

THE GREEN BUILDING COUNCIL

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GREEN BUILDING COUNCIL AUSTRALIA

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→ AS STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENTS THROUGHOUT AUSTRALIA INTRODUCE WATER AND ENERGY EFFICIENCY TARGETS FOR NEW BUILDINGS,

the need to build green has never been greater. At the same time, the business case for building green continues to strengthen, with studies showing that the benefits of building green far outweigh the marginal initial cost premium.

The Green Building Council of Australia is leading the response to this imperative - and opportunity - with the support of more than 100 member organisations. The Council is a national, not-for-profit, property industry initiative, with a broad membership base representing all sectors of the property industry as well as government, professional societies and universities. It is the Australian member of the World Green Building Council, a global federation of green building councils.

The Council's mission is to drive the transition of the Australian property industry towards sustainable development by promoting and advancing the creation of green building rating systems, economic incentives, government initiatives and programs, new technologies and continuing industry knowledge. The Council is actively working with government to remove barriers to sustainable development and create incentives to change industry practice.

A key Council initiative is the development of Green Star, Australia's first national, voluntary, comprehensive environmental rating system for buildings. Green Star is an umbrella system which will have rating tools that assess either the design, construction or performance of buildings against a range of environmental criteria including water, waste, energy, materials, indoor environmental quality, ecology and emissions.

Green Star provides Australian rating tools for different phases of the building life cycle (design, construction and operation) and for different building types (office, retail, industrial, residential etc). It has been developed as a voluntary system to recognize and reward 'Best Practice' (four stars), Australian Excellence (five stars) and World Leadership (six stars). That is, only designs, projects or buildings that achieve a Green Star rating of four, five or six stars receive official certification from the Council, which is conducted by an independent third-party assessor.

To date, the Council has launched two rating tools:

- Green Star - Office Design, and
- Green Star - Office As Built.

Maria Atkinson, the Council's Executive Director, explains: "The Green Star - Office As Built rating tool complements our Green Star - Office Design rating tool, which was launched in 2003, by providing a means to assess whether the intent of an office building's design is met by its construction. To build green you need to get the design right and Green Star - Office Design evaluates the design against a comprehensive range of environmental criteria. While a certified Green Star design will be valuable, the market - and especially tenants - will also want to see that the promise of the design has been realised in the construction and that is what Green Star - Office As Built delivers."

The Council will launch Green Star - Office Interiors in early June, which will enable organisations to rate their tenancy fitout designs. Green Star - Office Interiors will be released as a pilot for public exhibition and Stakeholder feedback. A rating tool for existing buildings will follow soon afterwards, to complete the suite of tools for office buildings. The existing office rating tool will be useful for property owners and managers to report on a building's performance, allowing market competition with new office buildings in terms of environmental credentials.

"The question then is what building type do we focus on next - residential, retail, industrial, hospitals, schools?" Ms Atkinson said. "We now have the capacity to develop as many rating tools as the market demands - we are only limited by funds to sponsor their development."