



These notes are of the Cairns *Improving sustainable housing in Queensland* forum and do not represent the view of the Department of Infrastructure and Planning nor do they suggest future government policy.

Improving sustainable housing in Queensland discussion paper

Report of community discussion forums

Forum number: 10

Date: 3 September 2008

Location: Cairns (Mecure Hotel Harbourside)

Dignitaries: The Honourable Paul Lucas MP, Deputy Premier and Minister for Infrastructure and Planning
Cr Eric Britton, Mayor, Boulia Shire Council

Guest panel: Russell Brandon, Executive Director, Building Designers Association of Queensland
Rod McInnes, Chief Executive, Timber Queensland
Michael Plunkett, Director, Nero Building Solutions

Facilitator: Glen Brumby, Director, Building Codes Queensland Division, Department of Infrastructure and Planning

General meeting description

- presentation on the key initiatives outlined in the discussion paper
- participant question and answer time, with guest panel members.



Participant comments/suggestions	DIP/guest panel response
5-star energy equivalent rating	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In Victoria, there was a shortage of software assessors after the 5-star housing requirement was introduced. There needs to be adequate training and education for software in Queensland.• The system to establish 5-star needs to fit the area. 2nd generation software is working much better than 1st generation to give accurate star ratings in warmer climates, such as natural ventilation. There is some concern that some volume builders will not want 5-star housing introduced given it will make changes to their building design.• How would the peer review process show star rating?• New Queenslanders have good passive design. Some concern about making affordable project homes with good design.• Building practices should be improved. Should HIA's GreenSmart program become compulsory for builders?• How are sloping sites dealt with in sustainability assessments?• Volume designed houses need to better consider where they are built	<p>There are currently over 220 assessors trained to use 2nd generation software in Queensland. Three courses are available—BERSPro, AccuRate, FirstRate—for assessors in Queensland through the Association of Building Sustainability Assessors (ABSA). In Victoria the training courses are available through TAFEs, not just ABSA.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>They would state that if the design is considered to comply with the 5-star requirement, similar to compliance with the deemed-to-satisfy method (DTS) whereby the dwelling is deemed 5-star using the Building Code of Australia (BCA).</p> <p>Standard design with good design features can be achieved by working with local industry. There are some excellent examples of designing for climate in Cairns, as highlighted at Building Designers Association Queensland Awards.</p> <p>Noted</p> <p>Some councils in South East Queensland only allow 1 m clearance. More options are needed and are starting to happen in Queensland.</p> <p>Noted</p>



<p>e.g. able to capture the sun in the morning.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• There are difficulties in understanding R-values. There is a need to look at R-values in assembly. Is there an Australian standard for R-values?• Will the energy efficiency requirements apply to renovations?	<p>Yes, there is an Australian Standard for R-values (covered in AS4859-2006).</p> <p>Yes, as they currently apply. Additionally, when the certifier assesses the renovation, they could undertake assessment for the entire house. This information could be used to complete the proposed sustainability declaration.</p>
Covenants	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• In regards to body corporate by-laws, how difficult will it be to enforce and will there be penalties? Will body corporates have to amend them?• There is a code for hill slopes whereby houses need a dark roof for aesthetic reasons.	<p>Pending Crown Law advice, the legislation will be amended and enforced through the <i>Body Corporate and Community Management Act 1997</i>.</p> <p>If a demonstrated need can be made in certain areas, then existing covenanting provision may be retained. However, a range of options could be chosen from to promote energy efficiency.</p>
Building materials	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Needs to happen in conjunction with RMIT research group (based in Melbourne).	<p>This is happening, and DIP also has established linkages to the Building Products Industry Group (BPIG) who are involved with this work.</p>
Energy efficient lights and water-efficient taps and toilets	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Do some halogens globes come into the federal government's phase-out of inefficient lighting? Is the phase-out regulation for regulation sake?	<p>Some of them do. The phase out is based any globes that have 15 lumens/watt or under.</p>



Pool Pumps	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">The pool pump energy efficiency measure is good given the number of pools in Cairns. However, off-peak tariffs are not permitted in all areas of Cairns.	A Minimum Energy Performance Standard for pool pumps is currently being developed by the federal government.
General Comments	
<ul style="list-style-type: none">Within the BCA there are only four climate zones in Queensland. Is this enough e.g. within climate zone 1 (Tropical), there are arguably four sub-zones?Cairn's water use is increasing. Cairns has over 2000 mm rainfall a year. A rainwater tank can be difficult to tie down for cyclone-proofing, and too costly to bury them. Home WaterWise scheme has had a big impact, and it should not be just about rain water tanks. If water efficient devices are installed in the home, can a rain water tank size be smaller?Who is training the assessors for the ClimateSmart home service and will it be available in Cairns?Need to reduce 'peak load' on electricity network in Queensland (South Australia has bad peak). It has increased due to more air-conditioners. By reducing the peak, distribution costs can be decreased.	<p>Across Australia, the BCA has designated eight climate zones. If using software programs to assess house design, there are now 80 'climate files' nationally (recently increased from 69 in earlier versions of software). There is now a climate file for Atherton Tablelands. Assessors are sending feedback to the national software developers to assist with further refinement of climate zones. Climate files are compiled from Bureau of Meteorology data, and these need at least 30 years of data. These weather stations are often based at airports.</p> <p>Can consider regional issues, but generally need tanks in new houses. Whilst Cairns has a lot of water in, it also has a lot of water out, and this can impact on future water infrastructure needs.</p> <p>From 1 January 2009, the ClimateSmart home service will take over from the Home WaterWise service. Existing residents can receive a discounted energy audit, energy efficient globes, smart meter and 3-star showerhead to save water and energy.</p> <p>Local Government Infrastructure Services (LGIS) will be training the assessors (LGIS also implemented the WaterWise service). Cairns will be included in the program as it is a statewide initiative.</p> <p>Noted.</p>



<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The issue of daylight saving needs to be brought up again. 80 per cent of Queenslanders are in bed from 6–7 am, but between 7–8 pm are active. Daylight saving could reduce the load on the energy network.• Through what process would energy efficiency assessment on existing housing be done?• These houses are designed specifically for how people use them. The peer review process could work well to assess these houses given their intended performance (some houses on islands off Cairns could be good examples for peer review as well).• How do the sustainable housing proposals relate to the draft Far North Queensland (FNQ) regional plan?	<p>It is not intended to re-visit this issue again. Queensland would need to be in zones (e.g. the coast and the west, such as Mt Isa) which is not preferred. This would result in Queensland having different time zones, which would cause difficulties e.g. for commerce.</p> <p>It is proposed that the sustainability declaration would be self-assessable. It will be both an information and marketing tool. Need to bring change in attitude to energy similar to that of South East Queensland during the water shortage, where attitude to water savings changed with a common goal.</p> <p>Noted.</p> <p>The draft FNQ regional plan sets goals and objectives for land use. The sustainable housing proposals are more detailed, and apply to the house. The regulations would set a distinction between planning and building.</p>
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Department of **Infrastructure and Planning**
PO Box 15009 City East Qld 4002 Australia
tel +61 7 3227 8548
fax +61 7 3224 4683
info@dip.qld.gov.au

www.dip.qld.gov.au