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Better resilience information tools and incentives needed to protect new homes in natural disasters

The Building Stronger Homes Roundtable convened by the Insurance Council of Australia (ICA) and Master Builders Australia (MBA) has recommended reforms to the way codes, standards and land use planning systems promote the resilience of Australian family homes.

The aim of the Roundtables is for both industries to lead the discussion on policy changes that make buildings more resilient.

The third *Building Stronger Homes Roundtable* took place yesterday at NSW Parliament House in Sydney with the theme *New Builds, Codes, Standards and Land Use Planning*. The Hon. Kevin Anderson, NSW Minister for Better Regulation addressed the event, which was attended by representatives from state and federal government departments, Standards Australia, and the Australian Building Codes Board as well as the property, real estate and architecture industries.

Recommendations include:

- Simpler and cost-effective access to standards for builders and inspectors to support compliance.
- Land use planning reforms that better incorporate the experience and insights of the building and insurance industries in the aftermath of natural disasters.
- Increased government incentives to invest in resilience measures when building new homes to improve the durability of homes.
- Development of resilience information tools that can assist industry and consumers to build more resilient homes.
- Establishment of an information sharing hub between government and industry to share risk information, land planning data and building experience.

ICA CEO Andrew Hall said improved resilience will only be achieved with increased collaboration between industry, government and the community.

“While new homes need to be built to be more resilient, it is imperative they remain affordable and that new homeowners are able to enter the market.

“At present, there is no system in place in Australia to assess and record the level of resilience in a building, making it difficult for insurers to adjust premiums accordingly,” Mr Hall said.

MBA CEO Denita Wawn said the building industry and the insurance industry agree that sharing data and information are key to developing understanding of the needs of building resilience.

“Data can better support informed decision making by government, particularly in relation to land use planning.

“We would like to see the building industry and the insurance industry formally included as part of the consultation processes of the Australian Building Codes Board and Standards Australia to improve information sharing and provide practical industry insights in relation to future reforms,” Ms Wawn said.

The final Building Stronger Homes Roundtable will be held in June 2021.

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