

Brookfield Multiplex's Submission on the Garnaut Issues Paper on the Built Environment

Brookfield Multiplex understands that the purpose of the Issues Paper and the submission process is to discuss medium to long-term policies and policy frameworks to improve the prospects for sustainable prosperity in general and to seek input on the key issues related to mitigating greenhouse emissions in transport, land-use and buildings in particular.

Brookfield Multiplex is a fully integrated property business with activities in commercial, retail, residential and property development, construction, management services and infrastructure. Due to the focus of the business this submission will focus on the barriers surrounding the built environment. The design of the future carbon trading scheme and the natural incentives for saving energy that higher energy costs such a scheme will create are going to have a strong impact on the issues discussed in the Issues Paper. Due to the focus of the Issues Paper we are excluding a discussion around the effects of such a scheme.

To create high performing buildings from an environmental perspective and utilise the possible reductions in existing buildings Brookfield Multiplex submits that there needs to be a stronger focus on and a deeper understanding of the effects of long term energy consumption in existing buildings.

As stated in the issues paper a wide range of new technical initiatives coupled with a change in occupant behaviour can influence a building's energy efficiency and achieve reduced emissions from the building sector. Retrofitting existing buildings will be an important step towards achieving the desired reductions. Since investments in retrofitting usually require a long period before they are payed back, Brookfield Multiplex believes that it is important that an entity expending the money on sustainable retrofitting is encouraged to take that financial risk. Tax incentives such as accelerated appreciation for buildings improved through retrofitting, and lower interest rates for loans financing a retrofit or other green initiatives are ways of achieving this.

It is important to note that retrofitting an existing building will not automatically translate into or guarantee a highly energy-efficient building. Brookfield Multiplex believes that one of the key-barriers towards achieving energy efficiency in buildings is the existing knowledge gap on how to utilise solutions already available as well as poor facility management practices. These informational barriers on financial savings and barriers through consumer preferences are also the ones that can be eliminated in the most time and cost efficient way with relatively easy and realistic methods.

Such methods can include companies creating incentives for facilities managers to adopt and continually monitor energy consumption. Internally or externally (e.g. through the government) run competitions is one example of how to encourage better practices. Greater access to high performance building management education programs such as TAFE and university courses for facility managers would be very beneficial to address the knowledge gap further.