



Newsletter of

**The Association of Building
Sustainability Assessors Ltd**

September 2009

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From the CEO

Dear members and friends of ABSA

It has been a very busy year for ABSA as we are now operating two assessor schemes, both under Federal Government Protocols. To differentiate these from each other we refer to them as HSAS (Home Sustainability Assessment Scheme) and HERS (Home Energy Rating Scheme).

We began taking registrations for HSAS in May, providing assessors for the Green Loans program and have been pleasantly overwhelmed by the interest and enthusiasm of the assessors. There are some teething problems in the national rollout of the program and as a membership organisation we are providing support, encouragement and information to assessors.

I trust that after reading the rest of this newsletter you will have a much better idea of what we are doing at ABSA. This newsletter does not replace the more detailed communications you receive from your respective Schemes.

Alison Carmichael, CEO

On Board

From a Board perspective it has been an interesting year so far, with many changes. Our new CEO has initiated many of these changes and so far we like what we see. The HSAS program has more than doubled our membership. We were cautious about this at first but have now embraced our new program and new members and look forward to seeing the program develop to maturity.

For the HERS program we have ramped up our QA, made submissions to ACTPLA and ABCB and are working with DEWHA to strengthen the program. The proposed changes to BCA look very promising for our sector.

We continue to improve our governance arrangements. The ABSA Board meets quarterly, helping to keep our collective view strategic rather than operational. We have excellent turn-up at Board meetings with 100% Board member attendance at the last meeting. For the 2009/10 financial year we now have improved financial reporting and have separated the external functions of accounting and auditing.

We look forward to the AGM when we can present a more detailed report and meet many of you. We trust that members will embrace the new constitution and membership schedule and fees when you get your copy and support it through the AGM process.

Wayne Floyd, President

ABSA AGM

The ABSA AGM for 2009 will be held on Friday 27 November 2009 in Sydney. We are planning to run assessor workshops at the same time so members have good reason to attend.

Constitutional change

As ABSA grew during 2009 we found the existing Constitution was not serving us well. Legal advice was that Constitutions do need to be reviewed periodically, and it was common for an organisation to change over time and operating under an old constitution would be a matter of the “tail wagging the dog”.

We need a new constitution to address our latest legal structure as a Company Limited by Guarantee, to allow us to broaden membership categories, elect a Board that represents the increased breadth of membership, and to better protect our not-for-profit status.

Ideally we would like to put the new Constitution to members for acceptance at the AGM in November 2009. A copy of the draft and an explanatory document are both available at:

www.absa.net.au/Files/Public/Constitution09/constitution_draft.doc

www.absa.net.au/Files/Public/Constitution09/constitution_info.doc

HSAS update

At the end of August ABSA has certified over 860 assessors. Welcome to ABSA all of you. We are working hard to support you through these early days of the Green Loans program.

80% of accredited assessors have contracts with the Federal Government to conduct Green Loans assessments and about 10,000 assessments have been booked.

As with any new program, especially one this size, there have been teething problems but the majority of assessors are getting on with the job. There is still a lot of confusion over the different roles of the Federal Government, who run Green Loans and ABSA as the assessor accrediting organisation which we are all trying to manage.

Stephen Gallagher, HSAS Manager and Andy Logan, Support Officer

HERS Developments

New staff member. ABSA would like to welcome our newest Technical Support Officer, Catherine MacBeath to the ABSA HERS team. She is very skilled and highly motivated, and will assist Rebecca and Andrew improve support services to Assessors:

Protocols and software. Representatives from ABSA have met with the national NATHERS administrator to discuss both the HERS protocols, the Assessor Accrediting Organisation Protocol, and Software accreditation Protocol.

There will also be a discussion on upgrades or improvements to AccuRate. The object is not to rewrite the protocols but ensure that they are still relevant and reflect current and foreseeable future regulatory regimes.

Membership, Accreditation and Certification Fees. Restructuring the HERS Accreditation fee model will be occurring in the upcoming months. This will result in a base fee increase and an increase in the fee charged per certificate. The increases are essential and will be directed towards further development of IT and the database that supports the HERS accreditation scheme.

National Accreditation Upgrade Exam for existing assessors. HERS Assessors that currently have state based Accreditation can now upgrade to the National Standard. The exam is online and multiple choice for existing HERS Assessors who have not been examined to allow them to perform assessments in all states in Australia. The exam is now available to HERS Assessors that are currently accredited for the introductory price of \$66 Until 1/12/09.

Further details available here: <http://www.absa.net.au/Training/index.php?q=node/123>

National Accreditation Exam for new assessors. The National Accreditation Exam is for persons who wish to become a HERS accredited assessor and have successfully completed the [Short Course in Building Thermal Performance Assessment \(Residential\)](#). Those who practice in NSW or WA are required by their state regulatory body to complete the examination. The exam will allow people to conduct assessments in states other than their own.

Further details are available here: <http://www.absa.net.au/Training/index.php?q=node/123>

BCA 2010

ABSA welcomes the proposed move to 6 star in BCA 2010 and the increased stringency for Dts. ABSA believes there are plenty of trained HERS assessors and the capacity to train more, but to maintain quality assessments we would like to see more assessors operate under the quality assurance system like ABSA HERS assessors. ABSA has made a submission to the ABCB and will respond to the Regulatory Impact Statement when it is released.

Board members Wayne Floyd and Michael Plunkett, and staff members Rebecca Douglass and Tony Isaacs, will present an afternoon on energy efficiency at the BCA conference on the Gold Coast in late September.

ABSA in New Zealand

ABSA has been supporting New Zealand thermal performance assessors since 2008. More recently there was change in government policy that will see program support scaled back from 1 October this year. Management of the program will then be carried out from Australia with ABSA continuing to manage the assessor registration database and certificate manager, provide QA and technical support using an online forum and email, allow with continuous education and communication with members through professional development and the NZ website.

There is a new sustainability tool on the horizon for NZ and we are working towards HERS providing the energy component of that tool.

HERS Software Group

ABSA recently convened a meeting to bring together the developers of AccuRate, FirstRate and BERS Pro for the first time, to discuss matters of common interest including new developments in software and tools, research findings, research needs and most importantly, the implications of regulations and version control. Attendees represented CSIRO, ABCB, DEWHA, BPIC, WERS, SolarLogic, Sustainability Victoria and ABSA.

ABSA database upgrade

For years ABSA has run accreditation, membership and training on separate databases. Over the next few months we will be phasing in a new integrated membership database called IMIS.

We ask you all to be patient during the changover period. If you become aware of any anomalies in your records please let us know as soon as possible so we can fix the issue.

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