

The NCPR: Helping building designers reduce risk

by Emma Green, NATSPEC Communications

With a performance-based National Construction Code, it is important that building designers stipulate the Australian Standards to which their chosen products and materials must conform. Otherwise, a builder may claim that they thought the design was a performance solution and that the designer was taking responsibility. It is therefore important for a building designer to check that their specified products and materials have the appropriate testing certification or evidence of conformity.

The National Construction Product Register (NCPR) is a new system made for this exact purpose. It is a freely available, public online database of building products with verified evidence of conformity. Developed by NATSPEC for building designers and other building professionals, the NCPR helps mitigate the risks associated with non-conforming building products.



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Non-conforming building products like combustible aluminium composite cladding, which infamously contributed to the Lacrosse Building fire and London's Grenfell Tower fire, have recently caused major problems in the building and construction sector. Combustible cladding, faulty electrical cables, substandard glass sheets and other non-conforming products continue to create concern. The NCPR reduces risks to building designers' organisations.

For a product to be listed on the register, it must have verified evidence of conformity. NATSPEC reviews all applications and checks that each product's evidence of conformity is current and valid. Building products' certifications may come from various conformity assessment bodies or be under different accreditation systems. The NCPR groups together all this important information about conformance in one easily accessible place. Building designers can be sure that they are using the appropriate products with verified evidence of conformity when they check the products on the NCPR.

NATSPEC developed the NCPR in response to recent incidents of inappropriately used building products across the country. Victorian building designers can be held accountable for problems caused by non-conforming building products. The NCPR makes it simple for designers to protect their projects and businesses from the risks associated with non-conformance.

Government and industry bodies support NATSPEC as the administrator of the NCPR as it is not involved in any advocacy or policy development. NATSPEC is a not-for-profit, Government- and industry-owned organisation and maintains the National Building Specification for Australia. It has been a trusted part of the building and construction industry for over 40 years.

As it is not a conformity assessment body (CAB), NATSPEC relies on conformity assessments performed by other organisations. Each CAB has been certified by an accreditation body. The main accreditation bodies in Australia are the Joint Accreditation System of Australia and New Zealand (JAS-ANZ) and the National Association of Testing Authorities, Australia (NATA). As Australia has mutual recognition and multilateral recognition agreements with several other countries, NATSPEC also accepts CABs accredited by overseas organisations.

Building designers can encourage their preferred product manufacturers to make an application to the NCPR so that each product's evidence of conformity can be verified and it can be listed in the database. The NCPR is currently in its infancy, with about 1000 product listings. The absence of a product from the register does not necessarily indicate that it is non-conforming or has invalid certification. Already a comprehensive database, the NCPR will only continue to grow, improving Australian construction quality as it does so.

For more information, and to check the conformity and validity of products with ease, visit: www.ncpr.com.au.