



Australian Building Codes Board

Annual Business Plan 2020–21



The ABCB

The Australian Building Codes Board (ABCB) is a joint initiative of all levels of government in Australia, together with the building and plumbing industries. Its key objective is to oversee issues relating to health and safety; amenity and accessibility; and sustainability in buildings. With a focus on life safety, the ABCB promotes efficiency in the design, construction and performance of buildings and plumbing systems through the National Construction Code (NCC) and the development of effective regulatory and non-regulatory approaches. The ABCB aims to establish minimum necessary, performance-based, proportional and cost effective codes and standards, as well as promote regulatory systems that are consistent, as far as practicable, between the States and Territories.

Focus of Business Plan

The ABCB's focus for the 2020/21 work program is on two key outcomes:

- the delivery of NCC 2022, and
- the development of priority measures for consideration in accordance with the Building Confidence Report (BCR) National Framework.

This will include delivering on some key policy priorities of Building Ministers, such as accessible housing, energy efficiency, lead in plumbing products and further measures relating to vulnerable children in high-rise buildings. The Board's work program will continue to focus on delivering improved building outcomes, increased confidence in the industry and public trust in the safety of buildings, noting the need to be mindful of the impacts of implementing significant building standard changes at this time.

In this respect the 2020/21 work program is set against the backdrop of the COVID-19 pandemic, which presents a variety of challenges for the building industry, regulators and consumers. The ABCB recognises this challenging setting and will consider the levers it has available to help support the building industry to play a key role in Australia's economic recovery. As part of this, Building Ministers have agreed to a recommendation of the ABCB to delay the adoption date of NCC 2022 to 1 September 2022 and have also directed the ABCB to consider other measures that can assist industry to adjust and familiarise itself with any proposed significant changes in the next edition of the Code.

The ABCB recognises that a clear, well understood and well utilised code is a critical component of the productivity reform agenda. In 2020/21, the Board will continue to progress other activities that support this outcome being:

- an enhanced education program to improve user knowledge of the NCC,
- delivering the improved NCC digitisation, information architecture and readability projects, which build on the success of free on-line codes access, and
- progressing the increased and competent use of Performance Solutions initiative, which includes quantification of the NCC's Performance Requirements and aims to improve the quality of Performance Solutions being used in the design and construction of buildings.

These measures, which have been progressing over the last few years, will complement the work associated with the BCR National Framework.

BCR National Framework

Whilst not a regulator, the ABCB plays a key role in the national infrastructure for building regulation, preparing national model codes for adoption by the states and territories and helping deliver key policy outcomes and national reforms for the Building Ministers' Meeting (BMM).

In 2019, the BMM requested the ABCB develop a BCR National Framework for future consideration by the nine governments through the establishment of the BCR Implementation Team (the Team). The work of the team is well advanced, with the development of a package of measures including NCC amendments, education initiatives, non-regulatory tools and model arrangements to address each of the BCR recommendations. This work will continue throughout the 2020/21 work program.

The Board will conduct macro-economic analysis of the BCR recommendations and consider possible implementation options during 2020/21. These will be provided to the BMM for consideration as part of determining opportunities for delivering the most efficient mechanism to achieve the desired outcome.

Noting that a number of BCR recommendations have already commenced implementation, the Team will focus on the delivery of priority recommendations relating to the licensing and registration of building practitioners, the integrity of building surveyors and the design and approval process, by June 30 2021. Any remaining BCR recommendations will be delivered by the end of 2021.

Other work closely aligned with the BCR reforms include enhanced NCC education activities, revision of the International Fire Engineering Guidelines, establishing an administrative process for documenting Performance Solutions and a two stage process to establish a national dictionary of building related terminology.

Regulatory interventions to address the design, construction and certification of complex buildings will also be progressed for further consideration by the BMM.

Enhanced Education Program

Complementary to the ABCB's existing education activities, the enhanced education program responds in part to the BCR recommendations that there be consistent requirements for continuing professional development (CPD) of building professionals. In 2020/21, the ABCB will deliver a new national online CPD package aimed at increasing the competent use of the NCC. This package is targeted at the nine key building professional groups as identified in the BCR.

Accessible Housing

In recognition of the diverse needs of people with a disability, in 2017 the BMM directed the ABCB to undertake a regulatory impact analysis into the possible inclusion of accessibility requirements for housing and in so doing identify potential code amendments.

In 2018, the Board carried out a review of the Liveable Housing Design Guidelines (LHDG) and other design options culminating in the release of a consultation paper in 2018. The Board published an Outcomes Paper in 2019 and commenced work on the next stage of the project, being a Consultation Regulation Impact Statement (RIS).

The focus for 2020–21 will be to proceed with the release of the Consultation RIS, review feedback and complete development of a Final RIS for consideration by the Board and BMM. Draft NCC provisions have also been developed for each option to outline technical details at an early stage and allow stakeholder input.

Lead In Plumbing Products

In 2020/21 the ABCB will complete an analysis of potential measures to reduce the risk of plumbing products and materials contributing to the level of lead in drinking water. The work has been informed by a Macquarie University report into the extent plumbing products and materials can contribute to lead levels in excess of those permitted by the NCC, as well as extensive consultation.

A Consultation RIS will be completed to identify if amendments are warranted that can deliver a net benefit to society and any necessary industry transition arrangements. The RIS will inform draft provisions for possible inclusion in NCC and feedback reviewed as part of completing a Final RIS for consideration by the Board.

Sustainability

The NCC currently addresses sustainability through its building energy efficiency provisions and measures to address the resilience of new buildings to extreme weather events. In 2020/21, the work plan will particularly focus on energy efficiency for residential buildings.

The ABCB is developing provisions that will progress through the Consultation RIS process for possible inclusion in NCC 2022. A number of options will be tested through this process, encompassing both the thermal performance and the annual energy use of the building.

The potential amendments include assessment of current and future whole-of-house assessment tools that may be referenced in NCC 2022 as compliance pathways. The ABCB will also continue to work with the NatHERS Administrator to ensure impacts resulting from NatHERS software updates are appropriately assessed.

2019–20 ACHIEVEMENTS

- Preview of NCC 2019 Amendment 1 released regarding egress from early childhood centres; labelling of aluminium composite panels; the process for documenting Performance Solutions; and other code clarifications
- BCR Implementation Team and support infrastructure established, progress reports to Board and BMF provided immediate action items reported to the Board with recommendations
- Progressed review of International Fire Engineering Guidelines in preparation for inclusion in NCC 2022
- Preliminary update undertaken of previous Consultation Regulation Impact Statement on smoke alarms to reflect research undertaken by Fire & Rescue NSW and progressed development of possible amendments for NCC 2022
- Draft bushfire provisions for non-residential public buildings progressed for possible inclusion in NCC 2022
- Implementation of enhanced education program commenced
- Scoping of different options for amending the energy efficiency provisions undertaken
- Development of Consultation Regulatory Impact Statement for accessible housing
- WaterMark Product database enhanced and 'what is Watermark' awareness campaign commenced
- Development and stakeholder consultation of new NCC information architecture in preparation for NCC 2022 adoption

For commercial buildings, the ABCB will continue to investigate improvements for NCC 2025, with the aim of moving commercial buildings towards minimum energy use. This includes a potential increase to the stringency of some commercial building services, as well as the better integration of on-site renewables. Consideration will be given to future climate impacts in energy modelling and expanding the number of building classifications that can use the NABERS Verification Method.

The adoption of the heating and cooling load limits in NCC 2019, which address extreme heat and cold stress, will also be monitored to determine whether any further research in this area is required beyond adjustments that reflect the latest CSIRO data.

The ABCB will also work collaboratively with building code development agencies including those from Canada, USA and New Zealand, with support from agencies such as, CSIRO, Geoscience, Standards Australia, the Australasian Fire and Emergency Services Authorities Council, the Australian Institute for Disaster Recovery and Department of Industry, Science Energy and Resources, to support research and identify future climate risks and adaptation solutions to enhance community resilience.

Water And Weatherproofing

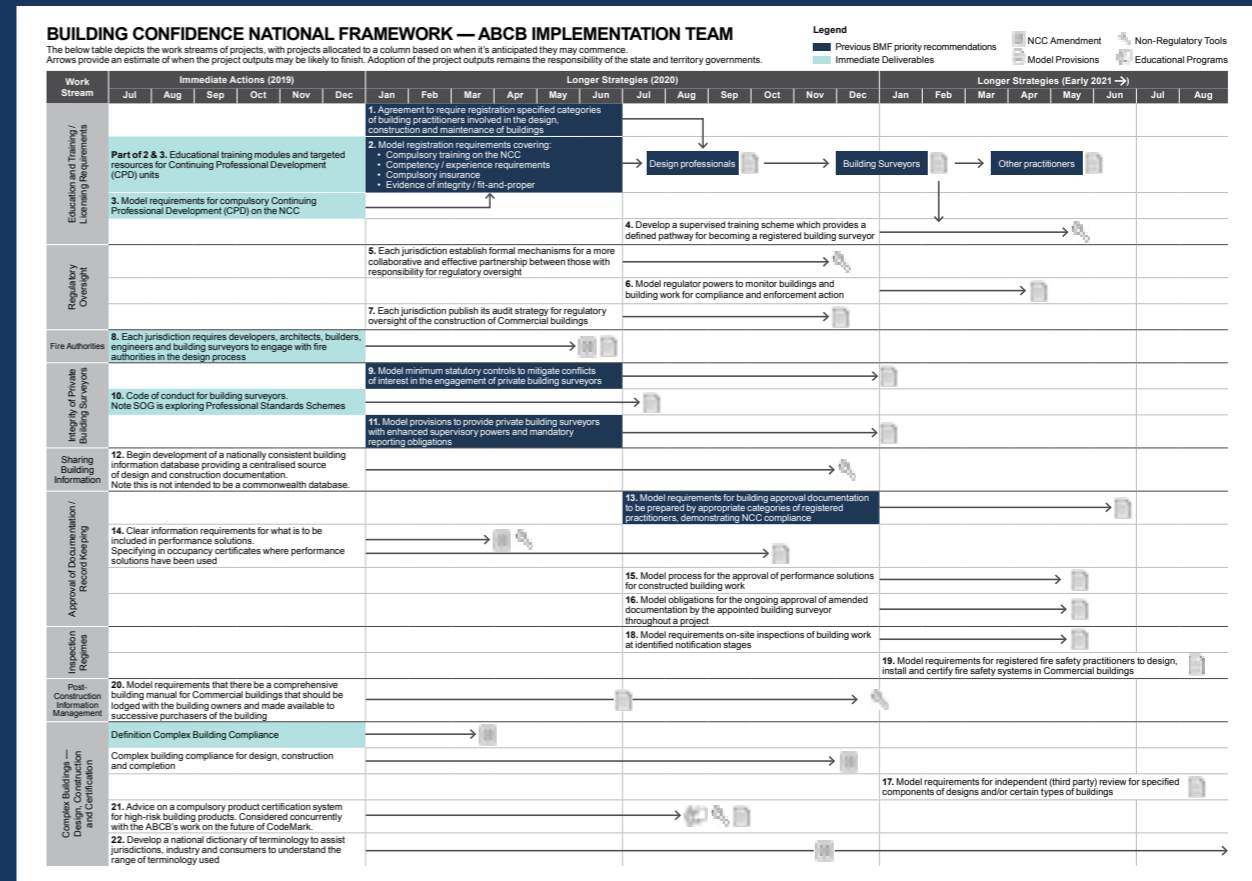
The Volume One Weatherproofing Performance Requirements are not currently supported by Deemed-to-Satisfy (DTS) Provisions. Further, the Volume Two Acceptable Construction Practices (ACP) review project and Proposals for Change (PFCs) have identified opportunities for clarification and development of NCC DTS Provisions pertaining to waterproofing and weatherproofing. NCC amendments requiring minimal analysis, including clarification amendments, will be developed for possible inclusion in NCC 2022. Matters requiring more detailed research and analysis will be addressed for NCC 2025.

2020–21 KEY PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

- NCC 2019 Amendment 1 released for 1 July 2020 State and Territory adoption
- Public Comment Draft of NCC 2022 released
- Priority recommendations for Building Confidence Report National Framework completed for Board and BMM consideration, remaining recommendations progressed
- National curriculum scoped and education resources released, including NCC CPD courses to increase understanding and competent use of the NCC
- RIS completed and options for reducing the contribution of plumbing products and materials to levels of lead in drinking water considered for possible inclusion in NCC 2022
- Consultation RIS completed and options for residential energy efficiency developed for possible inclusion in NCC 2022
- RIS completed and options on accessible housing considered for possible inclusion in NCC 2022
- Quantification of fire and structure Performance Requirements completed for possible inclusion in NCC 2022
- Implementation of new information architecture for NCC 2022
- Develop baseline provisions for early childhood centres in high-rise buildings as part of NCC 2022

The Building Confidence Report Implementation Team

The Building Confidence Report (BCR) Implementation Team is working with states and territories to develop policy responses to the recommendations of the **BCR**, as well as the design, construction and certification of complex buildings. The BCR Implementation Team will deliver responses to the Australian Building Codes Board and Building Ministers for consideration, in line with timeframes in the **National Framework**. States and territories will then consider implementing agreed actions through legislative, or other changes. Key BCR Implementation Team actions and expected outcomes of its work are shown below.



The BCR Implementation Team has been tasked with developing and publicly reporting on a National Framework for the consistent implementation of the BCR recommendations. The National Framework can be downloaded from www.abcb.gov.au



Supporting increased national consistency to reduce administrative burdens for industry, increase labour mobility across borders, increase consumer choice and increase practitioner understanding of education and training requirements.



Clarifying roles and expectations for key practitioners, including building surveyors and design practitioners to support increased accountability and positive culture change within the industry.



Improving documentation and record keeping practices to increase NCC compliance and the information available to regulators and building owners to inform decision making.



Improving processes related to building fire safety, including stakeholder engagement, leading to increased NCC compliance and greater building occupant safety.



Ensuring regulators have effective and necessary powers to enable inspection and review processes to achieve safe building outcomes.

Timeline

2018

Ministers **endorsed** BCR Recommendations.

July 2019

BCR Implementation Team **commences delivery** of National Framework.

July 2021

Consideration of priority BCR Recommendations by Building Ministers. Jurisdictional implementation commences.

December 2021

Final consideration of recommendations by Building Ministers. Jurisdictions continue implementation.

ABCB Work Program 2020–21

Project Name	Project Output
BCR Implementation Team	
BCR Team and National Framework delivery	Delivery of the Building Confidence National Framework; Proposals to address the design, construction and certification of complex buildings; Macro-economic analysis of the Building Confidence Report recommendations
NCC Development	
NCC Amendment Process	National Construction Code (NCC) changes developed and considered for implementation under agreed timeframes for release of new NCC editions/amendments
Standards Coordination and Committees	Documents, including Australian Standards, which are suitable for regulatory use and referencing in the NCC and the WaterMark Certification Scheme
Impact Analysis Process on Regulatory Change Proposals	Regulatory advice to decision-makers on proposals to amend the NCC; Effective regulation impact analysis processes undertaken in consultation with the Office of Best Practice Regulation (OBPR) and in accordance with COAG's regulatory principles
Extreme Weather Events and other Natural Hazards - analysis and collaboration	Monitor the outcomes of the new NCC provisions for heating and cooling load limits to determine whether additional work is required to mitigate the effects of heat and cold stress in residential buildings; Assessment of the adequacy of the current NCC earthquake and extreme wind provisions; Natural disasters monitored to determine whether current NCC provisions are appropriate
International Fire Engineering Guidelines (IFEG) Revision	Contemporary fire engineering guidance identified for Australian practitioners
Vulnerable Children in High-Rise Buildings	Development of possible DTS fire safety provisions for early childhood centres located on the upper floors of high-rise buildings in NCC 2022, in addition to those provisions implemented through Amendment 1 to NCC 2019; Development of possible changes to the fire safety provisions for primary schools in high-rise buildings for initial impact analysis and inclusion in NCC 2022 processes
Smoke Alarms	2012 ABCB smoke alarms RIS updated with consideration for the FRNSW testing program; Verification Method for smoke alarms developed in collaboration with FRNSW for possible inclusion in NCC 2025; Review of appropriate standards carried out, including AS 3786 and UL 217
Bushfire Provisions for Non-Residential Buildings	Nationally consistent bushfire provisions for non-residential buildings containing vulnerable occupants
Review of fire safety requirements for external walls, Volume One	Development of amendments to NCC provisions for fire safety of external walls, for possible inclusion in NCC Volume One
Commercial Energy Efficiency	Investigation of possible improvements to the commercial building energy efficiency provisions for NCC 2025.
Residential Energy Efficiency	Development of possible substantial changes to the residential energy efficiency provisions in NCC 2022; Ongoing monitoring and assessment of changes to Nationwide House Energy Rating Scheme (NatHERS) software
Condensation Mitigation Measures Stage Two	Development of Stage Two condensation provisions for residential buildings for possible inclusion in NCC 2022; Update Condensation Handbook and investigate possible further changes to NCC 2025

Project Name	Project Output
Plumbing Research Project – Pipe Sizing	Revised water services and sanitary plumbing and drainage sizing provisions
Lead in Plumbing Products	Amendments to the allowable lead content for plumbing products and materials in contact with drinking water
On-site Wastewater Management	Development of provisions for the design and installation of on-site wastewater management systems
Accessible Housing	Development of accessible housing provisions for possible inclusion in NCC 2022
Waterproofing and weatherproofing	Development of Deemed-to-Satisfy weatherproofing and waterproofing provisions and amendments for possible inclusion in NCC 2022; Development of Deemed-to-Satisfy weatherproofing and waterproofing provisions for possible inclusion in NCC 2025
Increased and Competent Use of Performance	
Quantification	Measurable NCC Performance achieved through quantified Performance Requirements
NCC Awareness, Understanding and Useability	
Improved NCC Readability – Volume Two	To facilitate a well understood and utilised code, implement improved NCC language, structure and format changes
Digitisation – including consistent NCC structure and new information architecture	Continued re-development of NCC Online to integrate with ABCB website and provide a stable, more navigable, easier to use site underpinned by a consistent NCC structure and information architecture
Education and Awareness	Increased awareness of the ABCB, NCC, WaterMark Scheme and CodeMark Scheme; Education/supporting resources aligned with the current NCC; Education resources aligned with AQF levels available for VET and HE sectors (Stage 1)
Enhanced Education	Targeted digitally focused NCC CPD courses delivered; Curriculum input on the NCC for relevant courses in the VET and HE sectors developed; Strong relationships established with key education accreditation bodies including professional industry bodies; Promotion of NCC CPD courses as part of broader strategy to facilitate uptake by practitioners
National Events	Delivery of 2021 National Seminar Series and other events in support of a well understood and utilised Code
Product Certification	
WaterMark Administration	Materials and products complying with requirements of the WaterMark Certification Scheme are certified by a WaterMark Conformity Assessment Body and listed on the WaterMark Product Database
WaterMark – Point of Sale Awareness Initiatives	Delivery of a WaterMark Awareness Strategy for promoting and raising awareness of the WaterMark Certification Scheme, including a 5 year Masterplan and detailed Implementation Plan for the first 2 years; Commenced delivery of the initial Implementation Plan in collaboration with key Scheme stakeholders
Watermark – Product Specification Review	Appropriate technical specifications for the evaluation of products within the scope of the improved WaterMark Certification Scheme
CodeMark – Management	Management and facilitation of Australian voluntary third party building product certification scheme



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