

NECA QUEENSLAND

SUSTAINABILITY CHARTER

June 2011



Introduction - Why is energy efficiency and sustainability important now?

There are numerous drivers in all market segments of the Electro technology industry - domestic, commercial and industrial - that are creating an increasing demand for energy efficient and sustainable/or environmentally-friendly installations, technology and products.

Some of the market drivers include:

- The Australian Government setting the National target of reducing our carbon pollution to 25% below the 2000 level by 2020;
- An increasing consumer awareness of environmental issues and the need to save energy. However, while many consumers are now becoming more aware of the need to save energy, few are aware of how to go about it or what savings can be made.
- New energy efficiency standards for commercial and public buildings introduced into the Building Code of Australia with effect from 1 May 2006;
- More opportunities for contractors to encourage energy efficient installations as they are regularly maintaining, repairing and upgrading installations in domestic, commercial and industrial premises;
- The demand for electricity is growing nationally at 4 percent per annum, a figure that is unsustainable;
- A national emissions trading scheme in the pipeline, which will drive demand for energy efficiency, particularly in non-domestic markets, and increase energy costs;
- Government-funded initiatives, such as The Solar Cities Project, which stimulate consumer awareness and demand for energy efficient products and services and accredited professionals; and
- Financial incentives for customers to invest in energy saving products and technologies.

Market research completed by Sustainability Victoria highlighted that the Electro technology industry is 1 of the top 3 industries that has the strength and ability to have a real and positive effect on the sustainability of our environment and really reduce our carbon footprint.

Sustainability - a definition to direct NECAQ activity

The National Electrical and Communications Association, Queensland (NECAQ) has recognised the importance of these influencing factors on the electrical and communications industry and the growing market opportunities for contractors and is developing an appropriate Sustainability Program (*Sustainability Plus*) to improve the sustainability practices of electrical contractors by covering the issues on the sustainability agenda that are significant to this country and helping electrical contractors to be better equipped and trained to take advantage of these new business opportunities.

In order for NECAQ to generate focused and meaningful sustainability outcomes, we have established an agreed definition to underpin our activities.

Environmental sustainability requires the design and provision of products and services that incorporate and promote waste minimisation and the efficient and effective use and reuse of resources.

We also recognise that environmentally sustainable practices are those that target the following.

Personal Responsibility - the skill and knowledge to reflect on and manage one's own actions to ensure that they:

- comply with and demonstrate an understanding of established environmental standards;
- procedures and compliance requirements;
- reflect awareness of the environmental impact of their actions;
- contribute to decision making and continual improvement processes targeting personal and organisational efficiencies in the use of resources, reduction of waste and in the improvement of products and processes to reduce their environmental impact; and
- embrace continual improvements and lifelong learning to improve environmental conditions now and for the future

Analysis - of the environmental impact of products and processes – this includes lifecycle analysis from creation to disposal, development and implementation of testing processes, comparative and critical analysis, and environmental risk analysis.

Transparency - determination of environmental monitoring and reporting requirements and the subsequent development and implementation of monitoring and reporting procedures – this includes identifying and reporting on regulatory and compliance requirements relevant to organisational operations, environmental audits, environmental accounting.

Conservation – including the management of existing resources; determination of protection requirements; efficient and selective use of resources.

Leadership – including modelling personal responsibility and developing it in others, creating an environment of cooperation and flexibility in order to facilitate ongoing changes and improvements to technology and processes, value based leadership.

Workforce Capability - building the cultural maturity and skills capability of the workforce to recognise and engage in appropriate environmental sustainability practices.

Purpose of the Sustainability Charter

NECAQ is committed to the practice and demonstration of environmental sustainability within the electrical industry. We embrace our responsibility to the environment and recognise the unique contribution NECAQ can make to a sustainable future for all Queenslanders. NECAQ aims to assist electricians to understand and implement sustainable practices throughout the industry, exploring the benefits whilst working to achieve a balance between responsible environmental sustainability and economic success.

The **Sustainability Charter** has been developed to set out the objectives aimed at improving the sector's environmental performance and provide an ideal vehicle to develop a sustainability roadmap. The Charter will provide a management plan that reflects NECAQ's awareness and concern for the environment and guide NECAQ's decision making over the coming years.

We believe that the **Sustainability Charter** is critical because it carries the potential to create an opportunity for education on the concept and importance of sustainability. Furthermore the **Charter** will also provide clear direction to government, the industry and the community concerning our desired future and facilitate coordinated, collective ways of achieving it.

As we engage in the transition towards sustainability, the **Charter** provides an aspirational document that clearly and succinctly provides the overall direction required for advancing sustainability. It identifies what sustainability means to the industry, with visionary overarching objectives covering the issues on the sustainability agenda that are significant to this country.

The objectives within the Charter will be used primarily by the industry to advance tangible sustainability outcomes through self-initiated strategies, tactics and tools, under the guidance of NECAQ.

Objectives

NECAQ's aim is to improve the sustainability of the Queensland electrical industry both in an environmental and financial capacity. NECAQ's *Sustainability Plus* program will provide expertise, training and a network of organisations working towards sustainability aimed at managing environmental risk, using resources more efficiently, integrating environmental strategies with business planning, enhancing customer, supplier and community relationships, and engaging electricians and communications cablers in achieving higher levels of environmental performance and sustainability.

By subscribing to the program, individual firms and companies whose business is the selling, installation, servicing and repair of electrical and communications products and services will gain the knowledge, the skills, and the confidence to become an energy efficient expert and add strength and credibility to their team, their service and their business.

The program will aim to make sense of sustainability, pinpoint how their business can benefit and provide a clear path for action. It will be aimed at electricians and contractors who provide advice to customers on energy efficient building projects, renovations or refurbishments, or who advise on the purchase of products such as air conditioners or heating appliances, and who wish to increase their skills and differentiate them in the marketplace. Investing in the program will ensure business have a strong understanding of how they can assist their clients to save energy, save money and reduce their carbon footprint today and for the future.

Through this Charter, NECAQ will assist electricians to understand and implement sustainable practices throughout the industry and to boost their environmental performance. Individual firms and companies whose business is the selling, installation, servicing and repair of electrical and communications products and services will work with the *Sustainability Plus* program to:

1. Promote sustainability as a core business value and integrate environmental strategies with business planning.
2. Improve environmental risk management strategies.
3. Use resources more efficiently to drive down costs and boost competitiveness.
4. Efficiently manage the supply chain by working with suppliers to reduce costs and improve environmental performance of their products and services.
5. Enhance customer and community relationships.
6. Engage and train staff in sustainability issues.

Performance Monitoring, Reporting and Review

Given the **Sustainability Charter** focuses on long-term sustainability goals it will be reviewed every 2 years to ensure that it reflects new issues, developments and opportunities for the practice and demonstration of environmental sustainability within the electrical industry. It will be used to develop initiatives and targets that respond to and support the objectives set out in this **Charter**. The results, over time, will provide important information about how we can continually improve our environmental sustainability practices.

Objective 1

Adopt sustainability as a core business value and integrate environmental strategies with business planning

Strengthening the commitment to environmental sustainability, especially for the long term, requires vision and planning. It requires leadership and acceptance that establishing a firm foundation is vital to successfully adopting sustainability as a core business value.

Companies and firms that understand their environmental footprint and how the environment affects their business gain a competitive edge. Vision, Commitment and Planning is essential in developing the business case for sustainability, and how a firm's culture, purpose and operations may change.

We are committed to introducing the main concepts of environmental sustainability to the Electro technology Industry and assisting electricians to define what sustainability means for their company/firm. This includes strategies leading to environmental sustainability being integrated into their values, business plans and business operations. This will result in ongoing environmental improvements and highly visible market recognition.

Vision, commitment and planning will be critical in developing and delivering business strategy. Firms that to commit to sustainability will:

- create the business case for environmental sustainability in their organisation;
- develop a sustainability vision and long-term goals;
- integrate sustainability into their business decision-making systems;
- have access to up to date information about the latest energy efficient news, training and programs;
- enhance their understanding of their products and offer informed advice about energy solutions to help consumers achieve greater efficiencies;
- availability of skills in order to meet the extensive demands of carbon reduction targets through the design, development and dissemination of new and improved technologies and changes to work practices; and
- change how they do business and make investments to secure market opportunities to address rising energy costs.

Objective 2

Improve environmental risk management

A focus on maintaining industry, regulatory, safety and quality standards; implementing and monitoring environmental and sustainable energy management policies and procedures; Complying with environmental policies and procedures

A focus on *Environmental Risk and Responsibility* will give individual firms and companies a clear picture of their legal obligations, and ensure they are met with rigorous risk management. This includes understanding current legislative responsibilities in relation to environmental issues and the potential new responsibilities in terms of the cause and effect of human activity on the general climate change cycle and how such activity should be moderated or prevented from having any adverse impact. It will also support individual firms and companies in dealing with definitive action by governments to facilitate the implementation of energy efficiency options. This includes the legal and regulatory processes to ensure construction activities take into account the impact of those activities on the environment.

Electrical Contractors will be supported to identify how they currently manage environmental risks and decide what action is needed to assess their environmental compliance, and to reduce or eliminate risk in their company. A focus on *Environmental risk and responsibility* will ensure they improve their environmental risk management by:

- identifying, evaluating and prioritising environmental risks;
- integrating risk assessment into existing management and OH&S systems where appropriate;
- introducing them to legal responsibilities and market forces;
- examining options for managing risk – avoidance, mitigation, reducing consequences and risk retention; and
- providing the opportunity to save energy and provide business cases with payback periods, including;
 - Energy and cost savings;
 - Specialist energy advice and technical support;
 - Help to measure and understand energy use; and
 - Opportunities to network and share energy efficiency ideas.

Objective 3

Use resources more efficiently and implement efficiencies in the use of resources

Successful organisations continually identify and implement efficiencies in the use of resources to drive down costs and boost competitiveness.

Companies that are *Resource Efficient* will improve their bottom line. The aim is to build capacity in supply chain efficiencies to achieve those results. Through the NECAQ *Sustainability Plus* program we want to generate momentum for sustainability because it drives tangible benefits from better operational processes. We want to assist electricians to assess baseline data on material flows; identify opportunities through a business costs analysis; execute resource efficiency plans; and establish internal processes that drive innovation and savings.

We want individual firms and companies to pursue the best of the resource efficiency opportunities through a process of continual review and work on new resource efficiency projects. The *Sustainability Plus* program will help individuals and business become as energy efficient as possible through the support of organisations who share this aim; are part of the electrical industry and have the expertise to provide Electrical contractors with technological support or communicating the benefits of the program to the wider community by:

- Adding value through providing specific product or technological support to Electrical contractors; and
- Providing access to up to date information about the latest energy efficient news, training and programs.

For companies and firms that seek greater efficiency in their existing processes and who want to improve their environmental performance the *Sustainability Plus* program will support them to:

- achieve tangible savings in their resource use and operating costs;
- gather and monitor baseline data on production and service inputs and outputs;
- increase productivity and build staff morale;
- enhance reputation and credibility with major stakeholders, customers and suppliers;
- promote marketing advantage through more sustainable products and services; and
- identify eco-efficiency opportunities in their value and supply chain.

Objective 4

Efficiently manage the supply chain by working with suppliers to reduce costs and improve environmental performance of their products and services

Real business benefits can be achieved by efficiently managing your supply chain. Many organisations are already working with suppliers and customers to reduce risk and costs and improve environmental performance of their products and services

A positive approach to sustainability helps companies build stronger relationships with their external stakeholders – their communities, government, shareholders, suppliers and customers. These relationships in turn help companies find and pursue opportunities for resource efficiency and environmentally sustainable solutions.

To reduce risk and cost and get the best environmental results from products and services, firms are working cooperatively with other businesses and customers along their supply chain. Through the *Sustainability Plus* firms and companies can evaluate how they can best engage with suppliers and customers; for example, through setting supplier standards and product specifications, or through supplier education programs.

Given financial markets and NGOs calling for more reporting on sustainability performance, the *Sustainability Plus* will demonstrate how engagement with wholesalers and retailers will help sustainability action, and how to engage proactively and effectively. Companies and firms will be supported to determine the best direction for their engagement, develop well-reasoned plans, and learn from best practice examples. This will be tailored to meet their organisational culture, priorities and current initiatives

Through greater **Supply Chain Management** we will strive to support electricians to deliver lasting improvements in their environmental performance and stronger relationships with their key supply chain partners by:

- introducing them to the principles of supply chain environmental management;
- understanding how the supply chain affects business risk and environmental performance;
- presenting supply chain approaches being used by other organisations;
- building the business case and identifying appropriate strategies for engaging with suppliers and customers;
- developing effective procurement policies and supplier selection criteria and processes;
- understanding how to evaluate product environmental performance and implement a product improvement program; and
- developing supplier education and partnership processes.

Objective 5

Enhance customer relationships

Business needs to ensure that they have a strong understanding of how they can assist their customers to save energy, save money and reduce their carbon footprint today and for the future.

The *Sustainability Plus* program will aim to support electricians to gain the knowledge, skills and confidence to be an expert in energy efficiency. This will give them a real point of difference in the market place making them more competitive and more appealing to potential and existing clients. They can add value to their service by:

- Saving their customers money;
- Offering their customer's informed choices;
- Reducing their customers energy requirements and usage;
- Helping their customers reduce their carbon footprint; and
- Reducing the negative impact on the environment.

The Carbon Pollution Emissions Scheme's Green paper recognized that there are 4 major household emissions efficient opportunities:

- Insulation;
- Hot water heating;
- Lighting; and
- Appliance consumption.

Through the *Sustainability Plus* program we will strive to support electricians and keep them up-to-date on developments in products and services as well as providing them with tools to promote their energy efficient services to the community so they can:

- inform and educate consumers of the importance of energy efficiency; and
- help their clients sift through the information overload and provide them with the relevant information that they can understand.

Objective 6

Engaging and training staff in sustainability issues

People now care about the environment more than ever before. You can use this to build organisational loyalty and to entrench sustainability in your daily business practice.

Staff engagement is a powerful aspect of any sustainability program, as it should be both a benefit and a driver of change. Companies and firms will be supported to harness the ideas and enthusiasm of their people, allocate responsibilities wisely, build capacity and skills of staff and see the resulting achievements generate further ideas and energy.

Staff Engagement will respond to the needs and culture of each company, and allow each to build and pursue its own engagement strategy and identify how to best to build support for them – with education and training, leadership behaviour, social events and initiatives, peer and internal forums, communication and signage, mentoring and recognition.

Staff engagement will tap staff potential and improve satisfaction and performance by supporting electrical contractors to:

- understand why they may be motivated to achieve their sustainability goals;
- understand what they can do to engage in different sustainability efforts;
- develop programs that involve staff in planning, implementing and evaluating their sustainability priorities;
- engage and motivate staff during the course of sustainability efforts;
- assist staff in successfully accessing the rapidly growing market of energy efficiency and provide electricians and contractors with training in energy efficient installations, services and products;
- develop a broad understanding of the concepts of energy efficiency utilising modern technology and products; and
- promote their knowledge and training as a unique selling point to their customers.

Through the *Sustainability Plus* program NECAQ will provide access to training and accreditation programs for electricians to assist them in successfully accessing the rapidly growing market of energy efficiency. This will include building the capacity of trainers and training organisations to provide environmentally related training designed to provide electricians and contractors with training in energy efficient installations, services and products. NECAQ will also consider:

- the process for implementing accredited training in all parts of the state;
- the establishment of different learning platforms to allow access to training regardless of location;
- the development of formal quality control mechanisms to ensure consistency of delivery, resources and assessment processes; and
- local customization – ensuring local needs can be satisfied within a State-wide program.