MEDIA RELEASE

A new roadmap sets a course for sustainable homes

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A new roadmap for sustainable homes presents a win for builders, consumers, the economy and the environment.

Growing the market for sustainable homes was launched today by the CRC for Low Carbon Living and the Australian Sustainable Built Environment Council (ASBEC).

The report reveals that two thirds of Australian home buyers prefer energy efficient homes when given a choice – but significant barriers prevent them from turning that desire into reality.

“Our research shows that Australians want homes that are comfortable, healthy and affordable – all things that a sustainable home can deliver,” says Scientia Professor Deo Prasad AO, Chief Executive Officer of the CRC for Low Carbon Living.

Australia’s homes produce around 13 per cent of the nation’s greenhouse gas emissions.

“Sustainable homes require less energy to heat and cool, enhance occupant comfort and are more resilient to climate and weather extremes. They can also be a driver for economic growth, Professor Prasad explains.

Preliminary economic modelling outlined in the report finds that accelerating Australia’s transition to sustainable housing would deliver more than half a billion dollars of extra investment in the construction industry by 2030. It would also create more than 7,000 new jobs and save Australians $600 million on their energy bills.

While the opportunities are enormous, the report identifies several significant barriers.

Suzanne Toumbourou, ASBEC's Executive Director, says some Australian home builders are already striving to move beyond minimum requirements by incorporating energy efficient designs and technology innovations into new homes.

“However, these builders lack scale and face significant barriers. Consumers are unclear of their choices. Home builders are locked into business models and supply chains that limit innovation. And financiers don’t value sustainable homes,” Ms Toumbourou explains.

The report proposes a ‘Sustainable Homes Transition Roadmap’ with four clearly defined steps to address these barriers:

1. Differentiate sustainable housing in the market
2. Train and reward the construction industry
3. Build awareness
4. Broadcast the positive business case.

Ms Toumbourou says the roadmap presents a “golden opportunity” for the industry to proactively address challenges and achieve a smooth regulatory transition as the Australian Building Code Board responds to COAG’s Trajectory for Low Energy Buildings.

“Our research shows that, with the right incentives and support, the transition to sustainable homes can create a win outcome for builders, consumers, the economy and the environment,” she says.

Professor Prasad says Australia’s world-leading approach to sustainability in the commercial sector underscores the opportunity.

“We have the skills, knowledge and technologies at our disposal. Now we must create the right policies and incentives to help Australian home builders deliver the benefits of sustainable homes,” Professor Prasad concludes.
Available for comment

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About the report

Growing the market for sustainable homes was developed in partnership between the CRC for Low Carbon Living, ASBEC and the NSW Office of Environment and Heritage Collaborative Sustainable Housing Initiative (CSHI), supported by research led by CSIRO.

Download Growing the market for sustainable homes: www.asbec.asn.au/research-items/growing-market-sustainable-homes-roadmap/

About the Australian Sustainable Built Environment Council

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 building, precinct and citywide scale.

About the Low Carbon Living Cooperative Research Centre

The CRC for Low Carbon Living is a national research and innovation hub that seeks to enable a globally competitive low-carbon built environment sector. With a focus on collaborative innovation, the CRC brings together property, planning, engineering and policy organisations with leading Australian researchers to develop new social, technological and policy tools.