

SUSTAINABLE INFRASTRUCTURE – CAN WE RATE IT?

AUSTRALIA IS CURRENTLY ENGAGING IN AN EXTRAORDINARY LEVEL OF INVESTMENT IN INFRASTRUCTURE. AT THE SAME TIME THERE IS AN EMERGING PUBLIC AND BUSINESS DESIRE TO ADDRESS SUSTAINABILITY ISSUES, PARTICULARLY, THE IMPACT OF CLIMATE CHANGE. THE ABSENCE OF ANY RATING SCHEMES APPLICABLE TO THE INFRASTRUCTURE SECTOR IN AUSTRALIA HAS PAVED THE WAY FOR THE FORMATION OF THE AUSTRALIAN GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE COUNCIL (AGIC) AND THE DEVELOPMENT OF A RATING SCHEME FOR ADVANCING SUSTAINABILITY IN AUSTRALIA'S INFRASTRUCTURE.

The AGIC program was launched on February 28, 2008 by Queensland's Minister for Sustainability, Climate Change & Innovation, The Hon Andrew McNamara who said that *"AGIC would help ensure government and industry created sustainable infrastructure solutions into the future, meeting environmental, economic and social criteria."*

AGIC's Chairman David Hood said: *"while clients are aware of the need for sustainability and designers, constructors and operators are incorporating sustainability features, there are few tools to help them assess and prioritise sustainability efforts."* The AGIC tool will aid in this effort and allow Australian sustainable infrastructure projects to be afforded ratings which recognise environmental achievements.

Through the rating system, projects will be measured, recognised and rewarded for sustainable design, construction and operation of infrastructure such as major transport corridors, telecommunications structures, marinas and airports.

The Rating Scheme proposes to cover a plethora of areas including roads, rail infrastructure, bridges and tunnels, ports and wharfs, airport facilities, military facilities, distribution grids, telecommunication facilities, landfills, canals, coastal and beach nourishment.

The rating scheme is proposed to be self-assessable by project teams, practical and easy-to-use, and is envisaged to comprise a scoring spreadsheet, a technical manual, and a library of good practice case studies and references to assist in achieving sustainable outcomes.

Mines are excluded from the scope of the scheme at this stage, although depending on market demand the scheme maybe extended to this and other areas at a later date. In all other infrastructure areas the scheme will be available to allow for assessment of a projects' incorporation of environmental, social and economic aspects against benchmarks in sustainable infrastructure design, construction and operation.

ACEA sees the need for infrastructure to be delivered and adopted in the most sustainable way where possible, and having a rating tool which allows for this to occur can only benefit the industry. In order to be successful AGIC are seeking to encourage industry organisations to actively contribute to and help build and influence the development of the rating scheme.

ACEA are pleased to support the development of the scheme and see this as a great step forward for sustainable infrastructure design and implementation in Australia. **Caroline Ostrowski**

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