rating tool and across the suite of Green Star rating systems. 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. 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 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. We are now working on Stage 2 of the project which involves establishing best practice benchmarks for assessing and certifying sustainable communities.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to provide comment on this matter. The GBCA looks forward to working with the Queensland Government to ensure Australia's transition to a low-carbon future.

Yours sincerely,



Romilly Madew
Chief Executive



Robin Mellon
Executive Director – Advocacy and International