



21 September 2022

Dr Karin Mathison  
Chief Executive Officer  
Keystone Tasmania

By email to: [karin.mathison@keyston.com.au](mailto:karin.mathison@keyston.com.au) and [email@keystone.com.au](mailto:email@keystone.com.au)

## RE: KEYSTONE TASMANIA 2023-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN

Dear Karin,

On behalf of the Tasmanian Chapter of the Australian Institute of Architects (the Institute), we would like to thank you for the opportunity to provide feedback and input into the development of the Keystone Tasmania 2023-2026 Strategic Plan.

### About the Australian Institute of Architects

The Australian Institute of Architects (Institute) is the peak body for the architectural profession in Australia. It is an independent, national member organisation with over 13,000 members across Australia and overseas. The Institute exists to advance the interests of members, their professional standards and contemporary practice, and expand and advocate the value of architects and architecture to the sustainable growth of our communities, economy and culture. The Institute actively works to maintain and improve the quality of our built environment by promoting better, responsible and environmental design.<sup>1</sup>

### Australian architects

Architects are a key component of Australia's \$178 billion building construction sector<sup>2</sup> and there are around 13,000 architectural businesses in Australia with more than 43,000 employees. Approximately 25,000 people in the labour force hold architectural qualifications (bachelor's degree or higher) and architectural services in Australia in 2021 had a combined revenue of \$7 billion.<sup>3</sup>

Australian architects have a worldwide reputation for creative and innovative design leadership and Australia is known for producing contemporary and breakthrough architecture. We have a well-recognised, high quality and liveable built environment. To maintain this into the future and support our burgeoning population in both urban and regional centres, we must create buildings and public spaces that are environmentally, economically, and socially sustainable and culturally rich.

---

<sup>1</sup> To learn more about the Institute, log on to [www.architecture.com.au](http://www.architecture.com.au)

<sup>2</sup> Combined housing, multi-unit apartments and townhouses, commercial and industrial and institutional building construction as noted in [Construction in Australia](https://www.ibisworld.com/au/construction-sector/) sourced from: <https://www.ibisworld.com/au/construction-sector/>

<sup>3</sup> [Architectural Services in Australia - Market Research Report updated August 2<sup>nd</sup> 2021](https://www.ibisworld.com/au/industry/architectural-services/550/), sourced from: <https://www.ibisworld.com/au/industry/architectural-services/550/>

## **Professional development and the Australian Institute of Architects**

The Institute seeks to advance the professional development of the architectural profession. We represent the profession on numerous national and state industry and government bodies, advising on issues of interest to the architectural profession, other building professionals and the construction industry.

The Institute is an important contributor to the high professional practice standards established for architects through the National Standard of Competency for Architects governed by the Architects Accreditation Council of Australia as well as the model code of professional conduct which has been adapted and regulated into use by most states and territories' architects' boards.

There are established annual continuing professional development (CPD) requirements set by the architects' boards in most states and territories as a requirement for registration renewal. The Institute is an experienced provider and facilitator of CPD programs to the architecture profession. Nationally, the Institute has evolved a comprehensive CPD program that is accessible via online delivery mechanisms. A member benefit includes free access to our Acumen practice notes.

However, our CPD is self-funded and therefore needs to be individually purchased by members or non-members (some member discounts apply). For many members and practices, the out-of-pocket cost is difficult to sustain.

The Tasmanian Chapter of the Institute have several committees, consisting of members who contribute to the direction of the Chapter and provide technical guidance on matters relating to the profession of architecture. The Chapter is guided by an elected Chapter Council who meet once a month to discuss issues pertaining to the profession and the practice of architecture.

## **The importance of architects in Tasmania's building and construction economy**

Tasmania's building and construction economy and the Tasmanian built environment relies on a strong and innovative architecture profession. Architecture practice is much more than attractive and innovative concept designs for buildings. Design documentation itself progresses through many stages from concept designs to floor plans and elevations to construction details.

The process of designing and building are interdependent. Architects also administer building contracts, inspecting the progress of works as part of this process. They support the construction team with design decisions and construction design details as well as maintaining design documentation with regard to any variations throughout the entire cycle of a project.

Strategic investment in architectural practice is not just about achieving high quality designs but also seeing successful projects to their practical completion and even afterwards with post-occupancy reviews for defects and building performance.

## **Workforce development needs of architects in Tasmania**

There are currently 602 architects registered to practice Tasmania, though this currently includes interstate architects who hold registration in more than one state or territory.

The overall workforce development needs in Tasmania are for:

- regular CPD for registered architects and
- support to train unregistered graduates on their pathway to registration.

Currently in Tasmania, the building and construction industry trades are well supported with both state and federal funding initiatives for businesses to develop their workforces. Locally in Tasmania, we note that organisations including Master Builders Tasmania, the Housing Industry Association and Civil Contractors have received significant funding support over the past few years to make training more accessible to their members.

In contrast to building and construction trade professionals and businesses, architects and architecture practices in Tasmania currently have no access to government funding for CPD nor training for graduates. Tasmania's architecture profession is totally reliant upon self- or employer- funded CPD and training. In the absence of similar funding support to other organisations, the Tasmanian Chapter of the Institute is unable to deliver free or highly affordable CPD especially suited to Tasmanian industry conditions and regulatory settings.

This leaves the profession in a tenuous position over the long term. It presents a risk for Tasmania of not having ready access to a strong local architecture profession fully integrated into Tasmania's building and construction sector and regulatory environment and with the risk of becoming more reliant on interstate architects.

We recommend that Keystone takes a broader strategic approach to supporting the building and construction industry's workforce by including architects and other relevant consulting professions in Tasmania's building and construction sector as part of its 2023-26 strategic plan.

### **Training subsidy funding priorities**

The Institute recommends three training subsidy funding initiatives are adopted as part of Keystone's 2023-26 Strategic Plan to address the workforce development needs of architects in Tasmania. These are:

- Continuing professional development
- Employer training subsidy
- Practice of Architecture Learning Series

#### *Continuing Professional Development*

Architects have accountability measures in place via the Board of Architects of Tasmania and the Architects Act (1929)<sup>4</sup> and the licensing requirements outlined in the Building Act 2016. These also set out the requirements for minimum levels of CPD required to maintain registration as an architect in Tasmania. Specific competencies are set out in the National Standard of Competencies for Architects (NSCA)<sup>5</sup> and these must be continually addressed through CPD in order to maintain registration as an architect.

The Tasmanian Chapter of the Australian Institute of Architects Tasmanian Chapter seeks funding support to develop and deliver a comprehensive program that provides innovative and up to date CPD opportunities for architects in Tasmania.

---

<sup>4</sup> There are further provisions yet to be made operational in the Act consequent to the Architects Amendments Act 2020.

<sup>5</sup> See: <https://aaca.org.au/national-standard-of-competency-for-architects/2021nsca/>

The financial model for this funding may take the form of Keystone's current program used for the building and construction industry of subsidising the participant. Alternatively, it could be an annual block-funded investment paid to the Tasmania Chapter of our Institute for an agreed set of delivered outputs and measured outcomes. Block funding would be our preferred model.

The program would comprise a series of CPD events for architects, that could also be delivered to building designers and other built environment professionals, to develop their skills to provide a higher standard of service to all consumers of building and construction services. This would improve the volume and scope of CPD activities available to architects, building designers as well as engineers, building surveyors, and other building and construction industry professional in Tasmania.

The Tasmanian Chapter program would address all the units of competency for architects, as set out in the 2021 National Standard of Competency for Architects<sup>6</sup> under the four areas of *Practice Management and Professional Conduct; Project Initiation and Conceptual Design; Detailed Design and Construction Documentation; and Design Delivery and Construction Phase Services*, as well as ensuring these relate to local conditions in Tasmania.

An additional return on investment would be strengthening the Tasmanian Chapter's overall capacity to deliver CPD and increase the choice of providers available to Keystone for sourcing local building and construction CPD in Tasmania. This would specifically focus on CPD targeting architectural, design and consultancy services within Tasmania's building and construction sector.

#### *Employer training subsidy*

A university student must attain set national competencies established by the National Standard of Competency for Architects (NSCA) which are governed by the Architects Accreditation Council of Australia (AACA) in order to graduate with a Master of Architecture (MA) from an Australian University.

A graduate with a Master of Architecture must then gain and demonstrate additional competencies before they are able to become registered as an architect with any Australian state or territory Architects (Registration) Board. The process between graduating with an MA and attaining registration is called the Architectural Practice Examination<sup>7</sup> (APE) which is also governed by the AACA.

The APE includes a minimum of two years supervised practice experience (giving rise to 3,300 log-book recorded hours) across a range of architectural practice areas while working for an architect practice. The APE also includes oral and written exams conducted by a state architect board examiner.

Graduates are not independently able to practice upon first graduating with their MA. Their initial work in a practice as they gain the required competencies to become registered involves a significant time investment from experienced architects in the practice.

This model, which combines learning, on the job and formal education, is analogous to apprenticeship or traineeship programs in other areas of the construction industry, where formal learning and practice are both prerequisite for practitioner registration/licensing.

---

<sup>6</sup> See: <https://aaca.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2021-NSCA.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> <https://aaca.org.au/architectural-practice-examination/>

Anecdotally, these architecture graduates who are not yet eligible for registration have struggled to gain an opportunity to join the architecture profession as supervised 'graduate' employees across many practices in Tasmania. The starting level annual award wage for a graduate of the Master of Architecture degree is approximately \$57,000<sup>8</sup>. Practices have reported that they cannot recover the significant investment of time required before a graduate becomes productive and suffer a loss when employing a recent graduate.

An employer training subsidy that supports the award wage paid to a graduate would help ensure that our architecture graduates can gain a supervised entry level graduate position in a Tasmanian practice and attain the required supervised work experience to become registered under the support and guidance of experienced architects.

While women have overall low representation in the construction trades, they are found in much greater proportion in the architecture profession (although the number is still under 50% at graduation). Therefore, targeted subsidies to employ graduates also creates an opportunity to promote women's participation in the building and construction sector.

#### *Practice of Architecture Learning Series (PALS) – a pathway to registration*

For over 20 years the Institute's PALS program has been helping graduates prepare for the Architectural Practice Exam (APE) to become registered as an architect in Australia and help architects succeed in practice.

PALS has been developed by expert Institute members around the country, and includes 21 online modules, live case study sessions and access to Acumen practice notes. This comprehensive course covers the National Standards of Competency for Architects.

The financial cost of PALS is significant for graduates (of between \$561 and \$1346) on very minimal wages, and can be a cost pressure for some graduates in attaining registration as an architect combined with living costs and repayment of HECS-HELP loans.

The Institute recommends Keystone initiate a program of financial assistance. This could take the form of a financial contribution to the cost of the course and a payment to practices to allow them to provide study time within work hours.

Once again, thank you for seeking the Institute's input and feedback into the development of Keystone Tasmania's 2023-2026 Strategic Plan. Please don't hesitate to contact us if you wish to discuss this further.

Kind regards,



**Stuart Tanner**  
President, Tasmanian Chapter  
Australian Institute of Architects



**Jennifer Nichols**  
Executive Director, Tasmanian Chapter  
Australian Institute of Architects

---

<sup>8</sup> [https://aca.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/ACA\\_Architects\\_Award\\_Pay-Rates\\_4-July-2022-2.pdf](https://aca.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/07/ACA_Architects_Award_Pay-Rates_4-July-2022-2.pdf)