

# **BUILDING MINISTERS' FORUM**

## **COMMUNIQUE – 23 APRIL 2020**

The Building Ministers' Forum (BMF) met in late April to discuss the impacts of the current COVID-19 crisis on the building and construction industry, and agree the way forward for the design, construction and certification of complex buildings. The Australian Building Codes Board (ABCB) updated Ministers on the key achievements with implementing the recommendations in the Building Confidence Report.

### ***COVID-19***

Ministers acknowledged the current COVID-19 crisis and discussed opportunities to work together to address the impacts of COVID-19 on the building and construction sector. Building Ministers recognise the important role the sector plays in the economy and agreed that the health and safety of workers is paramount. They recognised the industry's efforts to protect workers and preserve jobs, including implementing social distancing and other measures.

Critically, the reform journey that the BMF has committed to must continue to progress. Improved industry compliance and enhanced oversight is essential to ensuring public confidence in the sector so construction businesses can bounce back as Australia begins to recover from COVID-19.

### ***Complex buildings***

Ministers agreed last year that a key focus of the BMF-led reforms would be on buildings that have characteristics that require additional oversight during design, construction and certification, to ensure the health and safety of people who live and work in such buildings.

Today's agreement to publish a nationally consistent definition of complex buildings provides a basis for developing greater safeguards for the design, construction and certification of this type of building.

The definition will be made available on the ABCB's website for final consultation, as the ABCB works closely with industry and states and territories to develop the regulatory interventions that rely on the new definition, including how the definition will be applied within the NCC. This will include consideration of the industry's capacity to adapt to this step-change given they are already under pressure from COVID-19.

Ministers agreed that it was important to conclude work on the definition within six months for inclusion in NCC 2022—a preview of NCC 2022 is scheduled for public consultation in early 2021.

This is an important milestone, and forms part of a broader [National Framework](#) that the ABCB is responding to.

### ***Building Confidence Report progress***

The Building Confidence Report Implementation Team is working to progress recommendations in line with the National Framework, which is in addition to the work underway in individual states and territories. The status of each jurisdiction in relation to the BCR recommendations as at December 2019 is published on the [BMF website](#).

The ABCB advised Building Ministers that all recommendations are on track to be implemented by the July 2021 deadline. Key achievements to date include:

- A new definition for ‘complex buildings’ to be published on the ABCB website, with the intent to incorporate it into NCC 2022;
- Amendments to NCC 2019 to ensure that building practitioners have a consistent and robust process to follow in developing and implementing innovative solutions, to meet the building safety and health outcomes required by the NCC (due for adoption on 1 July 2020);
- Public consultation on a discussion paper for developing a national model Code of Conduct for building surveyors completed 24 April 2020;
- Ongoing development and consultation on
  - a national model registration and licensing framework for building practitioners;
  - a national building information database portal, which will include the consistent collection and sharing of building and practitioner information;
  - continuing professional development training for building practitioners on the NCC;
  - a national dictionary of terminology for the construction industry.