



Media Release

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Green Building Council response hastens need for Government review

The National Association of Forest Industries (NAFI) welcomes the recent announcement by the Green Building Council of Australia (GBCA) to recognise the Australian Forestry Standard, after continued calls by Governments, industry and unions. It is a good first step. However, this outcome demonstrates the need for a Government review into voluntary environmental rating schemes, particularly rating schemes like the Green Building Council that have been imported from overseas.

Unfortunately consumers using these environmental rating schemes think they are doing the right thing for the environment. However, as these schemes are voluntary, there is no one checking whether they deliver what they say they deliver. It is fortunate in this case that the Commonwealth and State Governments were paying attention and joining with the timber industry and unions have been able to convince the GBCA to hopefully correct the situation for timber products.

However, we will be watching the process outlined by GBCA to recognise the Australian Forestry Standard (AFS) carefully. We hope it will not be another example of environmental rating schemes being a law unto their own. For years the GBCA had no problem recognising the Forest Stewardship Council (FSC) certification scheme without any assessment process. Now the Council has been convinced to recognise Australia's own forestry standard, it wants to implement another assessment process to rate FSC and AFS – a rating scheme rating the rating schemes.

We hope we can work with the GBCA to implement a process that is credible, avoids duplication and minimises the cost of assessment.

NAFI is concerned about the general lack of market transparency for consumers wanting to do the right thing with respect to sustainable materials and products such as timber.

“Unfortunately I think this is just the tip of the iceberg with respect to the proliferation of unregulated environmental rating schemes” said NAFI CEO Allan Hansard.

“We note Senator Brown has called for a review of the GBCA by the ACCC in relation to green washing. For once we agree with Senator Brown.

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