

A Minister for Cities is needed to build Australia's future, says ASBEC

EMBARGOED until Tuesday 1 March 2011: Australia needs a federal Minister and Department for Cities & Urban Development to ensure the nation meets its urban challenges.

The Australian Sustainable Built Environment Council (ASBEC) will release a call to action on Tuesday at the Green Cities 2011 conference in Melbourne.

"We have developed this call to action to highlight the urgent need for bold leadership and a streamlined, coordinated approach to urban management policy," says ASBEC President, Tom Roper.

"We are facing a future of transport gridlock, rising greenhouse gas emissions and eroded quality of life unless we take decisive action. An integrated and collaborative approach is mandatory if we are to foster a culture of innovation and excellence, and ensure our cities are liveable, affordable and sustainable," Mr Roper says.

ASBEC's list of urgent actions includes:

- A **Federal Minister for Cities & Urban Development** to drive the reforms needed to better connect urban built environment policies and programs across all levels of government.
- A **Cities & Urban Development Cabinet Committee** of federal ministers whose portfolios involve decisions or activities pertaining to urban centres.
- A **COAG Cities & Urban Development Ministerial Council** involving representation by state and territory treasurers and planning ministers, and local government.
- A **Cities & Urban Development NGO Roundtable** to ensure business and community groups have a direct voice to government on issues involving our cities.
- A **Department of Cities & Urban Development** tasked with developing and co-ordinating policy which involves urban outcomes.

According to Romilly Madew, Chief Executive of the Green Building Council Australia and chair of the Cities task group, the ASBEC call to action includes a matrix which plots 45 Australian Government programs, strategies and initiatives which impact the built environment.

"While the Australian Government's commitment to national urban policy is welcome, we are particularly concerned by the lack of co-ordination between the three levels of government in Australia, resulting in inconsistently-managed programs and policies across eight state and territory governments, and more than 500 local governments," Ms Madew says.

"Business and the community are looking to the Federal Government to join-up their forthcoming policies on population, cities, regional Australia and sustainability," says Chief Executive of the Property Council of Australia, Peter Verwer.

"Cities - of all shapes and sizes - are the centre of action! A linked up, coordinated approach is needed to meet the challenges of managing growth, improving quality and liveability and transitioning to a low-carbon economy while maintaining wealth creation," says David Parken, Chief Executive Officer of Australian Institute of Architects.

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“With industry working together like never before across the design, development, operation and management of Australia’s built environments, it is essential that our governments match this initiative and fully support our call to action,” says Chairman of the Facility Management Association of Australia, Steve Taylor.

“It is clear that a coordinated approach to urban policy development is required to meet Australians’ desire for sustainable and liveable cities, to make our cities more resilient to climate change and environmental disasters and to maximise the opportunities of our cities as drivers of Australia’s productivity and innovation,” Tom Roper concludes.

About ASBEC

The Australian Sustainable Built Environment Council (ASBEC) is a collective of leading industry organisations committed to a sustainable built environment in Australia. ASBEC’s membership consists of a range of key industry government and academic organisations who are involved in the planning, design, delivery and operation of our built environment and who are concerned with the economic, social and environmental performance of the sector.

ASBEC’s activities, including research and policy development on built environment issues, are an example of a collaborative, co-ordinated approach undertaken across all segments of the built environment. ASBEC works actively to develop and promote leading practice in the design, planning and operation of our cities, at a buildings, precincts and citywide scale.

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