

Public hearing in Canberra on Tuesday, 26 November 2013

Master Builders Australia – Answers to questions on notice

Senator Urquhart: My question is: did you consider what any extra compliance costs might mean for your suppliers and the impact on them if this was accepted by the ACCC as an increased regulation? If you cannot answer it now, I am happy for you to provide that on notice.

Answer: We did not consider the issue of compliance costs for suppliers and the like.

Senator Milne: Can I ask you about compliance. For example, how many builders and developers actually comply with the current codes? I note that they say they do, but there is no checking, is there?

Answer: In terms of compliance with the current building code, the building and construction industry is one of the most heavily regulated sectors in the Australian economy. The building industry is regulated at the Federal, State and Local Government levels. This regulation includes design, development and design approvals, construction, and includes inspections during and on the completion of projects by building certifiers and/or building surveyors. These regulations are across all the three industry sectors but falls more heavily on the residential building sector. The building participants are also heavily regulated through licensing and the need for appropriate qualifications from trade to university. Buildings, on completion, are independently certified to ensure compliance including in respect of energy efficiency requirements.

These measures therefore ensure that all buildings, residential, commercial and others fully comply with the energy efficiency requirements prescribed in legislation and regulation. Master Builders therefore rejects the proposition that the energy efficiency measures prescribed in legislation are not adhered to. We would also ask for you to provide any evidence you have to the contrary.

Senator Milne: and also around what training is in place to ensure that builders understand that the performance of their building will be tested against a code and that they need to have those skills that are necessary. What is Master Builders doing to ensure that that is the case?

Answer: Builders and building tradespeople generally undertake one or more national qualifications from the CPC08 Construction Training Package maintained by the Construction and Property Services Industry Skills Council (CPSISC). A project was undertaken over 2011-13 by CPSISC (with Commonwealth funding) to integrate sustainability concepts such as energy ratings in all training package qualifications. At the same time, several specialist sustainability units were developed that could be offered as electives in a range of qualifications (see http://www.cpsisc.com.au/projects/Cross_Industry/Energy_Efficiency_Skills_Gaps_Training_Needs). Master Builders was closely involved in this process.

For builders with existing qualifications, there are a number of short courses such as Master Builders' popular Green Living course that teach the basics of energy ratings and the construction of energy efficient dwellings. There is also an annual Green Living Conference. For builders seeking more detailed knowledge of energy efficiency, the Master Builders Association of Victoria has also developed a Certificate IV in Sustainable Building, the only qualification of its kind in the country.