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Q&A Carlos Flores, M.AIRAH

Ecolibrium holds forth with the NABERS national program manager.

Ecolibrium: Could you tell us what's going on with the NABERS governance review and what AIRAH has to do with this.

Carlos Flores: Key changes to the NABERS governance structure under consultation include a new leadership group and a refreshed Industry Forum.

The new leadership group will be comprised of individuals from industry and government charged with decision-making authority on future directions for the program.

A refreshed Industry Forum will allow new industry bodies and markets relevant to NABERS to provide input on NABERS tools and program changes to offer new perspectives.

This is an exciting time in the life of our program. The industry feedback will help us determine to what extent adjustments to the program's existing governance are needed for NABERS to continue being an agent for sustainable change for years to come.

As chair of the Stakeholder Advisory Committee (SAC), Phil Wilkinson, F.AIRAH, played a key role engaging other stakeholders in the governance review process by leading quarterly discussions with the SAC about the progress and status of the review.

Eco: What's happening with the NABERS Hospital tool?

CF: This year NABERS will be working on releasing new NABERS Energy and Water tools for public hospitals. In 2016 we worked with state and territory health department representatives to develop Energy and Water tools for public hospitals.

Much of the credit should go to the sustainability managers of public health portfolios in all states and territories, who championed this tool from its very inception and helped us throughout the development.

We believe NABERS ratings will be a crucial step to unlock major opportunities in what is one of the biggest



Carlos Flores, M.AIRAH

energy and water users in Australia. The benchmarks are now complete, and we are expecting to see the first ratings coming through in March/April 2017.

Eco: Have there been any developments with the NABERS Apartment tool?

CF: We are in the early stages of developing NABERS Energy and Water tools for apartment buildings. This is the first time we're providing the residential sector with an Accredited Assessment. Once again, much of the credit goes to several major local government councils and other stakeholders across Australia, who repeatedly asked us to partner with them to tackle this sector.

We're hoping to develop and release a pilot version of NABERS for apartment buildings by the end of the year, followed by a full launch in 2018.

Eco: Anything else?

CF: Looking at what's planned for 2017, it's going to be the biggest year for the program yet.

We'll be creating new tools to rate more types of buildings; encouraging a holistic

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approach to sustainability; collaborating to achieve greater environmental benefits across the multiple sectors we work with; and improving our products and processes.

It goes without saying that a major date for our calendars this year will be July 1, when the threshold for the CBD program is lowered to 1000 sq m. This will bring us into contact with a whole new cohort of building owners who will start their NABERS journey.

It will be critical that we work with Assessors to help these new entrants to the program understand the value of a high rating, where efficiency gains can be made most effectively in their building, and how they can access information or support to upgrade their buildings.

This will be an exciting challenge filled with opportunity, and we need those of us in government and industry to work together to make the most of it.

Eco: Any highlights or achievements you can point to?

CF: 6 Star Street: Collins St Melbourne. Collins St Melbourne is fast becoming Australia's most sustainable street, with major buildings at 171 and 747, which is the latest to achieve a 6 Star NABERS Energy rating without GreenPower. ■

Would you like to know more?

To make a submission to the NABERS governance review, email nabers@environment.nsw.gov.au by Friday, March 10.