



**Australian  
Institute of  
Architects**

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31 March 2020

The Honourable Anastacia Palaszczuk MP  
Premier and Minister for Trade  
1 William Street  
BRISBANE QLD 4000

Dear Premier

### **COVID-19: Leveraging building industry expertise to ignite economic stimulus**

I represent Australian Institute of Architects' Queensland Chapter, and our 2,000+ members throughout Queensland. I firstly wish to commend you and your government on the leadership you have demonstrated in these extraordinary times. I offer the Institute's support in any way practicable.

As you know, the Queensland construction industry is a major driver of Queensland's economy. It is the State's second largest employer after the healthcare and social assistance industry. In the March quarter 2020, almost 115,000 people were employed in construction-related jobs. (*Queensland Government Statistician's Office, Employment by industry, March quarter 2020*).

Within this industry—at the heart of design innovation—are 2,500+ registered architects (and hundreds of students of architecture studying at four universities: Bond University, Griffith University, Queensland University of Technology and the University of Queensland).

Our current survey of these practitioners reveals that 50% are being significantly affected by COVID-19 from a business perspective. 46% are currently somewhat affected, but foresee considerable issues impacting on their practice in a matter of weeks. Only 3% of architects are experiencing no change to their business.

With these statistics in mind, and ahead of an extraordinary meeting of the Ministerial Construction Council tomorrow (chaired by the Honourable Mick de Brenni MP) I hereby table for your attention the following recommended actions.

We believe these actions will not only ensure the retention of skilled staff in the architectural profession and construction sector, but also stimulate the broader Queensland economy, across all regions and industries—from education, to hospitality, tourism to social services.

#### **Recommended Action 1: Bring forward capital works programs and employ architects**

- The Institute strongly urges the Queensland Government to bring forward capital works programs that will stimulate the economy. We also urge the government to implement methods of project procurement that will leverage the expertise of architects across all stages of the project.

### **Recommended Action 2: Engage out-of-work architects on broader government projects**

- Our architects have a broad range of skills that could be used in a number of ways, thus ensuring that our practitioners remain in work during this pandemic. For example, architects could be employed to assist with the backlog of assessment and documentation work in the heritage sector (through the Department of Environment and Heritage Protection).

### **Recommended Action 3: Support the Queensland Government's sustainability agenda**

- Architects are uniquely equipped to operationalise forward thinking and proactive initiatives to support the Queensland Government's sustainability agenda (as outlined in the *State Planning Policy*, July 2017 and the *Queensland Climate Adaptation Strategy - Built Environment and Infrastructure Sector*, 2017).
- Capacity-building initiatives that employ architects to survey existing buildings and infrastructure assets to determine what is needed to safeguard them from projected climate change hazards would help to future-proof Queensland communities and drive climate-resilient practice across the construction sector as a whole.

We also recommend the following:

- Construction sites should be classified as essential services, notwithstanding construction management plans that can support mandated social distancing. We note that generally, sites already have high levels of proscribed protective equipment and safe work practices generally incorporate some form of distancing.
- Design and construction work on social housing, remote social housing, supported accommodation for people with disabilities and those experiencing homelessness and domestic violence should be brought forward. We believe that work on education, health, tourism and transport infrastructure projects should be prioritised.
- Strengthening the 'Buy Queensland' procurement policy and process that support local suppliers and services, and further stimulate awareness of these policies and processes, particularly throughout government departments. Our world-class architects need to be championed by the Queensland Government, and not disadvantaged in any bidding procurement process.
- We believe that right now and in the near future, architectural design competitions should be suspended or carefully planned to ensure that architects are not disadvantaged by high expectations and insufficient design fees.

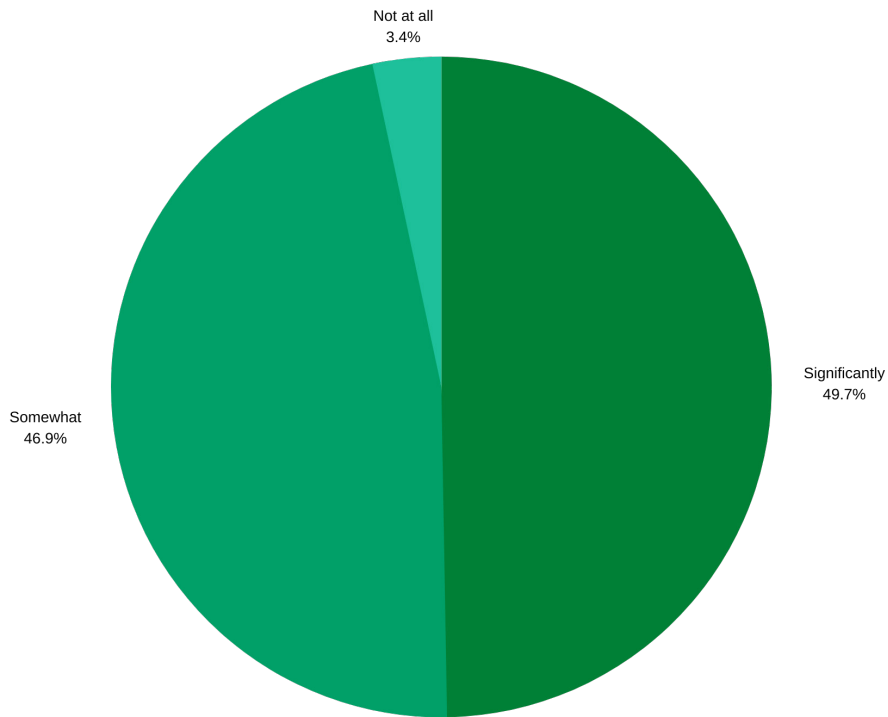
On the following pages is our snapshot of how our sector is faring during this critical time. We know that this reality is being experienced across every sector, statewide, nationally and internationally. Nevertheless it is very hard to read about the impact on our architects, many of who have been in practice for a considerable time, or are hopeful of a future career in the profession.

As always, the Institute is working with our colleagues across the built environment sector to expedite stimulus into the system and identify opportunities to retain and grow pipelines of work. While we remain in contact with Ministers de Brenni and Dick, their offices and departments, we also appreciate your awareness of our current difficulties.

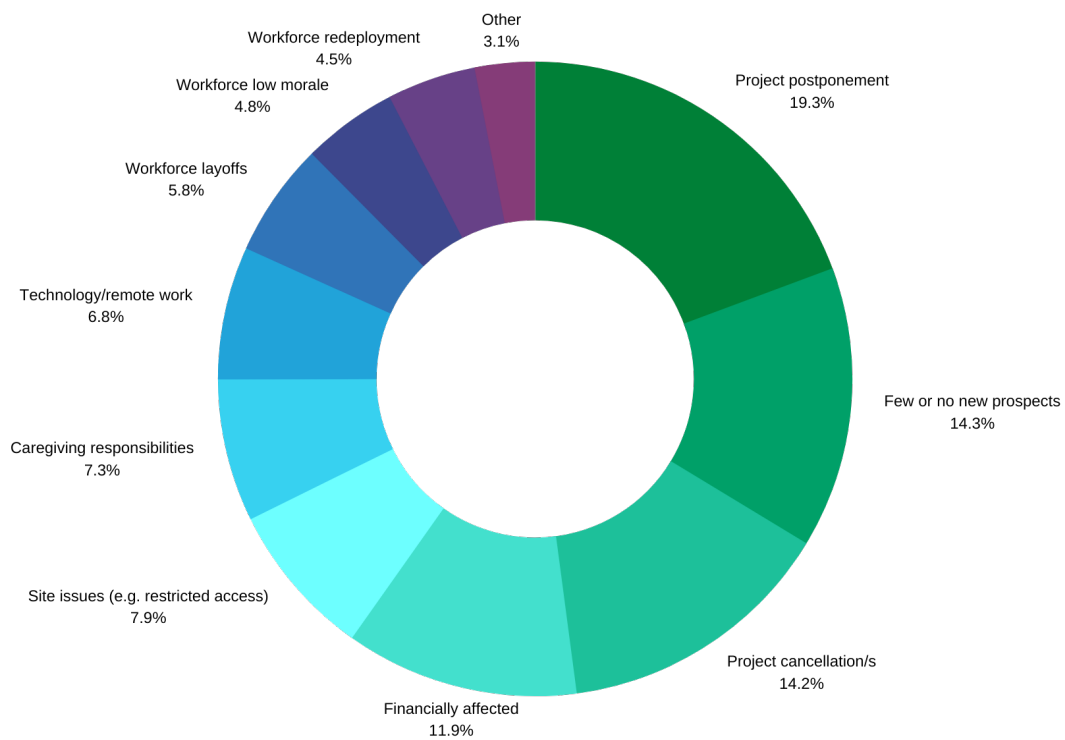


## COVID-19 MEMBER CHECK-IN 30 and 31 March 2020

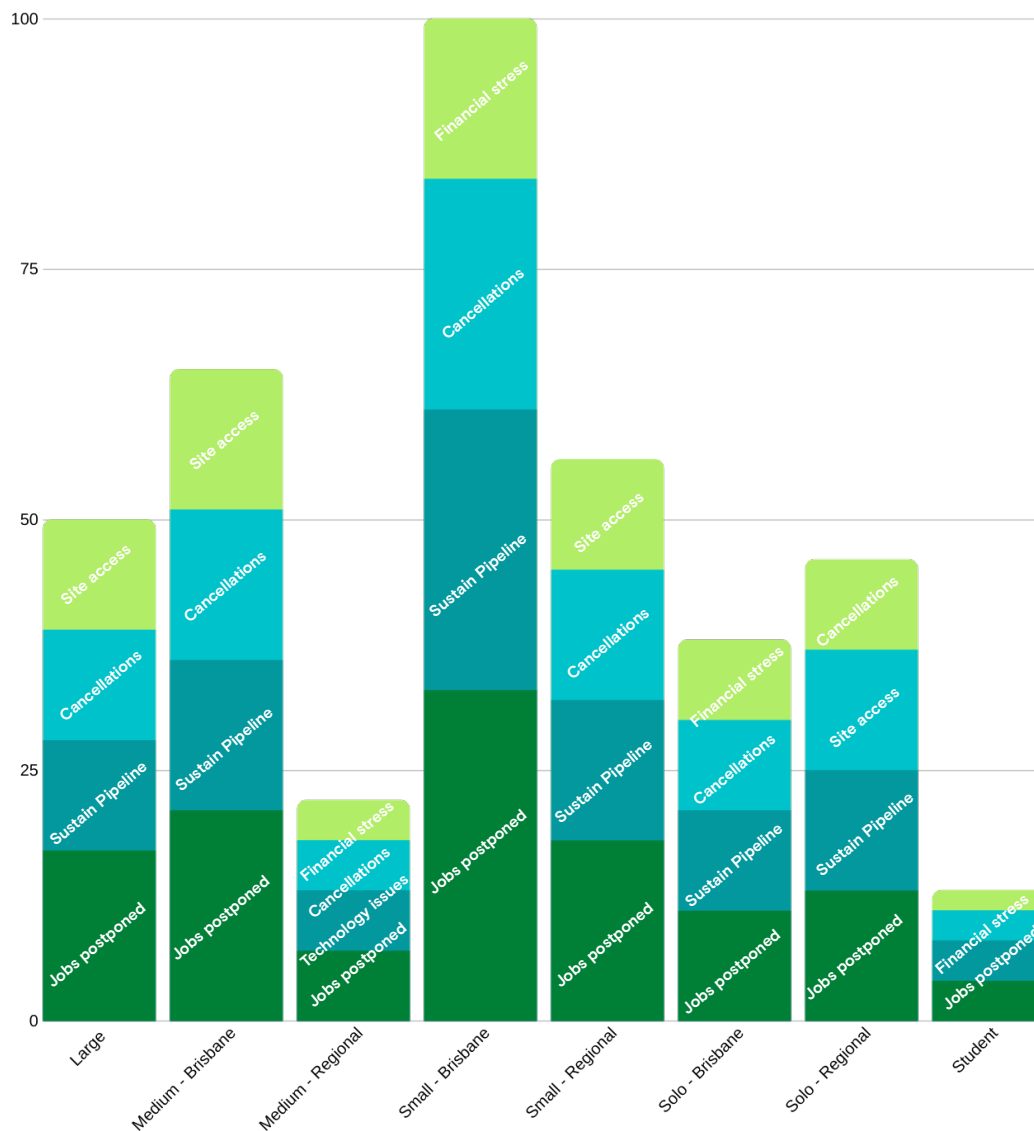
### Level of impact of C-19 on Queensland architectural practices



### Areas of practice that are being affected by C-19



## Major areas of concern and impact according to type of practice



Please do not hesitate to contact me at the email address below should you require more information or consultation on the above.

Yours sincerely

**Dr Michael Lavery FRAIA**  
President, Australian Institute of Architects Queensland Chapter

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