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Queensland Productivity Commission
Opportunities to Improve Construction Industry Productivity
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Submission to the Queensland Productivity Commission

Inquiry into Opportunities to Improve Productivity of the Construction Sector

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Introduction

I welcome the opportunity to contribute to the Queensland Productivity Commission's inquiry into construction sector productivity. Working in this industry, engaged daily in energy efficiency assessments, I work closely with architects, builders, certifiers and households to support compliance with building standards.

My submission addresses one of the Commission's central concerns: how regulatory settings influence productivity in the construction sector. I provide evidence from practice showing that energy efficiency assessments do not hold back the construction process, and in fact can support long-term productivity, affordability, and resilience.

1. Energy Assessments Support, Not Hinder, Productivity

At a local energy assessment business, I complete multiple energy assessments every day across a wide range of residential and commercial projects. My experience demonstrates that energy assessments integrate seamlessly with the broader certification process. Far from being a source of delay, they are conducted quickly and efficiently, with results delivered in a timeframe that keeps projects on schedule.

This high throughput shows that the presence of energy efficiency requirements is not a bottleneck to productivity. Instead, it ensures projects move forward with confidence that compliance is achieved from the outset. By embedding this step early and efficiently, the overall approval and delivery pipeline operates more smoothly, supporting timely completion of homes and infrastructure.

Furthermore, the argument that energy efficiency requirements slow down the building process is not valid. In practice, we are specifying the performance level — for example,

R2.0 insulation versus R1.0 insulation — rather than requiring something entirely new. Either option requires installation; it is simply the type and performance that differs.

2. Strong Energy Efficiency Standards Enhance Long-Term Productivity

Maintaining strong energy efficiency standards is critical not only for sustainability but for productivity itself. Energy-efficient homes are more comfortable to live in and, most importantly, keep the everyday energy needs of Queensland households within limits that our network can reliably supply — keeping the lights on, providing hot water, and running cooling systems in our increasingly warm climate.

Weakening standards in the short term only shifts the burden to tomorrow. Inefficient homes increase household energy bills, reduce comfort, and impose additional costs on households and governments when costly retrofits or upgrades inevitably become necessary. At the same time, they place unnecessary stress on Queensland's energy networks, raising the likelihood of blackouts and higher infrastructure costs.

By contrast, robust standards today deliver long-term cost savings, reduce energy demand growth, and ensure that Queensland's housing stock supports the state's goals of improved affordability and productivity.

3. Today's Policy Pathways Lock In Tomorrow's Outcomes

Recent research (e.g. Impact of Policy Pathways on Building Futures, 2024) highlights that policy choices made today have lasting effects that cannot easily be reversed. Constructing energy-inefficient dwellings locks in a trajectory of challenges for decades to come. Once built, inefficient homes cannot be easily upgraded to meet higher standards, leaving households and the wider economy exposed to avoidable costs.

The consequences of weak standards are wide-ranging:
- Reduced household comfort and quality of life.
- Greater pressure on the electricity grid, increasing the risk of supply interruptions.
- Difficulty meeting Queensland's emissions reduction targets, with flow-on impacts for national commitments.
- Lower overall sector productivity, as future work is consumed by retrofits rather than efficient new construction.

In contrast, maintaining strong energy efficiency pathways now sets Queensland on a trajectory of resilience, affordability, and productivity growth.

Conclusion and Recommendations

My daily experiences demonstrate that energy assessments are efficient, practical, and fully compatible with timely project delivery. They do not hold up the certification process and do not reduce productivity. On the contrary, they provide certainty and support smoother approvals.

Looking forward, strong energy efficiency standards are not a barrier to productivity but a foundation for it. They ensure that homes are livable, affordable to run, and resilient to future energy and climate challenges. Policy pathways chosen today will determine whether Queensland's housing sector faces escalating problems tomorrow, or whether it delivers long-term benefits for households and the economy.

Recommendations:

1. Maintain and strengthen Queensland's energy efficiency standards.

2. Recognise that energy assessments are already streamlined and do not impede project timelines.

3. Avoid lowering standards, as this would increase future costs, lock in inefficiencies, and reduce long-term productivity.

4. Position energy efficiency as a central enabler of productivity, affordability, and resilience in Queensland's construction sector.

Yours sincerely,

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Engineer & Energy Efficiency Consultant