

**DATE OF INTERVIEW:** 17/8/16

**Subject** Bowden

**Interview Location** Adelaide, Australia

### **Interviewee**



Paul Davey (PD)  
GBCA Green Star Professional

### **Interviewer**

Dr Josh Byrne (JB)  
Research Fellow, Curtin University and the CRC for Low Carbon Living

## **Transcript**

**JB:** Can you describe your roll on the project?

**PD:** Yes we 've got two rolls on the project – one is, ah, helping Government translate their vision into something that can be understood by the developers, so how to build green how to introduce sustainability into their designs. And our second role is to really then working with the developers and the architects to deliver solutions that are cost effective, replicable and deliver on the outcomes that are demanded. So they have a Green Star rating , energy efficiency water efficiency, great indoor environment quality for people moving into Bowden. So, two aspects to our role.

**JB:** Can you give us a bit of an overview of what the Green Star Rating is all about?

**PD:** Yeah, the Green Star Rating system it's a holistic rating tool, it was set up by the Green Council of Australia over 10 years ago now, it can be applied to any building type, , it demands energy efficiency water efficiency but both of those deliverables balanced with good environmental quality, good access to transport sustainable transport options. It deals with how the buildings are constructed, the material pallet that is used and then the processes around construction. So, the kind of team members that are employed, the site construction methodologies, diverted construction waste from landfill, using recycled materials. So, very holistic tool, so it deals with the design and construction elements so it covers, you know, the whole construction process and it requires use of the tools to maintain good records and to deliver evidence they what they were sort of promising to build. So, it's a very robust tool its third party certified by the Green Building Council, so you can't just say one thing and do another. So, there is no space for green washing there.

**JB:** Tell us how the Green Star Tool has been applied here at Bowden, both the building and precinct scale?

**PD:** Yes, so the green star has always been applied at Bowden by, having it mandated in the development guideline, so every developer that buys land at Bowden has to obtain a minimum 5-Star Green Star design certified rating and then as built certified rating for their project.

So 5 stars signifies Australian excellence in the tool framework and a minimum of 5 stars is required, so there are no mandated approaches how you achieve that rating that's up to the developer and the architect. And is dependant on where the building is going to be and the use of the building and the sort of flavour that the architect might want to bring to that building but the end result has to be a minimum of 5 stars.

**JB:** And how about at the precinct level?

**PD:** At the precinct level, state government here have elected to have the whole development rated using the Green Star Communities Tool, so it's a tool that looks at broader aspects of development. So it does include the buildings, the fact that the buildings are getting a Green Star rating as a component also looks at social sustainability, the connectivity with the precinct itself and the broader community.

Some of the sort of public features that are introduced to make it a community – use of public building, use of public space, like the space that we are in at the moment. The notation of parklets, the notion of sort of community garden spaces, a way of connecting the people that are living in the buildings with the broader space. The community's ratings talks to all of those issues. And again State Government, you know, following their own mandate are committed to a 5 star communities rating, certainly they will target higher than they can, but 5 stars again is what they are aiming for .

**JB:** How important is it to use a recognised sustainability rating tool or framework in a project like this?

**PD:** I think it's essential in order to provide some kind of guarantee of the result and also to create a framework that's robust enough to ensure the results are measurable and they are real.

There are a lot of developments which take an approach which are designing to best practice or will follow you, know current best sustainable practices – you know are the results real? Do we really see a better than best practice or a leading result out of that? If you are not recording what you are doing, if you're not testing or measuring what you are doing?

You know if you are not checking on any of those processes then anything can happen, constructions a kind of a live environment, there are real people involved at every level. If you are not tracking the materials that you are using, if maybe you have designed a building a certain way at early planning stage, maybe that's not fully translated into the detail, the outcome won't be there.

A frame work like Green Star sets in place checks and balances. The evidence that you have to provide is assessed by the Green Building Council, there's a third party independent body, which is got no axe to grind with any particular developer or builder. So, they just say what they see and if you have achieved the credit criteria they award the points.

So, what it does, I think it allows Government to slightly, you know, to sort of rest a little bit easier than having mandated that they've got some assurance that it's going to be delivered. So, if they have made a commitment for a development to have a certain emissions profile or to be greener than business as usual, that they've got that process in place to make sure it happens.

I think it's also helpful for developers and builders because they know where they stand there is a set of criteria, it's written, there is a process in place for assessing it, the rules. Developers always say they don't want rules, but it can be helpful. If you've got a set of development guidelines that just say best practice, that's open to so much interpretation. A builder will quite often find the path of least resistance and of course develop something that's of good quality, but not necessarily sustainable.

So, what we have seen at Bowden is really, you know, the builders that have been successful here have really embraced the process, they have delivered on that tool, they have even looked at opportunities to expand and improve upon it and I think without that framework being there those opportunities would have been lost.

**JB:** In terms of design excellence and sustainability aspirations where does Bowden sit compared to other medium density infill projects around the country?

**PD:** Um I think it would be fair to say when the development was first initiated I think it was pretty ground breaking, I think it was right at the forefront of leadership in the area. At the time the decision was made to mandate green star ratings it certainly would have been in the top tier. One of the first developments of its scale to have mandated that. I think we have seen that over the years that the leadership position is kind of encouraged. Other state governments and other sorts of organisations to sort of consider the successes and follow suite.

So, I think as it stands at the moment I think it's just poised for the, kind of, next step forward in terms of leadership. We've got one development here that's achieved the 6 Star Green Star Rating at design and view stage, which is the first residential development in Australia to achieve a 6 star rating. There are others that have achieved design and an aspect build of 5 stars.

And, so that certainly sets an aspiration, I mean I would certainly like to see the mandate move forward to, as higher rating that is possible within the tool system. So I think it's set the scene really well, I think it's established a leadership position. I think one of the main challenges for Bowden now is to kinda maintain its leadership position as it moves forward.

**JB:** OK and do you see it as an important role of Government to be pushing the boundaries and setting those benchmarks?

**PD:** Absolutely there are definitely two trains of thought about how government can best provide leadership in this area, and I think one is sort of the encouragement model. So, it's more the carrot model, so there is some incentives and some encouragement for private industry to kind of move a state of, a kind of, local government area into a position of leadership.

There's the stick approach which is to legislate and to mandate and I think that's what Bowden's got, is actually a really good mix of the two approaches. There are certainly incentives here, I mean there's land available, government have invested public money into cleaning the site preparing the site, bringing core central services like recycled water available for developers to use so there's the incentive component.

And then the legislative component which is to insist on mandated Green Star ratings is a driver, so that you know if you want to develop here, then you've got to accept the standard that we require.

So, I think the two together have been a really really powerful mix. So, it's not just been all incentive, which can often falter because there is no driver, it's not all stick, which can be equally negative situation, it's a good balance of the two. So, I think that the state government should be, you know, recognised as getting this development right and we are hopeful that it does set the scene for future developments.