Industry collaboration seeks long-term energy vision for new construction

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A new project led by the Australian Sustainable Built Environment Council (ASBEC) and ClimateWorks Australia will develop a long-term industry-led vision for how the National Construction Code can deliver energy and emissions savings alongside financial benefits for building owners and occupants.

In an Issues Paper published today, the project notes that buildings contribute more than half of our country’s electricity consumption and almost a quarter of emissions in Australia. Energy requirements for new construction in building codes are key to driving energy and emissions outcomes. Leading jurisdictions around the world, including countries, states and cities across North America and Europe, have established long-term targets of net or near zero energy buildings, to drive innovation, investment and market transformation in the property and construction sectors.

“At a time when energy prices are skyrocketing and energy policies are under critical review, better buildings can ease the strain on our wallets and take the pressure off our ageing infrastructure”, said ASBEC Executive Director Suzanne Toumbourou. “And with climate change starting to bite, they can ensure our emissions meet our obligations under the Paris agreement.”

Australia’s building standards are governed by the National Construction Code. The Code is updated every three years. The next changes will be implemented in 2019.

ASBEC and ClimateWorks Australia have partnered on a project to develop an industry-led, evidence-based pathway for the adoption of ambitious long-term targets for the energy performance requirements in the National Construction Code.

“It’s vital for Australia’s energy future that the changes to the National Construction Code help to drive more affordable and more widespread energy efficient buildings.” said Tony Arnel, Chair of ASBEC’s National Construction Code Working Group and Global Director of Sustainability at Norman Disney & Young.

“By 2030, buildings built after net next Code changes could make up more than a quarter of all Australia’s building stock. By 2050, this could increase to more than half of the total stock. There’s great potential to take the pressure off our power stations and power lines, save money and lower emissions – but we need the right standards in place.” said Tony Arnel.

“Our building industry – from architects and engineers to developers and builders – has the knowledge to help steer these changes in the direction that will address Australia’s challenging energy landscape. That’s why we’re working together on an industry-led vision.” said Suzanne Toumbourou.

ASBEC and ClimateWorks will publish an interim report on project findings in November 2017 and a final report on cost benefit analyses and a policy pathway in March 2018.

“Right now, Australia is at an energy crossroads. We can take the shortcut to a secure and low-cost energy future via better buildings, or go the long way round.” said Tony Arnel.
Full report


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.

Available for comment:

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