

**MEDIA RELEASE – January 23, 2008**

## **Building Council may catch a falling green star for industry - Mat 8 sustainable timber under review**

THE light shining at the end of a dark unfriendly environmental tunnel for building timbers could be a brighter Green Star standard for industry.

The Green Building Council of Australia's Green Star executive director (acting) Robin Mellon has advised industry that the council is reviewing the Material category with the aim of establishing a new approach to sustainable timber.

"This is part of our commitment to continuous improvement of the Green Star standard," Mr Mellon said.

It is intended that the review will establish an environment in which all timber certification schemes can be assessed in a transparent and equitable manner. This would differ from the acceptance of a specific timber certification scheme, which raised concerns in some sectors about being prescriptive or exclusive.

The GBCA has determined that the best way to approach the Mat-8 Sustainable Timber credit is to specify a set of leading best practice criteria under which a submission from a particular project can be assessed. The GBCA believes this would have the effect of driving market demand for sustainable timber practices, with the outcome an improvement in the overall environmental performance of the timber industry.

"Best practice will mean that the GBCA is setting specific criteria that must be met for timber used in a project, in order to gain points under this Green Star credit," Mr Mellon said.

A four-credit criteria report now in draft form will be the first steps/benchmarks in steering the timber industry towards greater sustainability. More criteria may follow within the next year or so.



The proposed GBCA credit (Public Review January 2008) – Mat-8 Sustainable Timber – encourages and recognises the specification of re-used timber products or timber from sources that have environmentally responsible forest management practices. It notes that compliance with this credit can be demonstrated by provision of proof of chain of custody from a recognised forest certification scheme (such as FSC, AFS, PEFC, etc). Timber that does not have a chain of custody from a forest certification scheme will not comply with this credit.

The industry, including key industry bodies such as the GBCA's Industry Reference Group (IRG), the National Association of Forest Industries and members of the public (through their review of the GBCA website and e-Newsletter), are encouraged to comment on, constructively criticise or agree with, the criteria of the credit by the end of January to enable changes to be incorporated.

The new format of the credit will be passed by the GBCA technical steering committee and board early this year before being included in the 'Technical Clarifications' section of the GBCA website. All Green Star rating tools are developed by a range of relevant experts from the construction, environmental and manufacturing sectors and stringently assessed and reviewed by the GBCA technical assurance committee.

Mr Mellon said the GBCA was committed to this best practice approach. "It does not penalise or discriminate against using a particular product or material in a building project; by promoting environmentally responsible building practices, the GBCA seeks to encourage market competition for sustainable solutions."

All comments on the proposed credit should be sent to [materials@gbcaus.org](mailto:materials@gbcaus.org) by close of business on Thursday, January 31, to be considered as part of the feedback.

In the proposed GBCA credit one point is awarded where 60% of the timber used is either post-consumer re-used timber or complies with three of the sustainability criteria; the remainder of the timber used in the project must not have come from old-growth forests.

Two points are awarded where 95% of the timber used is either post-consumer re-used timber or complies with three of the sustainability criteria the remainder of the timber used in the project must not have come from old-growth forests:

In the conversion of native forest to plantation, plantation timber must not have come from a plantation located on a site which was developed from native forest after November 1994 [in line with FSC and will allow FSC timber to automatically comply]. Timber from plantations established after this date will still comply if the plantation was located on land cleared prior to this date. For example, a plantation established in 2000, on farmland that was cleared in 1960, will comply.

Timber sourced from a plantation established on a site from which native forest was cleared after 1994 will not comply with this credit.

Evidence of a chain of custody is required to demonstrate that the product delivered was produced at a certified sustainably managed forest. Chain of custody ensures that only wood that has come from a certified sustainably managed forest is sold/labelled as such.

Compliance with this credit can be demonstrated by provision of proof of chain of custody from a recognised forest certification scheme (such as FSC, AFS, PEFC, etc). Timber that does not have a chain of custody from a forest certification scheme will not comply with this credit.

Timber must not have come from the logging of old-growth forests. Wood demonstrated to be from a plantation forest will automatically comply. However, plantation timber must also comply with the 'conversion of native forest to plantation' sustainability criteria.



*Glulam structure and plywood sheeting and bracing was used in this Seattle, USA, library, a state-of-the-art green building listed in the American Institute of Architecture's top 10 green buildings. The major components, selected for durability, are also recyclable or reusable. The glulam roof structure was erected with bolted connections, allowing for easy disassembly. Connectors and timbers could easily be salvaged for future use.*