

# **BUILDING MINISTERS' FORUM**

## **COMMUNIQUE – 13 DECEMBER 2019**

The Building Ministers' Forum (BMF) met today in Canberra to discuss progress and agree next steps with the suite of important national building reforms underway. Ministers acknowledged the extensive work done since they last met on 18 July but agreed there is more to be done.

Work to implement the recommendations in the *Building Confidence Report* and the path forward on professional indemnity insurance were among the many important projects discussed.

### ***Building Confidence Report National Framework***

Building Ministers noted the significant progress made by the Australian Building Codes Board (ABCB), since the establishment of the Implementation Team to deliver a national approach to implementing the recommendations in the *Building Confidence Report*.

Key work already undertaken has included:

- Development of amendments to the 2019 National Construction Code (NCC) including a best practice process for the development of performance solutions to strengthen their consistency and quality.
- Development of a new Continuing Professional Development (CPD) module on the NCC to ensure building practitioners have a better understanding of the requirements within the NCC.
- Development of a new nationally consistent definition of 'complex buildings' with further consultation on the definition and targeted regulatory interventions to continue in early 2020 with a view to inclusion of the definition in the NCC.

Ministers noted the update on the work program for the national approach to implementing the *Building Confidence Report* of the BCR Implementation Team over the next 18 months.

The next steps include:

1. Development of a nationally consistent code of conduct for building surveyors with consultation to commence in early 2020.
2. Development of a detailed national specification for inclusion in a building manual for commercial buildings.
3. Development of model provisions to set out the roles and responsibilities for documenting, approving and recording performance solutions.
4. Work on a national data-sharing framework to support the development of a comprehensive national building data portal will also begin next year. This will draw on data from state and territory governments to support education and compliance and enforcement activities.

The Chair reaffirmed the call for industry and states and territories to contribute to the work of the BCR Implementation Team to ensure solutions can be adopted by all jurisdictions in a nationally consistent way.

### ***Coordinated response to Professional Indemnity Insurance***

Building Ministers discussed the outcomes of the consultation they commissioned in July and agreed there is no single solution and that a range of responses may be necessary.

Enduring solutions, that reduce the cost of insurance for building industry practitioners and ensure protection for consumers, must be underpinned by the systemic reforms that are being implemented through the national work on the Building Confidence recommendations. States and territories agreed to achieve greater national consistency with regards to licensing requirements for professional indemnity insurance.

Building Ministers agreed to convene a meeting in February 2020 with the Insurance Council of Australia to discuss a suite of measures to reduce the cost and improve the availability of professional indemnity insurance premiums for building industry practitioners.

Ministers called on industry associations to develop Professional Standards Schemes as a matter of priority. A further meeting in February 2020 will be convened with building surveyor and certifier industry associations to discuss their implementation plans for establishing a Professional Standards Scheme and raising standards within the industry. The insurance sector and professionals in the construction industry all have a critical role to play in developing solutions.

### ***Aluminium Composite Panels***

Ministers noted the work of the officials and Standards Australia to develop a technical specification for labelling aluminium composite panels. The technical specification is proposed for inclusion in the NCC amendment. An Australian Standard for labelling these products will now be developed drawing on the work done to deliver the technical specification.

### ***Security of Payment***

Building Ministers agreed that states and territories would seek to apply model parameters if they are considering the implementation of statutory trusts in their respective security of payment regimes, to provide a nationally consistent approach to the reform.

States and territories would continue to assess the costs and benefits of implementing statutory trusts with respect to local sector conditions and stakeholder feedback.

### ***Digital Twins***

Ministers were briefed by CSIRO's Data61—the Commonwealth's data and digital sciences arm—on the opportunities to use digital solutions to improve compliance in the building and construction sector, including the ability to track products in the supply chain.

### ***Industry Qualifications***

Noting the July 2019 BMF highlighted that some building practitioners did not hold adequate skills required to read and interpret relevant standards and legislation, Building Ministers were briefed by the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) on their planned audits of building and construction qualifications.

### ***Fire Safety in Early Childhood Centres***

Building Ministers noted the decision of the Australian Building Codes Board to achieve enhanced fire safety measures for early childhood centres by requiring a Performance Solution for centres at upper levels of high-rise buildings. This requirement is to be included in the out-of-cycle NCC amendment.