

The Australian Building Codes Board Submission to the Productivity Commission Inquiry: Australia's Urban Water Sector

ABCB AND THE BCA

The Australian Building Codes Board (ABCB) is responsible for Australia's national building code. The Building Code of Australia (BCA) forms the technical basis for the regulation of all new building work across Australia. It is a joint initiative of all levels of Australian Government and has been given the status of building regulation by all States and Territories. The Board is established by an Inter-Government Agreement signed by the Australian Government and State and Territory Ministers (who have legislative and administrative responsibility for building regulatory matters).

The ABCB reports directly to the Ministers responsible for building regulatory matters through the Building Ministers' Forum (BMF), providing a vital link for the building industry between building practice and Government building regulatory policy.

The BCA is a 'performance-based' code, presenting mandatory Performance Requirements for health, safety, amenity and sustainability that buildings throughout Australia must meet. It is amended annually in May to reflect Government policy and changes in building practices, usage and technology, often through the adoption of new and/or amended Standards. The BCA amendment process follows an agreed procedure that is both consultative and transparent, while respecting confidentiality. It includes preparation of detailed technical proposals and, as required under COAG (Council of Australian Governments) arrangements, rigorous impact analysis and broad community consultation to inform decision makers.

Further information relating to the ABCB and the BCA can be found on our website <http://www.abcb.gov.au>

NATIONAL CONSTRUCTION CODE

In February 2010, the ABCB and the National Plumbing Regulators Forum (NPRF) were asked by the BMF to deliver on a COAG agreement to jointly deliver consolidated national building and plumbing regulation. The first step in this process is the publication of an updated Plumbing Code of Australia (PCA) in addition to the BCA early in 2011. The BCA and PCA will form Volumes One, Two and Three of the National Construction Code (NCC). Governments have indicated that the NCC will eventually comprise all on-site construction regulation (building, plumbing, electrical and telecommunications). The ABCB has been tasked with the maintenance and upkeep of the PCA in alignment with the BCA.

PLUMBING CODE OF AUSTRALIA

Like the BCA, the PCA is also a 'performance-based' code. Its goal is to enable the achievement of nationally consistent and efficient minimum necessary standards of relevant health, safety, amenity and sustainability objectives, relating to plumbing and drainage. The goal is applied so that the requirements in the PCA extend no further than is necessary in

the public interest, are cost effective, easily understood and are not needlessly onerous in their application. A primary objective of the PCA is the conservation of water and energy.

WATERMARK

WaterMark is a certification mark given to products that meet relevant standards for use in plumbing and drainage installations. The WaterMark scheme is given effect through the PCA and plays an important role in ensuring that health, amenity and efficiency requirements related to plumbing are met. Only products displaying the WaterMark can be installed by licensed plumbers. In addition to the PCA the ABCB has also been given responsibility for WaterMark.

ABCB BEYOND NCC 2011

Through its governance of the NCC the Board will be responsible for the future direction of not only life safety and energy efficiency issues through the BCA but also health, amenity and water efficiency issues through the PCA. Matters relating to on-site water supply and sanitary waste services, stormwater control and capture, and certification of products will all be overseen by the Board and controlled through the new National Construction Code.