

RESPONSE

The Carpet Institute of Australia supports the proposed Building Product Registration Scheme, as it aligns with our commitment to product quality and compliance with the National Construction Code.

ABCB: Principles
and Scope of a
Building Product
Registration
Scheme

1. What is the level of your support for the proposed Scheme?

Response:

The Carpet Institute of Australia supports the proposed Building Product Registration Scheme, as it aligns with our commitment to product quality and compliance with the National Construction Code (NCC). Ensuring conformance is vital for the industry's sustainability and public safety. We believe this initiative will enhance construction standards and consumer trust.

Key Reasons for Support:

- **Improved Product Traceability:** The scheme will provide better access to product information and ensure that building products conform to NCC standards.
- **Increased Safety and Quality:** By addressing non-conforming products, the scheme will improve construction integrity and reduce safety risks.
- **Efficiency in Compliance:** A standardized approach may streamline the approval process, saving time and resources for industry stakeholders

2. What other options or changes do you propose on the intent of the Scheme and why?

Response:

The Carpet Institute of Australia proposes that the existing labelling and product information available through our Product Grading (ACCS) and Environmental Certification Scheme (ECS) be integrated into the new Building Product Registration Scheme. The Carpet Institute has over 3000 products assessed for construction and durability as well as many thousands of flooring products certified to Green Building Council of Australia (GBCA) standards. This would prevent duplication of efforts, streamline compliance processes, and ensure that the industry's well-established grading and environmental standards continue to be recognized.

Reasons for this Proposal:

- **Leverage Existing Systems:** Our current grading and certification scheme(s) already addresses product quality and environmental impacts. Incorporating it would avoid unnecessary rework and align with the broader goals of the proposed scheme.
- **Industry Continuity:** Integration could ensure consistency for manufacturers, suppliers, and architects/specifiers who are already familiar with our grading and certification standards.
- **Efficiency in Compliance:** This approach could reduce administrative burdens for the industry while ensuring products meet all necessary conformance standards

3. Do you agree with all the principles for the intent of the Scheme?

Response:

While the Carpet Institute of Australia supports the overall principles of the proposed Building Product Registration Scheme, we have a concern regarding the manageability of a national database covering all building products. Thought needs to be given to the scalability and maintenance of the database to ensure it remains functional, up-to-date and efficient.

Specific Concern: A database of this magnitude could become unwieldy over time, making it difficult to ensure data accuracy, timely updates, and efficient usage. We recommend incorporating robust data management systems and clear procedures for keeping the database updated to fulfill the scheme's vision without becoming a burden on stakeholders.

Recommendations for Improvement:

- **Scalability:** The database should be designed with scalable architecture to accommodate the large volume of products while ensuring ease of use and quick access.
- **Data Management:** Clear and consistent protocols should be developed for updating product information, auditing entries, and maintaining data accuracy.
- **Resource Allocation:** Adequate resources, including technical support and funding, should be allocated to maintain the system long-term and avoid potential issues with outdated or incomplete information

4. What other options or changes do you propose for the intent of the Scheme and why?

Response:

The Carpet Institute of Australia proposes the following additional options for the intent of the Building Product Registration Scheme to ensure it is effective, practical, and aligned with industry needs:

- **Tiered Registration Approach:** Rather than requiring all building products to be registered in the same manner, a tiered approach could be introduced. Products that pose higher safety or compliance risks (such as fire safety systems) should have more rigorous registration and auditing requirements, while low-risk products (such as certain types of flooring) could have a simpler, self-registration process.

Reason: This would make the scheme more efficient by focusing resources on higher-risk products, reducing unnecessary regulatory burden for lower-risk categories.

- **Integration with Existing Industry Certification:** The scheme should allow the use of existing industry certifications and grading systems, such as the Carpet Institute's ACCS Product Grading and the ECS Environmental Certification Scheme. If products are already assessed under established schemes, those assessments should be recognized within the new framework.

Reason: This would prevent duplication of effort and costs for manufacturers and streamline the process for products that already meet established NCC and industry standards.

- **Phased Implementation:** The scheme could be rolled out in phases, starting with high-risk products, and gradually extending to other categories based on risk and industry feedback.

Reason: Phased implementation allows time for system refinement, user adaptation, and feedback collection to improve the system before it scales up, reducing the chance of errors or inefficiencies in a full-scale rollout.

These options aim to enhance the practicality and efficiency of the scheme, ensuring it benefits the industry without becoming overly burdensome.

5. Do you agree with the minimum information principle for better building information?

Response:

The Carpet Institute of Australia generally agrees with the minimum information principle for better building product information. Clear, standardized, and accessible information is crucial for ensuring product quality and compliance. However, we believe it is important to ensure that the requirements are practical and do not place an undue burden on manufacturers, particularly for products already covered under existing certification schemes.

Points of Agreement:

- **Transparency:** Standardizing product information, including traceability and conformance to the National Construction Code (NCC), will improve transparency and accountability.
- **Consumer Confidence:** Providing detailed product information, including installation guidelines and common compliance issues, will increase consumer trust and safety.
- **Suggested Consideration:** We recommend that products already covered by well-established certification programs, like the Carpet Institute's ACCS Carpet Grading and ECS Environmental Certification Scheme, should not be required to duplicate information. Instead, the scheme should recognize these certifications as meeting or exceeding the minimum performance requirements.

This will ensure the principles are upheld without unnecessary administrative duplication.

6. What other options or changes do you propose to the minimum information and why?

We suggest tiers of information that include differing levels of safety, health and environmental protection.

7. Should full test results be accessible and if not, why?

Response:

The Carpet Institute of Australia supports the concept of making full test results accessible as part of the Building Product Registration Scheme. However, it is essential that the protection of intellectual property related to product design and construction is carefully managed.

Key Considerations:

- **Transparency:** Making full test results available will improve transparency, allowing industry professionals and consumers to make informed choices based on product performance.
- **IP Protection:** While we support transparency, measures should be in place to protect sensitive proprietary information, ensuring manufacturers' intellectual property is safeguarded while still providing critical data for compliance and safety.

This balanced approach will enhance both confidence and innovation within the industry.

8. Do you agree with all the principles for a risk-based approach to demonstrating NCC conformance?

Response:

The Carpet Institute of Australia generally agrees with the principles for a risk-based approach to demonstrating National Construction Code (NCC) conformance. Prioritizing resources and compliance efforts based on the level of risk associated with specific products is a sensible approach. However, we recommend the following considerations:

- **Proportionality:** The requirements for demonstrating NCC conformance should be proportionate to the risk level of the product. For low-risk products, a simplified process would reduce unnecessary administrative burden without compromising safety.
- **Clarity in Assessment:** Clear guidelines on how products are categorized into different risk levels are essential. Who is the responsible party for the assessment. Transparent criteria will ensure that manufacturers can prepare the necessary evidence efficiently.
- **Use of Existing Certifications:** Products already certified under recognized schemes (such as the Carpet Institute's Environmental and Grading Certification) should have an expedited path for demonstrating NCC conformance, reducing redundancy in testing and documentation.

While we support the risk-based approach, ensuring practicality and clarity in its implementation will help the industry comply effectively

9. What other options or changes do you propose to a risk-based approach to demonstrating NCC compliance and why?

Response:

The Carpet Institute of Australia proposes the following options to enhance the risk-based approach to demonstrating NCC compliance:

- **Recognition of Existing Certifications:** As part of the risk-based approach, products that are already certified under established industry schemes (e.g., the Carpet Institute's ACCS Grading and ECS Environmental Certification Scheme) should automatically fulfill certain NCC conformance requirements. This would streamline the compliance process for low-risk, well-documented products.

Reason: This avoids duplication of testing, conflict in the assessment and ensures the efficient use of resources, particularly for products that already meet rigorous industry standards.

- **Simplified Process for Low-Risk Products:** For products that are assessed as low-risk, a simplified or self-assessment process should be adopted. Manufacturers could submit minimal documentation, such as test summaries or declarations of conformity, without the need for costly third-party testing.

Safety may be a concern regarding risk to building trades as well as consumers

Reason: This reduces the burden on manufacturers and accelerates the approval process, while still ensuring compliance for low-risk products.

- **Phased or Conditional Compliance:** For complex products, a phased compliance system could be introduced. Products could be allowed conditional entry into the market with initial, partial assessments, followed by full testing and verification within a defined timeframe.

Reason: This encourages innovation while allowing products to enter the market sooner, ensuring safety without delaying product availability unnecessarily.

The definition of complex products needs to be considered.

Criteria for the same could be difficult to define and more difficult to measure.

10. Do you view modern methods of construction and complex offsite/modular products as being designated products and if so why/why not'?

Response:

The Carpet Institute of Australia views modern methods of construction (MMC) and complex offsite/modular products as likely candidates for being designated products under the Building Product Registration Scheme. This is due to the unique challenges and potential risks associated with these construction methods.

Reasons for Designating MMC and Offsite/Modular Products:

- **Higher Risk of Non-Compliance:** Offsite and modular construction often involves integrating various components and materials that need to meet strict NCC standards. Ensuring that all elements are compliant can be more complex than with traditional construction methods, raising the risk of non-conformance.
- **Complexity in Installation and Use:** The installation of modular products often involves different environments, requiring specific guidelines and rigorous testing to ensure the products perform as intended under different conditions.
- **Need for Traceability:** Due to their modular nature, these products require a robust system of traceability to ensure all parts meet safety and quality standards, particularly when assembled in various locations.
- **Can complex products use standard components of these products and the assessment be held at a simpler level?**

11. Would you prefer:

d. a stringent test for registration (e.g. lab tests) accompanied with mandatory acceptance at building certification stage, or

e. a medium assessment standard accompanied by a 'preferred' status at building certification stage,

f. and why?

Response:

The Carpet Institute of Australia would prefer a medium assessment standard accompanied by a "preferred" status at the building certification stage.

Reasons for this Preference:

- **Balanced Approach:** A medium assessment standard provides a practical balance between ensuring product safety and compliance without imposing the high costs and time delays associated with stringent lab tests for all products.
- **Encourages Participation:** By offering a "preferred" status at the certification stage, manufacturers are incentivized to meet NCC standards without facing unnecessary barriers to market entry, which could be particularly beneficial for products with a proven track record of compliance.
- **Flexibility for Different Products:** This approach allows for flexibility, ensuring that higher-risk or more complex products can still undergo more rigorous testing if needed, while low- to medium-risk products can proceed with a streamlined process.

This balance ensures that compliance is maintained without imposing excessive costs and delays on the industry.

12. Would you prefer:

- a. a robust, and potentially more expensive, evidentiary stage at registration, followed by less frequent and lower cost audits, or
- b. a lower cost registration, followed by a more robust, and a potentially more costly, cost recovered audit program (meaning the cost of the audit is paid for by the product sponsor),
- c. and why?

Response:

This question touches on a pivotal aspect of regulatory compliance: the balance between initial registration costs and ongoing audit requirements.

Robust Initial Registration with Less Frequent Audits

Pros:

- **Higher Initial Confidence:** A robust registration process ensures that products meet all necessary standards right from the start, potentially reducing the risk of non-compliance issues later.
- **Cost Efficiency Over Time:** If the product design and manufacturing process remain stable, less frequent audits could reduce long-term costs for the manufacturer.
- **Market Perception:** Products that undergo stringent initial checks might be perceived as higher quality by consumers and stakeholders.

Cons:

- **High Entry Barrier:** Higher initial costs could deter smaller manufacturers or new entrants, potentially stifling innovation or market competition.
- **Inflexibility:** If there are changes in product design or manufacturing processes, significant adjustments might be needed before the next audit cycle, potentially impacting market responsiveness.

Lower Cost Registration with More Robust Audits

Pros:

- Lower Entry Costs: Easier for new or small businesses to enter the market, fostering competition and potentially innovation.
- Continuous Improvement: Regular, robust audits can ensure ongoing compliance and can adapt to changes in product lines or manufacturing processes more swiftly.
- Quality Assurance: Frequent audits might catch issues or improvements needed in real-time, maintaining or even enhancing product quality over time.

Cons:

- Ongoing Costs: Manufacturers might face higher operational costs due to regular audits, which could be passed on to consumers or impact profit margins.
- Resource Intensive: Regular audits require more administrative and potentially downtime resources, which might be burdensome for manufacturers.

Carpet Industry Specific Considerations

- Product Life Cycle: Carpets might have long life cycles but could undergo changes in material composition or manufacturing for sustainability or performance reasons. A more adaptive audit system could better serve such needs.
- Market Dynamics: The carpet industry might see value in a system that allows for easier entry of new products (like eco-friendly or technologically advanced carpets), suggesting a preference for less restrictive initial registration.
- Consumer Safety and Health: While not as critical as in food or pharmaceuticals, there are still safety concerns (like off gassing of chemicals), suggesting a need for robust ongoing checks rather than just at the start.

General Perspective

The preference might lean towards a lower initial registration cost followed by more frequent and robust audits for several reasons:

- Innovation and Competition: This approach could encourage innovation by not setting a high barrier to entry.
- Dynamic Compliance: Given the evolving nature of materials and manufacturing techniques in construction products, including carpets, ongoing robust audits could ensure products remain compliant with safety and performance standards.
- Long-term Quality Assurance: While initially more resource-intensive, regular audits might prevent larger compliance issues or recalls, which could be more costly in reputation and finances.
- We consider that there is a case for a series of key mandatory criteria that must be satisfied for particular products with potential safety, health and environmental impacts that also demand rigorous performance auditing.

13. Do you agree with all the principles for transparency and information sharing?

The Carpet Institute provides a very transparent grading (ACCS) and environmental certification scheme (ECS) for flooring products:

- Environmental Certification Scheme (ECS): The Carpet Institute's implementation of the ECS demonstrates a commitment to transparency in environmental impacts. By providing

multiple levels of certification for various products, it allows consumers and stakeholders to understand the environmental footprint of different carpet flooring products. This inherently promotes transparency by making environmental performance data accessible.

- ACCS Carpet Grading: this scheme has been in place for over 30 years and is widely used by carpet manufacturers and importers.
- Index of Carpet Names: The existence of an Index of Carpet Names, where subscribers receive regular updates on carpet qualities, suppliers, and their ratings under various certification schemes, provides a supportive stance towards information sharing. This service aids in transparency by providing clarity on product specifications and performance metrics, which is crucial for industry professionals and consumers.
- Installation Standards: The Carpet Institute's development and distribution of detailed installation standards (AS2455.1 and AS2455.2) also indicate a commitment to sharing information that ensures quality and consistency in product use, which indirectly supports transparency in how products are intended to be used and maintained.
- Transparency: The Carpet Institute values transparency, especially in how products interact with the environment and how they should be installed or used. By promoting schemes like ACCS, ECS and providing detailed standards for installation, we ensure that information about product quality, environmental impact, and usage is openly accessible to stakeholders.
- Information Sharing: This not only helps in maintaining industry standards but also in fostering trust and informed decision-making among consumers and professionals.

The Carpet Institute agrees with principles of transparency and information sharing due to their established practices in related areas.

14. What other options or changes do you propose to transparency and information sharing and why?

No answer

15. Do you agree with all the principles for scheme operation and sustainability?

What options or changes do you propose for scheme operation and sustainability and why?

No answer

16. Any other comments?

There may be an opportunity to use other existing product labelling schemes such as the European “CE” to demonstrate that the product is fit for purpose.

The product registration process and time allowances for actions to be undertaken is going to be important to the successful introduction of the scheme.

Used product disposal / circularity is an important function of building products that needs to be considered.

Tiering of products is practised in other schemes and where the standards of performance sit needs to be considered.

Can this registration and labelling scheme be applied more broadly than just building products?

The Carpet Institute of Australia appreciates the opportunity to contribute to the ABCB's proposed Building Product Registration Scheme, particularly regarding the classification of building products. Our commentary focuses on the critical aspect of product categorization into designated or non-designated groups, emphasizing the relevance of risk-based assessments in this decision.

Product Classification Concerns:

- **Risk Assessment:** The classification of products as designated or non-designated should hinge on their inherent risks concerning fire safety, waterproofing, and structural integrity. For textile floor coverings, which include carpets, the risks associated are generally lower compared to structural components. This assessment is supported by the fact that every floor covering undergoes rigorous, independent testing for these parameters before installation, aligning with Australian and international standards and demonstrating a robust self-regulatory framework.
- **Self-Assessment for Non-Designated Products:** The proposal for non-designated products to operate under a self-assessed, voluntary registration is appropriate for industries like ours. This approach not only reduces regulatory burden but also encourages industry-led innovation and compliance. Textile floor coverings, due to their nature, pose minimal risk in structural terms but are critical in terms of comfort, acoustics, and aesthetics, aspects that are already well-regulated through existing standards.

Support through ACCS:

- **ACCS Overview:** The Australian Carpet Classification System (ACCS) is a comprehensive framework that evaluates carpet performance in various categories such as acoustics, thermal properties. Separately, the Carpet Institute through CSIRO have detailed slip resistance assessments, and Fire Engineering assessments of textile floor coverings for compliance to the Building Code of Australia - flammability. This system is designed to ensure that carpets meet or exceed safety and performance criteria, providing a solid foundation for classifying textile floor coverings within the ABCB's scheme.
- **Integration Proposal:** We suggest the ABCB consider integrating the ACCS into the broader registration system. By doing so, the ABCB can leverage existing, proven methodologies for assessing textile floor coverings. This integration would streamline the process for manufacturers, ensure consistency in product evaluation, and maintain high safety and performance standards without duplicating efforts.
- **Briefing on ACCS:** The Carpet Institute is offering to provide detailed briefings on ACCS to the ABCB, demonstrating how the system operates, its compliance with international norms, and how it can be effectively incorporated into the product registration scheme. This collaboration could serve as a model for other industries, showcasing how industry-specific standards can enhance regulatory frameworks.

In conclusion, while the specifics of product designation are yet to be finalized by the ABCB, the Carpet Institute of Australia advocates for a risk-based approach that recognizes the unique

attributes and existing regulatory frameworks within the carpet industry. We are prepared to actively support and integrate our systems with the ABCB's initiatives to ensure a seamless, effective, and fair implementation of the Building Product Registration Scheme.

Proof of Submission

Your response has been submitted

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