

Efficient, Climate-Wise Buildings for the ACT

A Building Sector Workshop, June 2018: Summary of Discussions

The ACT is aiming for net zero emissions by 2045. Achieving this target will mean making changes to the way we plan and build our city. Already we are experiencing the impacts of climate change and we need to ensure our homes will be safe and comfortable now and in the future, including being resilient to extreme climatic events.

On 21 June 2018, the ACT Climate Change Council ran a workshop on efficient, climate-wise buildings, supported by the ACT Government's Climate Change Policy team. The workshop was designed specifically for the ACT building sector and provided an overview of what the ACT's emission reduction targets and climate resilience objectives mean for those working in the sector.

Who attended?

Attending were more than 40 participants from a range of sectors including builders, architects, certifiers, registered training organisations, developers and the broader general public. Toby Roxburgh of the ACT Climate Change Council was in attendance, and Penny Sackett, the Council's Deputy Chair, served as moderator for the evening.

What was discussed?

The agenda included two presentations and two rounds of small group discussion. The presentations were by Tim Sides, Climate Change Policy, ACT Government on 'Our future climate and vulnerability', and by Devan Valenti (seen presenting to the group in photo at right), Technical Specialist, Green Building Council of Australia on 'Fit-for-purpose for the future – what do efficient, climate-wise dwellings and zero emissions neighbourhoods "look like"?'



Questions were posed to guide the small group discussions, namely:

- What are the barriers to delivering efficient, climate-wise buildings? Consider your own business, what are the main challenges and opportunities?
- What support is needed to encourage the transition to efficient, climate-wise buildings? Consider your own business, what information and training is needed, and how could this best be delivered?

The outcomes of the workshop will be used by the Climate Change Council to make recommendations to the ACT Government and progress action on Climate Change Policy.

What main themes came out of the discussion groups?

The discussions were documented and comments provided by the contributors to the workshop were analysed and collated into key themes, which are displayed in the Table below.

	Barrier/ challenge	Support needed	Opportunity
Availability	3		
Awareness/ info/training	32	17	5
Cost	24	7	
Enforcement/ compliance	8	6	
Engagement/ participation	1	5	7
Financial sector	4	2	6
Government leadership		5	
Incentives	5	7	
Language/ culture	8	5	2
Mindset/ norms	20	1	7
Planning	11	7	1
Policy/regulation	18	37	2
Risk	6		
Technical	7		

The greatest barrier to the delivery of efficient, climate-wise buildings in the ACT was felt to be a lack of awareness, information and training. Cost was also identified as a significant challenge, with some overlap with the awareness theme, such as “Perceived upfront cost.” Some commented on mindsets and social norms, such as “Some people refuse to believe things will make a difference,” and recognised these norms as being important to challenge in order to initiate change.

The community highlighted a clear need to support revision and updating of policy and regulation. The group indicated that current standards are a barrier to achieving efficient, climate-wise buildings, as the bar is not set high enough to create meaningful change. The need for awareness, information or training was considered very important to support, in particular ensuring that young people entering the building industry were trained properly and that builders and clients alike were better educated to make more informed choices regarding building design and construction.

Specific common comments included:

- Legislate higher minimum standards for building design (e.g. BASIX),
- Consider draught seal/vacuum test regulation,
- Provide case studies with clear calculations of cost and energy efficiency,
- Research what people are buying, and
- Engage students at CIT and other local institutions about climate-wise building.

Our thanks

The ACT Climate Change Council thanks the participants of the Efficient, Climate-Wise Buildings workshop and looks forward to engaging the sector in the future to gain insight into the appetite for climate-wise buildings in the ACT and how to best engage with industry and the community.