

Monday, June 27, 2016

**AIRAH calls for a strategic approach for Australian cities and communities**

The Right Honourable Minister for the Environment Greg Hunt,

Minister,

I am writing to you in my capacity as Chief Executive of the Australian Institute of Refrigeration Air Conditioning and Heating (AIRAH), a national not-for-profit technical institute that has been the voice of the HVAC&R industry since 1920. We are calling for a considered approach to planning for Australia, its cities and communities to help guide politicians in the lead-up to the coming Federal Election.

AIRAH feels that it's important for politicians from all parties to understand both the vital role the HVAC&R (heating, ventilation, air conditioning and refrigeration) industry has in our economy, but also the part it can play in helping Australia achieve its environmental aspirations.

As you know, as a signatory to the Paris Climate Change Agreement, Australia has now committed to the global transition to net-zero emissions, and to reaching net-zero emissions nationally around 2050.

Policy makers should understand the Australian built environment sector – and within that, the HVAC&R industry – can make a major contribution to meeting this goal, as well as improving energy productivity, supporting innovation, and creating healthier, more liveable cities. We believe that in order to maximise emissions reductions from the built environment and help Australia reach its Paris Agreement obligations, an ambitious coordinated national plan is required.

AIRAH members can play a huge part in this transformation. Though working in a largely “hidden industry”, our members are part of a sector that includes more than 170,000 Australians. Their work impacts everything from keeping our food fresh, to the design and maintenance of high-performing buildings.

The Institute has been intimately involved with the development of ASBEC's *Low Carbon High Performance* report, and we support its recommendations. And AIRAH is in fact the driving force behind PRIME, the HVAC&R industry's blueprint for a successful transition to a low-emissions future through Professionalism, Regulation, Information, Measurement and Emission abatement.

**Our recommendations**

Yet the work must continue, and in the lead-up to the election on Saturday, July 2, we feel it prudent to inform you of what we think are important issues for you to consider in your planning for now and for tomorrow.

As part of the establishment of a national plan to coordinate policy development and implementation, AIRAH is calling for a focus on:

- **Strong minimum standards**
- **Targeted incentives**
- **Embrace of innovation through better data and smart technology.**



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### **Strong minimum standards**

Our recommendation is for the review and lifting of minimum energy performance requirements for key standards, including the National Construction Code (NCC), and for the implementation of a trajectory for future benchmark increases. We'd also like to see the introduction of cost-effective minimum energy performance standards for existing buildings to supplement measures outlined in the National Energy Productivity Plan (NEPP). Our recommendation in this area strongly aligns with AIRAH's position and continuing efforts regarding HVAC&R compliance.

Because HVAC&R is responsible for 24 per cent of the electricity used in Australian buildings and about 11 per cent of the total Australian national emissions, building sustainability cannot be addressed without addressing HVAC&R sustainability.

### **Targeted incentives**

AIRAH sees great value in the introduction of green depreciation to accelerate uptake of energy upgrades to existing commercial buildings at the time of refurbishment. We would also like to see the setting of ambitious targets for higher performance in government-owned and occupied buildings, and for government procurement.

Tool development is important for HVAC&R optimisation, and AIRAH has played a role here through the development of Calculating Cool, an online rating tool. This work should continue, and there is considerable potential to improve the existing building stock's performance through tuning, including recommissioning and energy-efficiency upgrades.

### **Innovation**

Innovation is part of AIRAH's DNA. As such, we recommend unlocking access to energy, and driving innovation to achieve large-scale improvements in energy performance across the building sector.

We see access to information, training and education as key in Australia's journey towards net-zero emissions buildings, and to innovation. As such, AIRAH supports the transition to next-generation low-GWP refrigerants, and research into new technologies.

AIRAH considers the commitment to fund smart, sustainable cities a most positive step. We applaud the promise of \$100 million for a Sustainable Cities Investment Fund, to be delivered through the Clean Energy Finance Corporation. And we are pleased to see funds could be invested in a range of projects, including green buildings, retrofit projects, and precinct-scale energy-generation systems.

We see these initiatives as aligned with our own strategic commitment towards resilience, sustainability, compliance, innovation, and the transition to next-generation refrigerants.

I trust you find the information in this missive helpful, and look forward to discussing these important matters with you or a member of your staff.

Regards,

Tony Gleeson, Affil. AIRAH, GAICD, FAIM  
Chief Executive

**AIRAH is the recognised voice of the Australian HVAC&R industry. We aim to minimise the environmental footprint of our vital sector through communication, education and encouraging better practice.**

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