



Resource Management in Residential Construction

Policy Background

- The housing industry acknowledges and endorses the need to build environmentally responsible housing.
- New housing is required to meet a range of minimum standards to ensure they meet community expectations in relation to their environmental impacts and performance.
- A combination of national and state regulations apply these requirements to all new homes and renovations.
- The building requirements focus on energy efficiency and water efficiency.
- Matters impacting the environment outside the home are generally managed through planning controls such as sediment and erosion control and waste management.
- Existing homes, which form the bulk of housing stock, are generally unaffected by new standards.
- HIA encourages members, through its HIA GreenSmart program, to voluntarily implement responsible designs and methods to conserve vital natural resources.

Policy Issues

- Every state and territory has enacted legislation and regulations aimed at making new housing more 'environmentally sustainable'.
- The introduction of mandatory planning and building regulations without proper cost and public benefit assessment is common.
- Regulation has placed a financial impost on the design and construction of new dwellings, whilst existing dwellings are not required to meet the same standards.
- Implementation of new measures is typically via state based regulations that focus on water and energy conservation at the house lot level, adding to the compliance costs for new houses and at the cost of greater gains which may be made in a project of a larger scale.
- Regulators continually fail to consult with and have mostly ignored the constraints and limitations of the manufacturing and supply industry which is placed under great pressure to facilitate supply of appropriate and cost effective technologies to meet regulation in a timely manner.
- Consumer education has also not kept pace with government regulation. Designs put forward by the industry for saving resources can only be implemented with consumer demand.

HIA's Policy Position on Resource Management in Residential Construction

1. The reduction of greenhouse gas emissions is a community responsibility and should not be confined to new home-buyer. The actions required to conserve natural resources and reduce emissions are multi-pronged but should focus upon three core strategies:
 - a. Reduction in resource demand per dwelling across the existing residential sector;
 - b. Reduction in resource demand for new dwellings; and
 - c. Infrastructure investment in generating technologies that can reduce emissions and consumption of natural resources.
2. Cost-effective measures to enhance the development of more sustainable housing through voluntary market-based incentives should be supported rather than regulation.
3. Further research is required to establish the real impact of regulations on consumption and outputs.
4. Governments should be undertaking a regulatory impact statement with net benefit outcomes to home buyers prior to any new or amended resource management measures being applied to housing. The housing industry should also be consulted on the findings before implementation.
5. The costs of new regulation should to be calculated by a transparent process, with industry involvement and subject to third party verification by a regulatory 'gatekeeper'.
6. Regulation should encourage innovative measures and technology development to conserve natural resources across all building sectors, not just housing.
7. Regulations which do not deliver a significant net benefit will not be supported by HIA.
8. Broader based land estate solutions should be pursued for their large scale savings of resources over individual lot based solutions.
9. Pricing mechanisms should reflect the true value and encourage efficient use of resources.
10. Governments should support research and technology for new products and measures to assist with conserving resources.
11. Governments should provide rebates for the supply and installation charges of capital purchase items that are required to meet sustainability objectives for new and renovated homes
12. Governments should promote the benefits of saving water and energy through all forms of media and lead by example and demonstrate water efficiency is being implemented in their own buildings and development works.
13. The housing industry should be recognised by governments for its efforts to develop sustainable housing for the future.