

Eco-labelling Study Tour Media Statement

The National Department of Public Works (NDPW) in South Africa has a Green Building Policy which states that the Department will facilitate the establishment of an eco-labelling system for environmentally friendly building materials and products. Although a South African ecolabel will be a government initiated system which will be incorporated in NDPW's Standard Specifications for Construction Works, it is the intention that the ecolabel will be promoted as a national system for the public and private sectors. The National eco-labelling system will conform to ISO 14024 Environmental Labels and Declarations: Environmental Labeling Type I, Guiding Principles and Procedures.

Agrément South Africa was recommended as the Competent Body (or licensor) to establish and operate the government initiated eco-labelling system for building materials and products, which is to be known as Agrément South Africa Ecolabel (or ecoASA). Agrément South Africa is a state-owned public entity which undertakes technical assessments of innovative construction products and building systems.

In order to establish an eco-labelling system, the NDPW set up a working group task team which assessed existing international and local eco-labelling systems with the view to assess whether any of these systems could be adopted. The task team identified Australia's Good Environmental Choice Australia (GECA) as the most ideal institution for a delegation from Agrément South Africa to undertake a fact finding study tour. GECA is Australia's only independent, non-profit, sustainability and environmental certification program, and is also a Global Ecolabelling Network (GEN) member.

An Agrément South Africa delegation supported by the NDPW and the cidb conducted the fact finding study tour in Sydney, Australia under the supervision of GECA. The tour was undertaken for the purpose of informing the establishment of a suitable eco-labelling system for South Africa. Alongside managerial and technical personnel from GECA, the delegation had the opportunity to share experiences, explore strengths and weaknesses, as well as identify potential threats where ecolabels are concerned. The tour was extremely beneficial to Agrément South Africa, with the overwhelming amount of feedback and knowledge gained during the trip. Agrément South Africa is thankful to the Chief Executive Officer of GECA, Kate

Harris for her warm reception and dedication to making the trip meaningful to the South African delegation.

The support from GECA has laid the foundation for the operationalisation of the Agrément South Africa Ecolabel. The insight gained over the duration of the trip has equipped Agrément South Africa with valuable information and strategic insights which will assist the agency in establishing a sound eco-labelling system for South Africa.

Agrément South Africa is confident that the lessons learnt in Australia will go a long way in the establishment of the South African Eco Label scheme. The South African delegation was able to meet with several key role players in industry in Australia who provided a lot of insight into the operation of the Australian scheme.

The South African Eco-Label delegation gratefully acknowledges the contributions of GECA as the entire team were extremely helpful and provided a lot of information which will certainly come in handy in the development of the South African eco-labelling scheme. The South African delegation gratefully acknowledges the contributions made by members from the following organisations:

- Bureau Veritas;
- Infrastructure Sustainability Council of Australia;
- Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation;

Bureau Veritas is a recognized auditing body focused on laboratory testing, inspection and certification services (TIC). The organisation helps to ensure that assets, products, infrastructure and processes comply with client specifications or standards and regulations, while improving performance in quality, health and safety, environmental protection and social responsibility (QHSE). The South African delegation was able to meet with Bureau Veritas staff and received insight into their activities in relationship to the Eco Label scheme which will come in handy in the development of the South African Eco Label scheme.

The Infrastructure Sustainability Council of Australia (ISCA) is a member-based, not-for-profit body operating in Australia and New Zealand with the purpose of enabling sustainability outcomes in infrastructure. The information received from ISCA will certainly be beneficial to the South African delegation.

The Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO) is an independent Australian federal government agency responsible for scientific research. Its chief role is to improve the economic and social performance of industry for the benefit of the community. CSIRO carries out testing certification and standardisation of reaction to fire and fire resistance of products and buildings. The organisation also provides independent and objective fire safety engineering expertise and evaluation. The South African delegation visited the world class Fire Laboratory as well as other fire testing facilities and were given an in-depth briefing on the latest developments in relation to the assessment of fires in high rise structures.

The entire visit to GECA and other Australian institutions provided the South African delegation with cutting edge developments which will come in handy in setting up the South African Eco Label scheme.