

Title	National energy-efficiency education, increased incentives and new government policy recommended for building industry – new research
Release date	10 October 2016

To help Australia reach its carbon reduction targets, developing a coordinated national built environment education platform; bridging gaps between research, training and policy; developing an industry coordinated approach to training incentives; and preparing a future building workforce, are four key recommendations made in new research [published today](#) by the CRC for Low Carbon Living (CRCLCL).

Entitled *Policy impediments and incentives for effective education and training* the research analysed current building industry continuing professional development (CPD) sustainability and energy-efficiency education programs, CPD policy incentives and impediments, international policy and interviews with industry leaders and researchers.

The research found that there are more impediments than incentives to Australian education policies for sustainability, energy efficiency and low carbon living for trades and professionals working in the built environment.

CRCLCL Research Node Leader, Professor Peter Graham of Swinburne University, said that incentives only embraced professional standing and risk minimisation but the impediments included a lack of government leadership and adequate long-term policy; limited research cooperation, communication and implementation of findings; deficits in CPD policy and program synchronicity; and inadequate industry engagement in CPD, with limited mutual recognition and human capital adaption.

“Overall there are minimal if any legislative or professional requirements to engage in CPD, and almost none relating specifically to sustainability, energy efficiency or carbon minimisation up-skilling programs. Australia lacks a government legislated or voluntary built environment council with the proper resources to lead and implement CPD policy or programs through industry and government collaboration,” said Professor Graham.

“The analysis of current training policies raised major concerns about the lack of incentives. The report therefore recommends that the Commonwealth Government and industry leaders collaborate to initiate an independent, national built environment education and CPD platform to consistently develop the capability of professionals and tradespeople to deliver sustainable built environments.”

The research also found that to bridge the gap between research, CPD and policy, key industry stakeholders have the potential to eliminate confusion and inconsistencies in CPD programs and develop a collaborative CPD policy framework.

Report author and researcher, Tomi Winfree, explained that ultimately knowledge and skills across the supply chain need to be integrated for consistent practices to emerge between various job roles.

“Similar to measure 25 in the COAG Energy Council’s National Energy Productivity Plan 2015-2030, we recommend that built environment experts from government, industry, research and educational institutions collaboratively identify the knowledge and skills required to foster a low carbon built environment,” she said.

“The knowledge and skills need to be specific to each identified role within the supply chain, being planning, design, engineering, construction and facilities management, as an integrated overarching industry framework. The framework should be promoted nationally as a tool to facilitate a consistent industry-wide approach and used to review vocational, tertiary and CPD education programs to identify and eliminate the gaps and inconsistencies in current policies and programs.

“Trades and professionals need evidence based knowledge available on the job, in a format that can foster skills development and integration into practice. This expert group, with specialist support, should also be tasked with the development of a set of open educational resources building on existing information and explore the potential for new delivery programs. However, these should not be more of the same, being long wordy information sets and seminars. New delivery methods must be engaging, user friendly, context specific and readily transferable into practice to be successful,” said Ms Winfree.

Report author, researcher and labour market economist, Dr Alexis Esposto, argues that in order to maintain and improve our national and international competitiveness in the built environment, our labour force needs to match the skills requirements to the industry challenges.

“Everyone at work has to be conscious, capable and accountable in their job. Every individual has a role to play and needs to become a contributor to a sustainable future. One way of doing this, is by creating a set of green job capabilities that helps to transform every job, skill and competency,” explained Dr Esposto.

Professor Graham concluded by saying it was time to prepare the sustainable building workforce.

“Up until now formal education programs have had an ad-hoc response to industry demand, based on the perspective of peak industry groups, but this needs to change especially as knowledge and technology grows and the sustainable built environment sector broadens. We need to be ready to meet future knowledge and skill demands through a solid, agreed education policy process. The challenge is the need to integrate new initiatives into trade and professional qualifications at the same time as prioritizing CPD opportunities and engagement incentives for the existing workforce,” he said.

Media Contacts:

CRC for Low Carbon Living

Sharon Kelly, E: s.kelly@lowcarbonlivingcrc.com.au; M: +61 414 780 077

About the CRC for Low Carbon Living Ltd

The CRC for Low Carbon Living (CRCLCL) is a national research and innovation hub that supports Australian industry to be globally competitive in the low carbon built environment sector.

It brings together property, planning, engineering and policy organisations with leading Australian researchers to develop new social, technological and policy tools for reducing greenhouse gas emissions in the built environment.

A key aim of the CRCLCL is to help cut Australia's residential and commercial carbon emissions by 10 mega tonnes by 2020. It will do this by developing opportunities for lower-embodied carbon manufacturing, creating efficiency and productivity in the built environment sector, empowering and engaging communities, increasing the evidence base for government policy and planning, and building the sector's capacity for high quality research, education and training.

The CRCLCL is supported by the Cooperative Research Centres programme, an Australian Government initiative.