



A TIME FOR ACTION

2022 Federal Election Policy Statement

The Australian Institute of Architects (the Institute) is the peak body for the architectural profession in Australia. It is an independent, national member organisation with 13,000 members across Australia and overseas. The Institute's vision is that everyone benefits from good architecture and our purpose is to demonstrate the value of architecture and support the profession.

The Institute's 2022 Federal Election Policy Statement is a call to the next Australian Parliament to take action on issues that are critical for Australia's future. The decisions made in the next few years will impact on generations to come. The Institute looks forward to working closely with the next Australian Government and offers its advice and support to help achieve the best outcomes for Australia.

WHAT OUR MEMBERS SAY

Results from the Institute's member survey show the transition to net zero emissions and housing affordability are the two most critical issues facing the country. Our members feel that trust in government has gone backwards, and more integrity is urgently needed.

What are the absolutely critical issues for the Architecture profession?

- Transitioning to a net zero emissions future – rated as “Absolutely critical” by 72% of members.
- Housing affordability – rated as “Absolutely critical” by 62% of members.

Almost nine out of ten of members...

- support Australia adopting a stronger 2030 emissions reduction target and more than 90% of members want the Federal Government to take more action on climate change.
- agree that the federal government needs to do more to address Australia's housing crisis, including severe shortages of affordable, social, community and public housing.

For more than three-quarters of members trust in Government is at a critical juncture.

- 77% of members think that the Community's trust in the federal government has decreased.
- 79% of members endorse the need for an independent federal anti-corruption commission to oversee the expenditure of taxpayer funds.

What will decide the outcome of this election?

- Action on Climate Change (64%)
- Trust and integrity in government (54%)
- COVID-19 pandemic response (46%)

Six priorities for the next Australian Government

1. Address inaction on climate change
2. Fix the supply of affordable and social housing
3. Become a leader for national design initiatives
4. Build confidence in and for the Australian construction industry
5. Address gender diversity and inequity in Australia's construction industry
6. Introduce greater integrity into government decision making

PRIORITIES

1 →

ADDRESS INACTION ON CLIMATE CHANGE

The Institute calls for the next Australian Government to:

- Immediately implement a national climate and energy plan to support international efforts to maintain global temperatures at 1.5° C above pre-industrial levels.
- Turbo charge private-sector leadership and investment through expanded support for ARENA, the Clean Energy Finance Corp and Universities.
- Support the construction industry to become carbon neutral by 2030 through investment in, and expansion of, the Trajectory for Low Carbon Buildings and increased stringency in the National Construction Code.
- Rapidly develop and implement a nationwide resilience strategy based on leading scientific climate projections.

Why is the Institute calling for this?

Transitioning to a net zero emissions future is rated as “Absolutely critical” by 72% of members.

The 6th Intergovernmental Panel on Climate Change report warned of “an atlas of human suffering” from the impact that climate change is already having on people and the planet. Australia is experiencing this devastation first-hand, from the Blacksummer bushfires to the floods that have ravaged the east coast. One-in-a-hundred-year events occurring are every five or ten years, which requires a major rethink in our approach to climate action and mitigation strategies.

The 2020 Global Status Report for Buildings and Construction¹ shows that 38% of total global energy-related CO₂ emissions are from building operations and construction of buildings. This provides an immediate opportunity for Australia to move down the path to achieve a zero carbon economy.

We need to accelerate our efforts to decarbonise and prepare for a future categorised by a harsher, more extreme environment with more frequent disasters. This requires forward planning to improve disaster response and, more importantly, prevention.

It needs courageous national leadership to confront head-on the large-scale changes we need to make to ensure our built environment is properly designed to keep people safe in years to come.

2 →

FIX THE SUPPLY OF AFFORDABLE AND SOCIAL HOUSING

The Institute calls for the next Australian Government to:

Establish a bi-partisan 30-year National Housing Strategy that will:

- Appoint a Minister for Housing to recognise this as an ongoing core government priority.
- Recognise ‘adequate housing’ as a basic human right² and establish a legislative framework to support this recognition.
- Centralise and publish data on all housing supply and consequently, set minimum targets for supply for social and affordable housing, including the eradication of waitlists.
- Establish a national minimum standard for the implementation of inclusionary zoning in collaboration with State governments and provide incentives for State governments to implement that standard.
- Set appropriate standards to elevate housing quality, particularly in remote and regional areas, ensuring housing is fit for purpose, accessible and responsive to community and resident needs. This includes long-term maintenance programs.
- Significantly increase funding for co-designed new social housing residences for First Nations peoples to address the chronic underfunding and undersupply of housing for Australia’s indigenous peoples.
- Ensure that due diligence is undertaken to ensure the protection of cultural materials and sacred sites when opening up greenfield sites for development.
- Address the supply of social housing as a long-term commitment rather than short term or one-off initiatives.

Why is the Institute calling for this?

Housing Affordability has been rated as an absolutely critical issue by our members.

Rates of housing stress and unaffordability in Australia today are well-known and documented. Numerous inquiries have identified the key issues. Problems are not just about the numbers of dwellings but dwellings that are overcrowded, costly to run due to low energy efficiency, unresponsive to the needs of people with various disabilities, and not co-designed with residents or communities to create positive and inclusive communities.

It is estimated that one in five First Nations households living in dwellings that do not meet an acceptable standard, and one in 28 are homeless³.

The Institute strongly believes it is only when a bi-partisan commitment is made, that real progress on critical problems can begin.

The next Australian government must provide leadership in this important area by working constructively across all parties to implement a National Housing Strategy. This will elevate housing affordability to the level of priority required to effectively address the inequity experienced by Australians every day as a consequence of the current and ongoing housing crisis.

3 →

BECOME A LEADER FOR NATIONAL DESIGN INITIATIVES

The Institute calls for the next Australian Government to:

- Fund \$14 million over the next four years to establish an Australian Government Architect's office to:
 - advise the Australian Government and statutory agencies on best ways to achieve great designs and outcomes from government owned or government funded buildings
 - provide leadership and cultural advice to government on connecting with Country to inform the planning design and delivery of built environment projects for all government owned or funded projects.

Why is the Institute calling for this?

Australian and international research provides evidence that good design and architecture leads to improved livability. Almost all Australians (97 per cent) believe that cities and towns are better to live in when public buildings and public spaces are well designed⁴.

Governments are a central influence in delivering on community expectations of how the built environment will support Australian society and economy. In part, this is because governments across Australia are a large procurer of buildings accounting for one third of non-residential buildings⁵. In turn, well-designed, liveable places become centres of social and economic activity creating sustainable, long-term returns on taxpayer funded investments.

Most Australian states and territories maintain the position of a Government Architect to provide leadership and independent strategic advice to government in relation to architecture and urban design.

Including a role for an advisor on connecting with Country at a national level will support better work practices, relationship building and delivery of better built environment outcomes that are informed and guided by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people's knowledge.

4 →

BUILD CONFIDENCE IN AND FOR THE AUSTRALIAN DESIGN AND CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

The Institute calls for the next Australian Government to:

- Deliver a major national construction supply chain strategy to increase Australia's manufacturing capability for high quality sustainable building materials, components and fittings. It must support programs that will:
 - decarbonise materials such as concrete, steel and aluminium
 - develop and manufacture sustainable products in Australia that enable the construction of durable and high energy performance buildings when combined with effective design solutions
 - position Australia to reduce reliance on overseas sourced materials
 - establish supply chain controls on any imported products or manufacturing inputs through national and state harmonised supply chain legislation, including requirements for testing and compulsory product certification and controls on substitution
 - implement measures to address global problems of modern slavery, child labour, displacement of communities and perpetuation of structural drivers of poverty and inequality.

- Elevate Building Ministers’ meetings of the National Cabinet to regular, ongoing meetings in order to:
 - track progress on the implementation of the recommendations of Building Confidence Report
 - advise on the recommended national construction supply chain strategy
 - review construction sector contract terms, and insurances which are creating risk exposure that will drive practitioners out of the sector.

Why is the Institute calling for this?

The National Building Product Assurance Framework⁶ represents a nationally agreed response to the Building Confidence Report’s recommendation 21 on building product safety. However, the Framework acknowledges that manufacturers and suppliers of building products are largely outside any legislative controls.

Beyond the immediate issues of structural integrity and fire safety, there is also a need to provide much higher guarantees about product quality when carbon emissions, environmental, social and economic components of responsible sourcing are considered. Moreover, performance solutions rely upon the right materials being brought together through adequate design and correct working, installation and finishing. This can only be achieved when all practitioners are competent.

Design and building practitioners are also being continually pressured to deliver cheaper buildings at a faster pace, while carrying disproportionate risk through unreasonable contract terms. Under these conditions, insurance premiums are climbing and there are increasing exclusions to cover. The viability of many businesses in Australia’s building consultancy and construction industry is at risk.

5 → ADDRESS GENDER DIVERSITY AND INEQUALITY IN AUSTRALIA’S CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY

The Institute calls for the next Australian Government to:

- Fully fund and implement all recommendations of the Jenkins Respect@Work: Sexual Harassment National Inquiry Report 2020
- Re-introduce gender responsive budgeting
- Increase efforts to close the gender pay gap
- Pay superannuation on government paid parental leave
- Introduce a Building and Design Equality Policy with clear reportable targets and strategies on the attraction, recruitment and retainment of women in the sector.

Why is the Institute calling for this?

The construction (and associated design) sector is traditionally male dominated.

“The construction industry has the second-worst gender pay gap in the country as the gap across all sectors widens. Women on average earn \$36,361 less, 26.1 per cent, per annum than their male counterparts in the construction industry, which was just behind the financial and insurance sector.”⁷

Research⁸ has highlighted a disproportionate attrition rate of women within the architectural and affiliated professions. There is a need for guidelines and policies that lead to rights and benefits to enable equal opportunities within their profession. Introduction of a nation-wide Building and Design Equality Policy addressing the identified obstacles of inflexibility in workplace, lack of support and cultural/systemic impediments is vital toward leading the way toward an inclusive industry.

6 → INTRODUCE GREATER INTEGRITY IN GOVERNMENT DECISION MAKING

The Institute calls for the next Australian Government to:

- Establish a federal anti-corruption watchdog in the first year of the 47th Parliament.
- Restore a transparent merits-based assessment process for all government grants - without ministerial interference.
- Rebuild capacity in the public service and ensure it fulfils its role as an apolitical body.

Why is the Institute calling for this?

More than three-quarters of members see trust in Government being at a critical juncture. 77% of members think that the Community's trust in the federal government has decreased and 79% of members endorse the need for an independent federal anti-corruption commission to oversee the expenditure of taxpayer funds.

Regardless of political parties, Australian taxpayers and voters need to be assured and informed of fully transparent and proper processes for funding decisions and anyone overstepping the bounds on decision making needs to be held to account.

1. UN Environment Program and Global Alliance for Building and Construction see: <https://globalabc.org/news/launched-2020-global-status-report-buildings-and-construction>

2. UN Habitat III Issues Papers, No.20 – Housing, UN 2015

3. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/people/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-peoples/national-aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-health-survey/latest-release>

4. The Benefit of Design, prepared for Architects Accreditation Council of Australia, Galaxy Research, June 2015

5. A total of \$55.2 billion of non-residential building projects were granted building approvals across Australia in the 12 months to November 2021 with public sector works representing 34% of this total. Building Approvals, Australia November 2021. Sourced from: <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/industry/building-and-construction/building-approvals-australia/latest-release>

6. ABCB 2021. Building product safety National Building Product Assurance Framework – BCR recommendation 21. See: <https://www.abcb.gov.au/sites/default/files/resources/2021/BCR-rec21-Building-product-safety.pdf>

7. <https://www.theurbandevolver.com/articles/construction-industry-pay-gap-widens-to-26pc>

8. Stead N, Willis J, Kaji-O'Grady S, Whitehouse G, Savage S, Clark J, Burns K, Roan A (2011-2014) "Equity and Diversity in the Australian Architecture Profession: Women, Work, and Leadership", Australian Research Council Linkage Project LP100200107. And subsequent <https://parlour.org.au/research/parlour-census-report/>