

# Submission

**Consultation submission -  
Streamlining and modernising the  
National Construction Code**

**February 2026**

## About NECA

The National Electrical and Communications Association (NECA) is the peak national body representing electrical and communications contractors across Australia. NECA's members deliver essential services in residential, commercial, industrial and infrastructure environments, and are deeply affected by the structure, clarity and consistency of the National Construction Code.

The electrical and communications sector is central to major national priorities—including electrification, energy efficiency, EV charging infrastructure, digital connectivity, safety compliance, and modern methods of construction. NECA welcomes the Government's commitment to modernise the NCC and strongly supports reforms that promote clarity, productivity, innovation, and national consistency while preserving the safety and performance outcomes critical to Australians.

NECA's perspective is grounded in extensive practitioner experience. Our members work with the NCC, referenced standards (such as AS/NZS 3000), and state-based regulations every day. We therefore offer this submission to highlight where improvements to governance, complexity, usability and innovation will deliver the greatest benefit to industry and the community.

## Executive Summary

NECA supports a modernised NCC that maintains minimum national safety and performance standards, while improving clarity, national consistency and usability across all disciplines, including electrical and communications. Industry experience over recent code cycles highlights that the core challenge is not the Code's intent, but rather the:

- increasing complexity and fragmentation of requirements,
- inconsistent adoption and modification across states,
- declining resourcing and technical capacity available to the ABCB, and
- lack of proportionate pathways for evolving best practice and low-cost improvements.

A strengthened NCC—clearer, better supported, and more digitally accessible—will directly improve safety, productivity, compliance, and efficiency of construction projects. Our submission responds to the Discussion Paper themes using NECA's practical insights and the industry experience reflected in recent stakeholder commentary.

# Theme 1 — Governance and Process

## Does the current governance model work?

To date, NECA's direct experience with the ABCB's processes and NCC development has been very limited. Indeed, we are concerned that the development of recommendations for electrical building infrastructure and electrification initiatives in the NCC has not included direct representation from the major sub-contractors involved in the design and delivery outcomes in partnership with the construction industry. NECA has therefore requested a greater role by appointment to the Building Codes Committee.

## Stakeholder engagement

NECA has participated to a limited extent in NCC consultation processes and supports the existing engagement framework. However, NECA also considers that the engagement quality is limited by the resources available to the ABCB and access to appropriate and somewhat consumer focused expertise, particularly when working on technically complex or specialist issues.

## Ensuring independent, high-quality advice

A transparent "technical advice protocol" would ensure that Ministers continue receiving independent, evidence-based recommendations, while giving stakeholders greater visibility into how decisions were formed. The potential for vested interests to use the NCC to produce a market biased outcome needs to be countered by an outcomes focused decision making process supported by impartial technical advice.

## (A) Cadence for changes

NECA supports retaining the three-year cycle and adding a controlled mechanism for smaller interim adjustments. Industry examples show that even minor improvements can otherwise take six years or longer to be implemented.

## Theme 2 — Complexity and Regulatory Burden

The NCC has become increasingly complex—now exceeding 2,000 pages with roughly 600 pages of jurisdictional variations—creating significant challenges for electrical and communications contractors who must understand, interpret and implement requirements accurately on-site. Treasury’s Discussion Paper acknowledges these burdens, noting that complex drafting and extensive referencing of external standards make the NCC difficult to navigate.

For NECA members, these challenges translate into increased design time, coordination issues between trades, and reliance on specialists simply to interpret requirements. This is particularly evident where the NCC intersects with electrical disciplines—for example, in energy efficiency, EV-charging readiness, solar and battery installations, and essential systems such as smoke alarms, emergency lighting, and passive fire systems.

The NCC should remain a minimum performance standard, not a best-practice guide. However, NECA sees clear value in creating structured opportunities to recognise and formalise proven performance solutions. Many innovations in electrical systems—including low-cost EV-readiness measures, alternative reticulation and load-management solutions, and emerging energy technologies—have been widely deployed by industry compliant with Australian Standards but must repeatedly be justified through performance pathways due to over specification in the NCC. These pathways have become increasingly documentation-heavy, costly, and subject to inconsistent interpretation.

Much of this complexity results from the NCC’s reliance on a large set of referenced Australian Standards. Electrical contractors regularly consult AS/NZS 3000 (the Wiring Rules), which itself references numerous other standards. These standards are also regularly referenced in commercial contracts and tenders. Standards access is expensive, especially for SMEs, and their nested nature makes compliance more labour-intensive. Treasury’s consultation paper echoes this concern, noting that referenced standards are often difficult to obtain and integrate.

The implementation of the NCC 2022 EV-readiness requirements offers an instructive example. The body of the clause is brief, yet practical application depends on deep technical understanding of circuit design, maximum demand, and future-proofing principles. Industry practitioners, including NECA members, have had to rely on extensive external explanatory material to clarify intent and avoid conflicting interpretations. This demonstrates the need for official, well-structured explanatory

resources produced by the ABCB, or a willingness to specify outcomes rather than specifics of a clause dealing with electrical installation and defer the detail to the requirements to the already mandated Australian wiring rules.

The regulatory impact assessment process also contributes to complexity. While appropriate for major reforms, the current approach is disproportionate for small-scale, low-cost improvements that have clear long-term benefits. NECA supports a scaled RIA framework that accelerates “no-regrets” changes while preserving rigorous analysis where required.

Jurisdictional variations further amplify the burden. Electrical and communications contractors frequently work across state boundaries, and inconsistent requirements—particularly around energy, safety systems, or electrical infrastructure—create confusion, duplicated design work, and increased cost. Treasury identifies these inconsistencies as major contributors to reduced productivity and unnecessary regulatory burden. NECA therefore strongly supports a harmonisation program that systematically reviews, justifies, and where appropriate reduces variations.

Finally, the usability of the NCC is a critical factor. Many contractors operate on-site, on mobile devices, or under time pressure. The current structure and search capabilities of NCC Online are insufficiently intuitive. A modernised, digital NCC—machine-readable, searchable, and accompanied by clear explanatory overlays—would materially reduce errors and rework and improve productivity across the electrical and construction sectors.

## **Theme 3 — Usability and Accessibility**

NECA strongly supports the development of a more intuitive and accessible NCC Online. Contractors frequently consult the Code on mobile devices, and improved navigation, clearer clause summaries and integrated guidance would reduce misinterpretation and lift compliance. Treasury notes that current presentation formats are a barrier to efficiency and understanding.

## **Theme 4 — Innovation and Housing Diversity**

Electrical and communications systems are central to innovation—modern methods of

construction, modular builds, medium-density housing, and building electrification all rely heavily on scalable and consistent electrical design. Uncertainty in performance solution acceptance, inconsistent classification of retrofit projects, and variability in state-level rules all constrain the adoption of modern, efficient approaches. A predictable pathway for transitioning proven innovations into Deemed to Satisfy (DTS) provisions would support industry investment and accelerate uptake.

## Implementation Priorities (NECA's recommendations for 12–24 months)

1. Establish a stable, indexed funding model to establish and maintain the ABCB's technical capacity.
2. Retain the three-year NCC cycle with modest annual amendment windows.
3. Launch a national harmonisation initiative focused on removing those jurisdictional variations that are unnecessary.
4. Modernise NCC Online with embedded guidance and machine-readable structure.
5. Create a structured pathway for elevating recurring performance solutions into DTS provisions.
6. Provide representation to industry bodies that represent the electrotechnology sector.

### In summary

NECA supports the Government's commitment to modernise the NCC and strengthen its clarity, consistency and capacity. A better-structured and more accessible Code will reduce costs, improve compliance, and support national priorities in electrification, safety, energy performance and housing supply.

To arrange a meeting or discuss this proposal further, please contact:

Kent Johns

Head of Government Relations & Policy

NECA National

**T** 1300 361 099    **E** [memberservices@neca.asn.au](mailto:memberservices@neca.asn.au)    **W** [www.neca.asn.au](http://www.neca.asn.au)