

# STRONGER INSIGHTS FOR STRONGER PRACTICES

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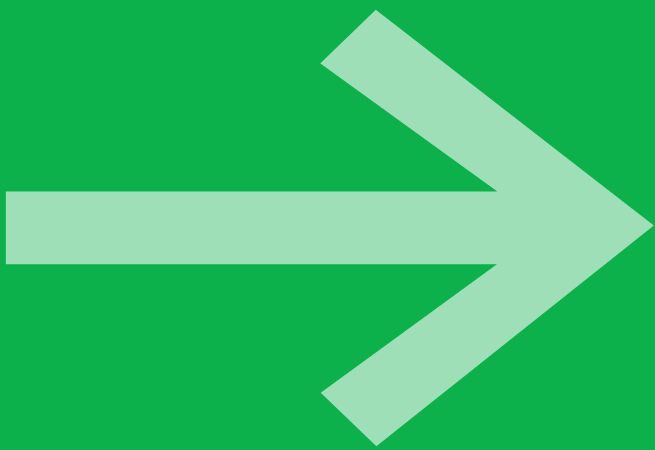
2021 CLIENT  
FEEDBACK REPORT



Australian  
Institute of  
Architects

Supported by

**LYSAGHT**



#### **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

Many thanks to our members, Partner Lysaght, and the team at RIBA who provided invaluable feedback throughout the development of this survey, and to those clients who participated by completing this survey.



As part of our forward focus on innovation and the human element of service delivery, Lysaght is proud to be partnering with the Australian Institute of Architects to deliver the inaugural 2021 'Client Feedback Report'.

This report has been designed to bring to light what clients value about the architectural profession, while also providing a necessary platform for insights that will lead to stronger service delivery and collaboration.

While we know every architectural practice values its clients and aims for collaborative and productive working relationships, the survey results deliver a level of practical insight that is rarely directly provided – and therefore is an invaluable opportunity for further education, training, and process improvement in the architect/client relationship.

For Lysaght, the Client Feedback Report is a meaningful way by which we can stay closely connected with the architectural profession, and support progressive approaches in design, process, and project delivery.

The value and importance of the information that is presented in the 2021 Client Feedback Report make us tremendously proud to be a part of this report, and of our ongoing association with the Australian Institute of Architects.

We trust that you will find this publication insightful and beneficial in mapping pathways towards a stronger built environment.

**Matt Lloyd**  
National Manager Sales  
Marketing & Innovation  
Lysaght



# 1\_ FORWARD



The Australian Institute of Architects is excited to provide you with our latest report – a new initiative inspired by the bravery of our friends in the United Kingdom, the Royal Institute of British Architects.

Stronger Insights for Stronger Practices - 2021 Client Feedback Report asked real clients about their experiences of working with architects on their projects.

Growth comes from the ability to foster a culture of continual improvement; however, practice is reporting hesitancy from clients in providing robust feedback within a one-on-one setting. With the Institute facilitating this body of work on behalf of the profession we are able to bypass this concern and provide a de-personalised mechanism for architectural practices to receive client feedback.

The framework and questions within the report could also be used as a guide for practices who would like to do a deeper dive on key areas with their own client database.

It is pleasing to see such positive feedback about the profession identified within this report. The report identifies opportunities for business development improvement, new service provision and for the first-time data which can be used by architectural practices to help ensure sustainable design becomes built form. As a society, profession and industry, climate change is the single largest issue we collectively face; with clients reporting it as the number one issue keeping them up at night, we hope this data will provide a pathway for greater collaboration amongst the client and architect in solving our collective challenge.

**Julia Cabbage**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Australian Institute of Architects



Pingelly Recreation and Cultural Centre Irealle Pedersen Hook Architects  
with Advanced Timber Concepts | Photographer Peter Bennetts

1. FOREWORD	4
2. INTRODUCTION	6
3. METHODOLOGY: INDUSTRY WIDE CONSULTATION	7
4. CRUNCHING THE NUMBERS - INSIGHTS BY NUMBERS	8
- RESPONDENTS	8
- SELECTION CRITERIA AND SERVICE EXPECTATIONS	10
- VALUE PROPOSITION AND PERFORMANCE	12
- PERSPECTIVES - CLIENT EDUCATION TO DESTIGMATISE MODULAR	15
- COLLABORATION WITH RIBA TO CREATE CLIENT FEEDBACK REPORT	17
5. KEY THEMES IN THE RESPONSES	18
- ENDURING VALUE IN GOOD DESIGN	18
- COMMUNICATION AND TRUST	19
- VALUE AND PRICING	20
- PLAYING TO STRENGTHS	21
- IT'S IN THE BRIEF	23
- ROOM FOR GROWTH	23
6. SUMMARY	25

## 2\_ INTRODUCTION

The Australian Institute of Architects and partner, Lysaght, is proud to share the findings of our 2021 research study which examines attitudes, satisfaction levels and opportunities for future growth in the client and architect relationship.

We acknowledge the Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) as a key source of information in the development of our survey, consulting with their team to leverage their 2016 “Working with Architects” client survey.

Our survey delivers insights for Australian practices – providing meaningful and timely information to support architectural practices in understanding the positive attitudes to the profession and identifying constructive pathways to greater client satisfaction and ultimately stronger outcomes and respect for the profession.

Throughout the survey and analysis process, our focus has been to delivery honest insights that will support greater education and understanding.



Photo by Leon on Unsplash

### 3\_ METHODOLOGY: INDUSTRY WIDE CONSULTATION

The goal of the research was to provide insights from clients that will empower architectural practices to engage the market with a stronger sense of confidence and to help strategic leaders make informed business decisions.

A rigorous process was undertaken to design the survey's structure and contents. To determine the feedback sought from clients a consultation process was undertaken involving multiple meetings with the generous team at RIBA, a survey was sent to all Institute members and consultation was undertaken with Institute subject matter experts, staff, and model clients.

Institute members and staff established the key target list of clients to approach for feedback. The survey focussed on seeking feedback from senior professionals across a range of sectors that had engaged the services of an architectural firm for at least one project across the last three years.

Across a three-week period, through direct conversations and survey responses, clients across the nation provided insights that have been drawn from their experiences engaging architectural services on a wide range of public and private projects.



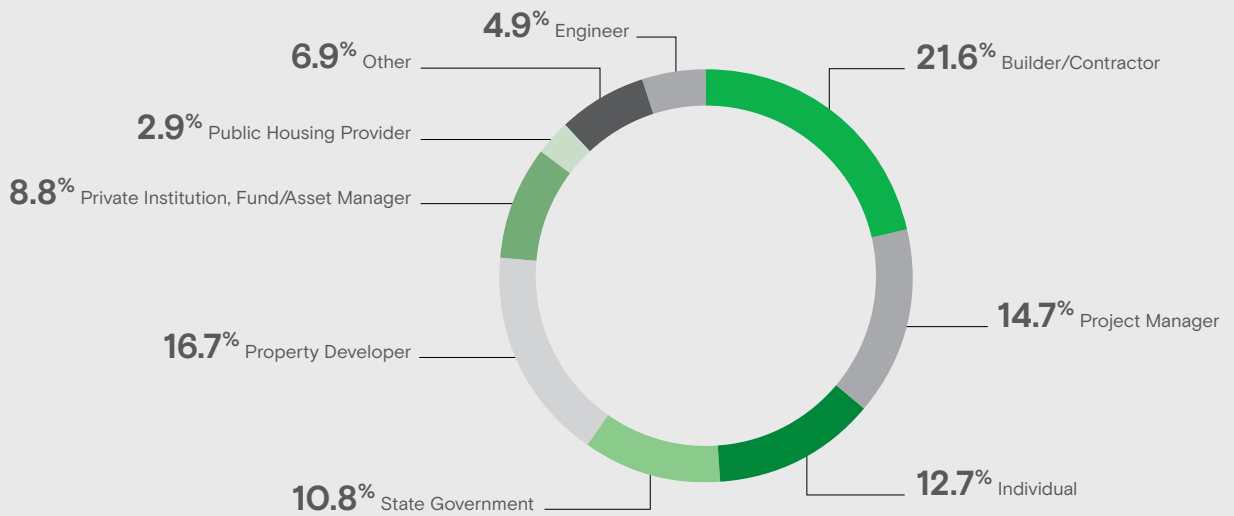
Photo by Redd on Unsplash

# 4\_ CRUNCHING THE NUMBERS

## RESPONDENTS

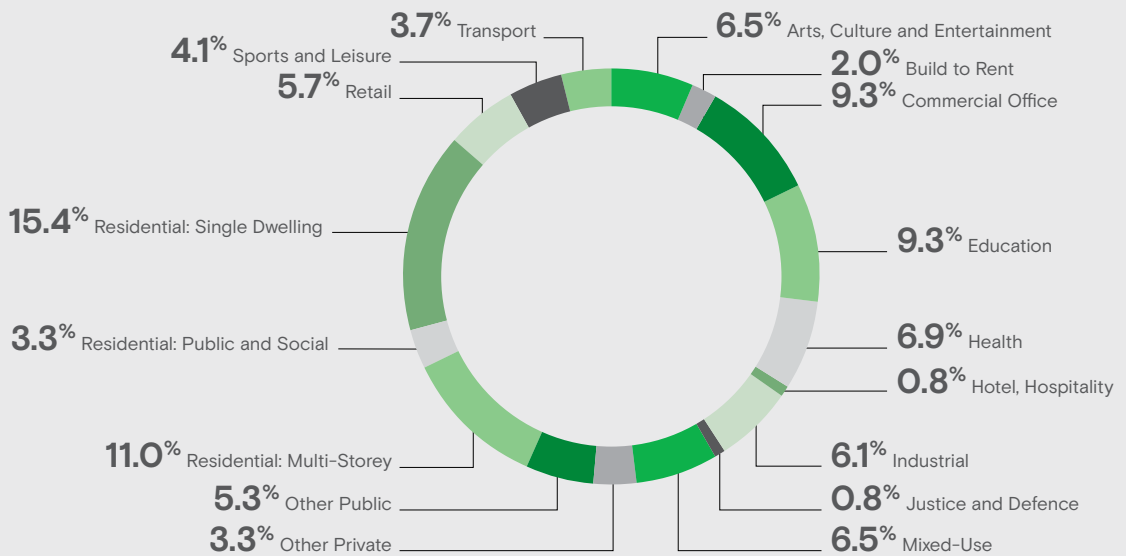
### CLIENT TYPE

Respondents were asked to self-identify with a role or client type which best contextualises their relationship procuring architectural services.



### SECTOR EXPERIENCE

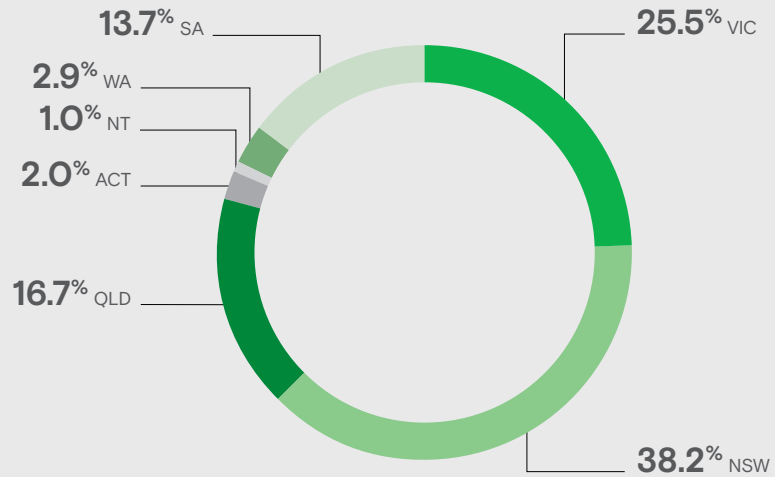
Respondents were asked to list all the sectors they have engaged an architect over the last three years. It is important to note, some clients have provided multiple and singular sectors.



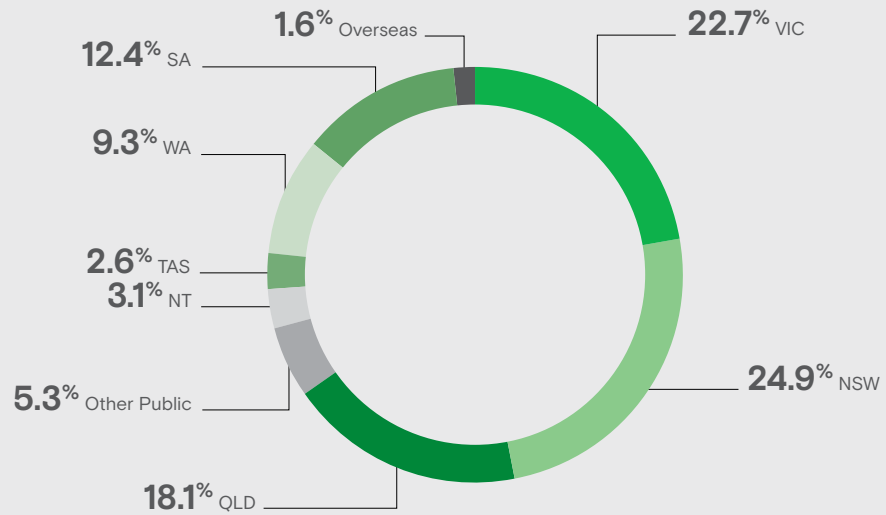


## RESPONDENT LOCATION

Respondents' residential location is not necessarily reflective of the primary location of the projects they work on.

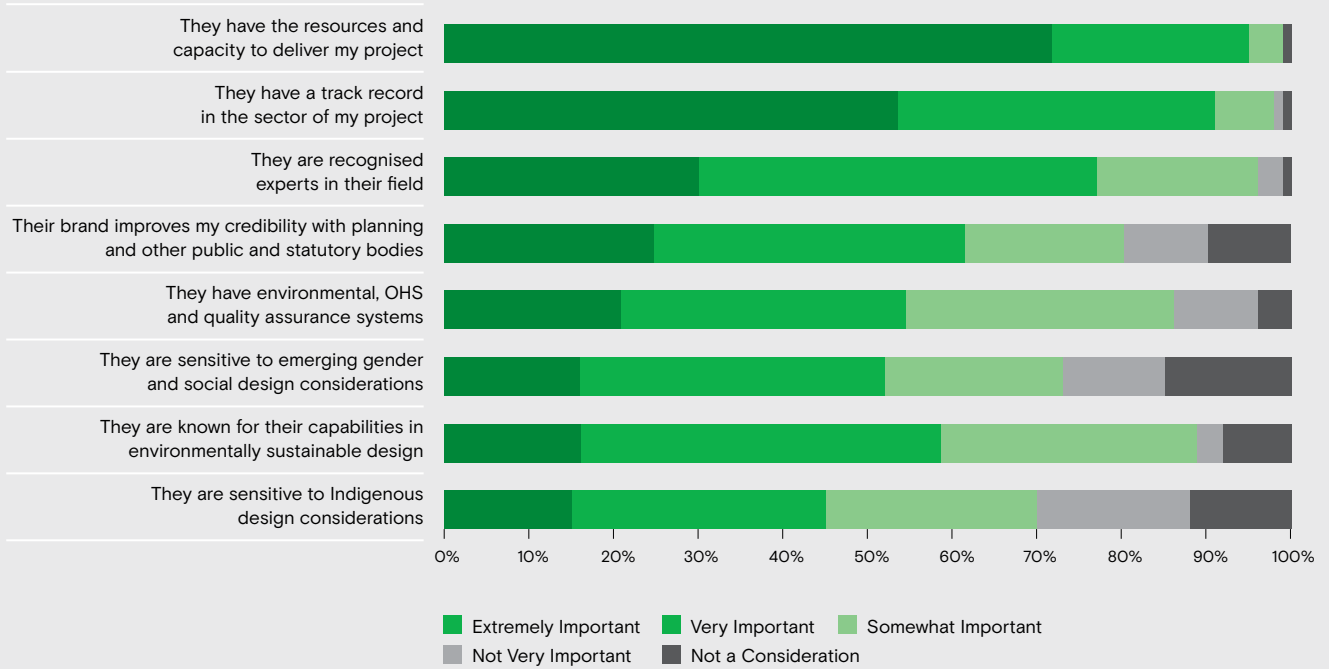


## PROJECT LOCATION



## SELECTION CRITERIA AND SERVICE EXPECTATIONS

Factors of importance for clients when looking to appoint an architectural practice.



“

WE WANT A FIRM THAT IS PRACTICAL AND EASY TO DEAL WITH.

IT'S IMPORTANT THAT THEY UNDERSTAND OUR NEEDS.

WE APPRECIATE COLLABORATION, A FIRM THAT IS RESPONSIVE TO FEEDBACK AND AN UNDERSTANDING OF CONTEMPORARY PRACTICES IN THE RELEVANT FIELD.

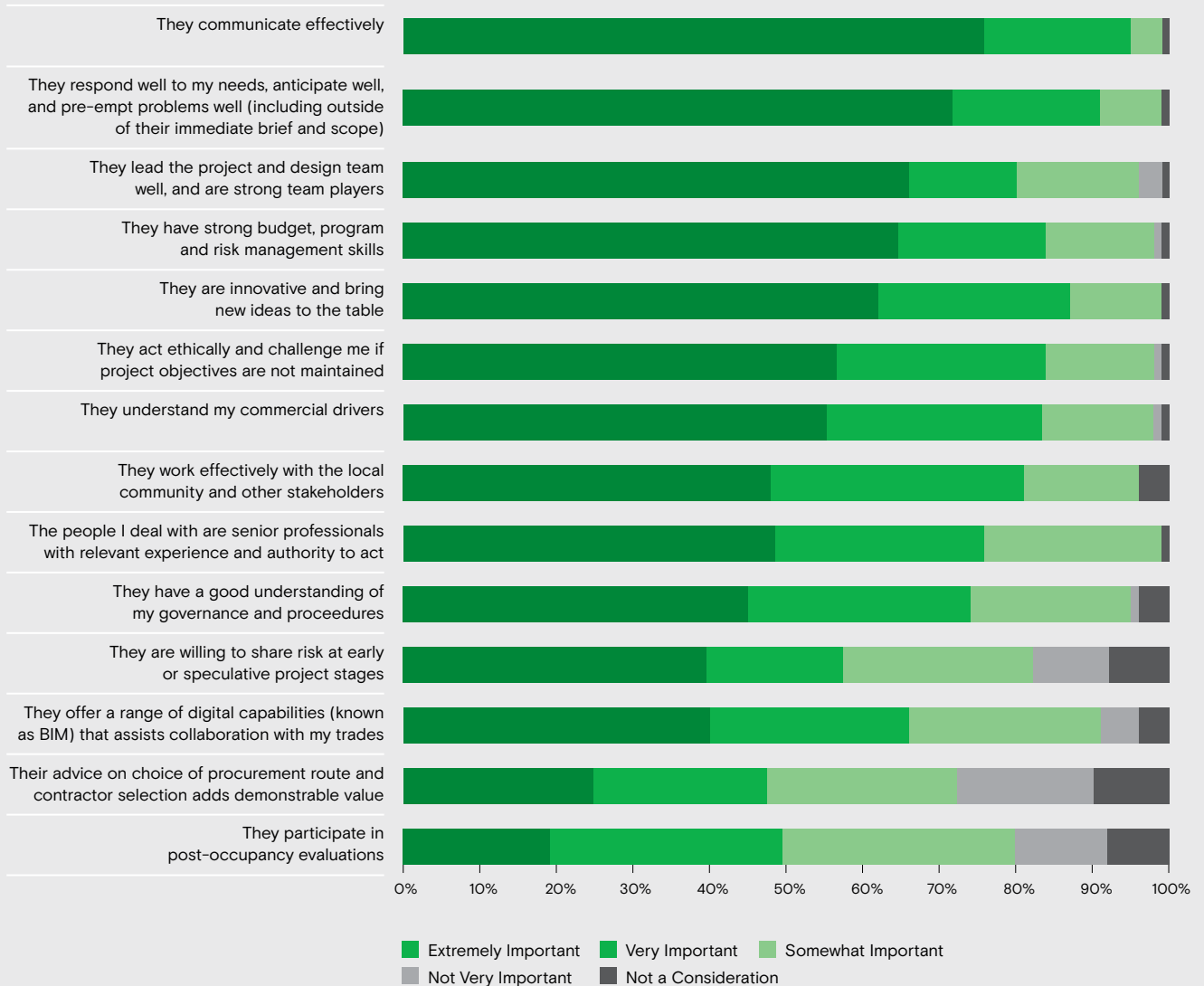
COLLABORATION AND TRUST.

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Photo by Toa Heftibayon Unsplash

## Factors of importance for clients regarding service and relationship expectations.



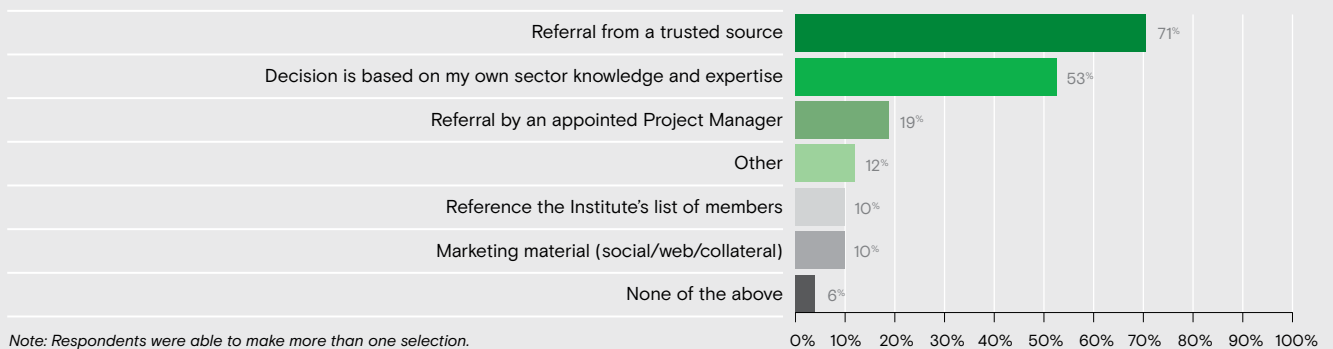
Moving beyond the selection phase, clients were asked to nominate all the factors which were a priority for them during service delivery of services.

**67%** of clients would like a collaborative relationship with architectural practices where both organisations take initiative and assume the lead in various areas.

## Top five factors of design assessment

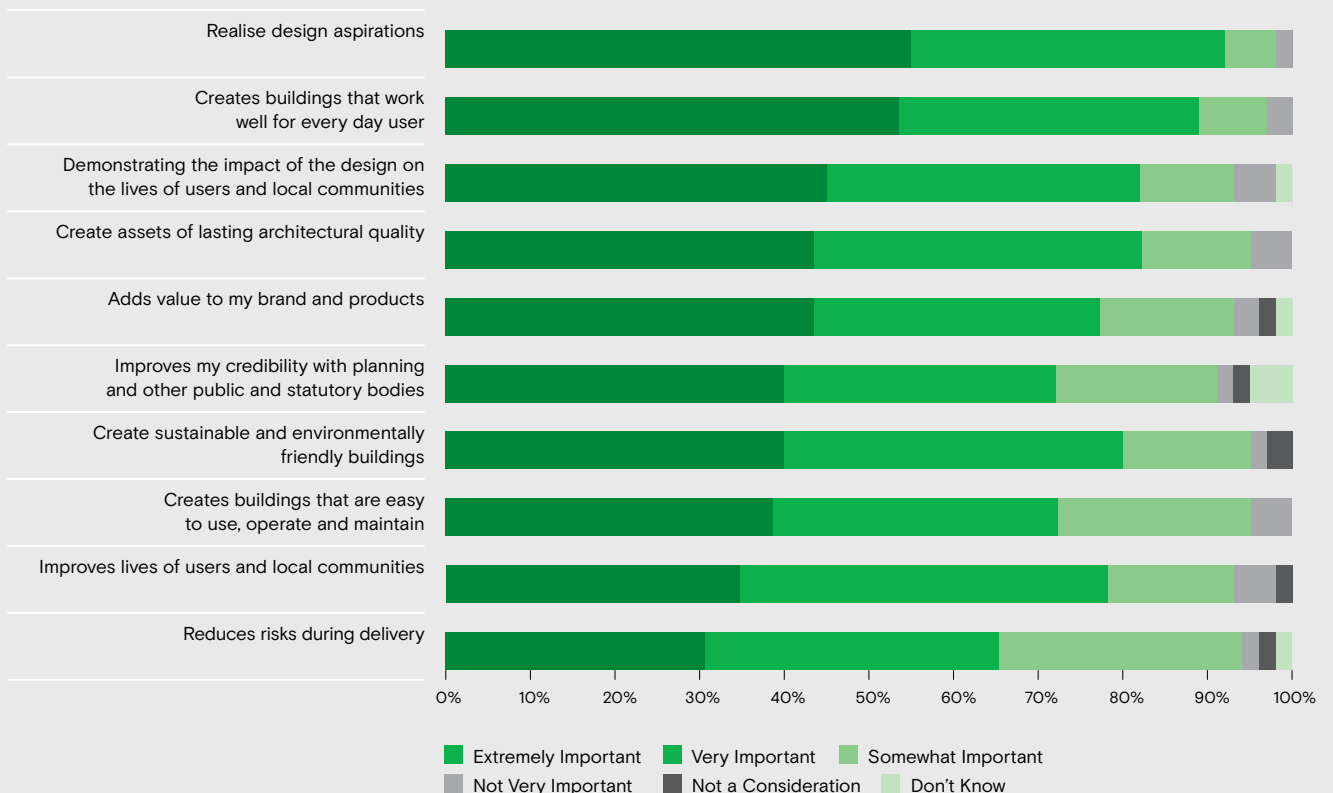
1. A design that meets the brief
2. Work that's delivered on time
3. Documentation that is clear and practical to use
4. The technical design specifications are complete and accurate
5. The design is aligned to budget

## Referral Sources

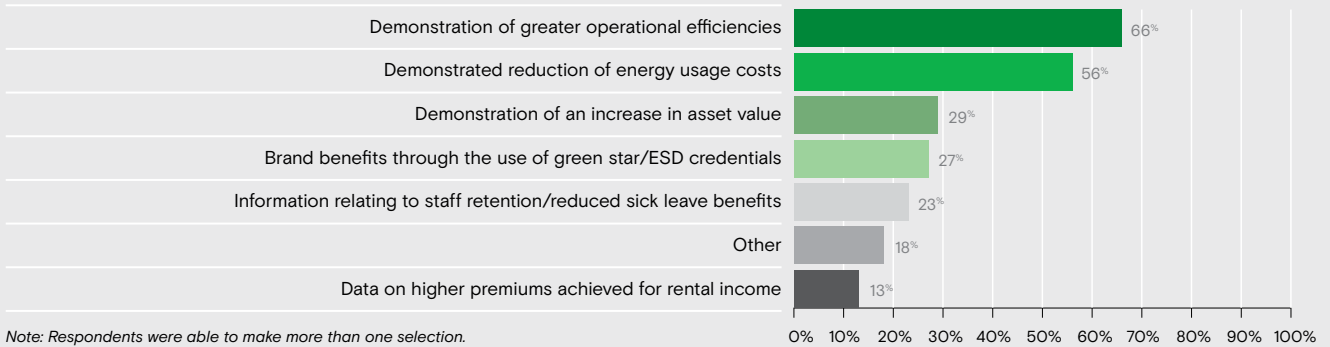


## VALUE PROPOSITION AND PERFORMANCE

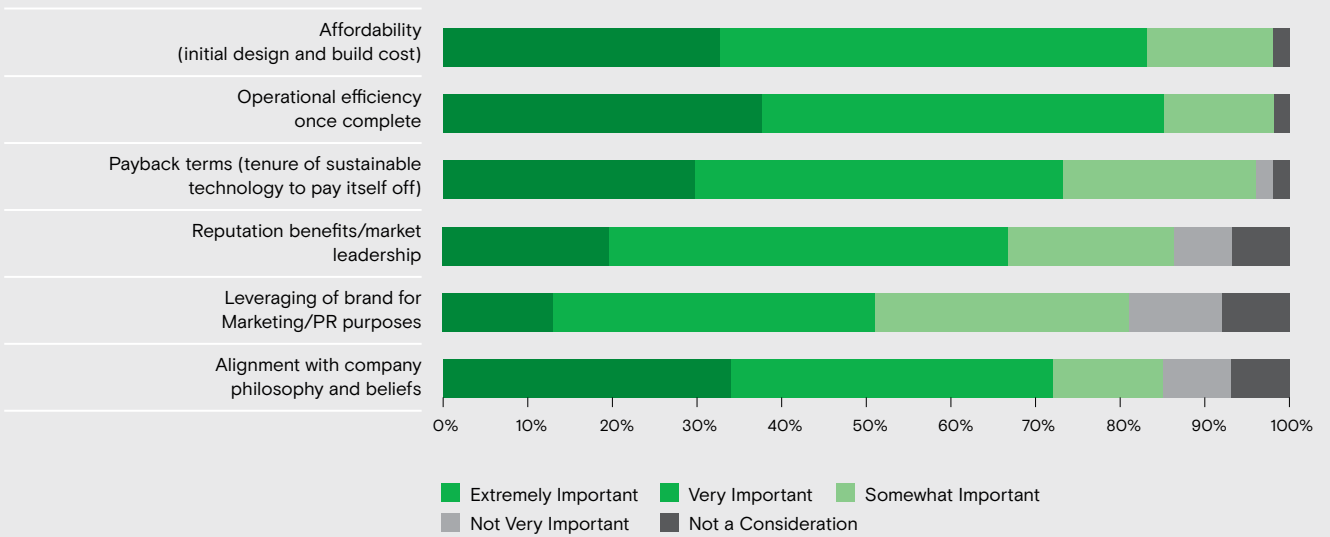
### The benefits of engaging an architect as rated by clients.



### Data and evidence requested by clients to inform investment in sustainable design.



### Factors of importance in persuading a client's broader organisation to invest in a sustainable design.



**3/4** of respondents believe that using the services of an architectural practice represents good value for money.

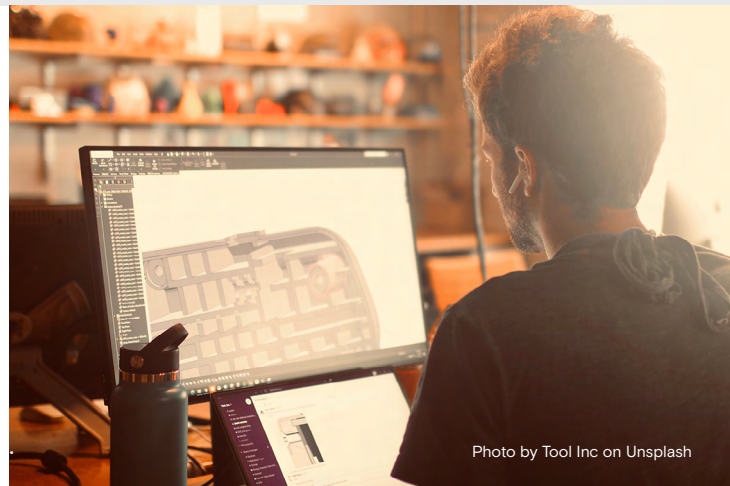
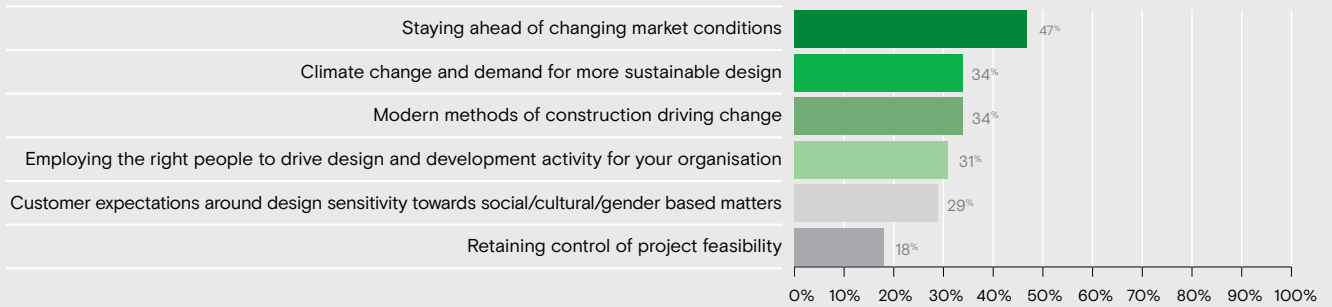


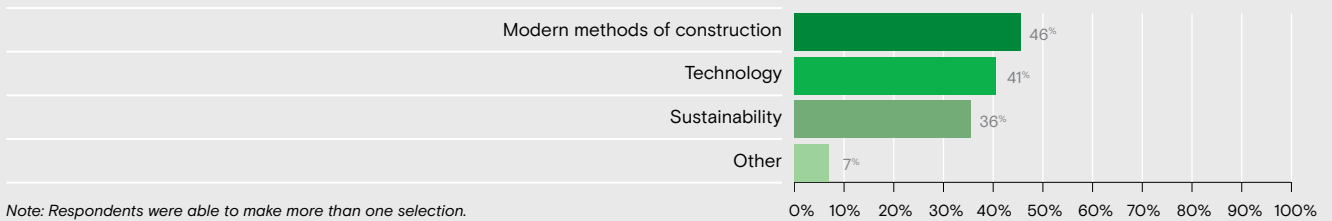
Photo by Tool Inc on Unsplash

## What's keeping clients up at night?

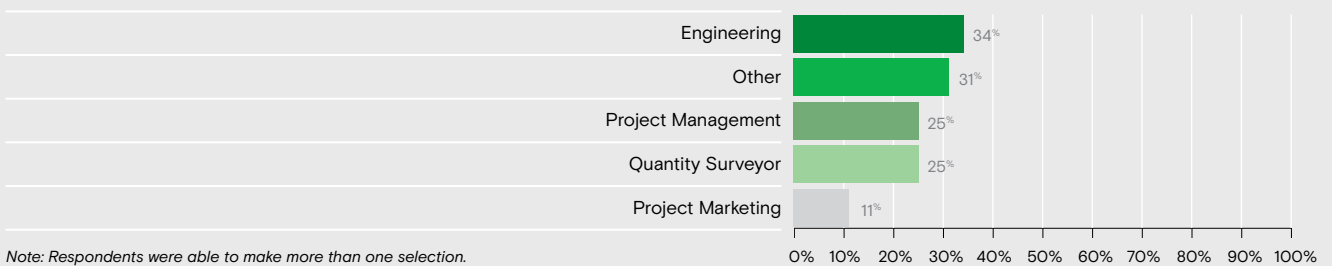
Understanding a client's broader concerns creates an opportunity to shape your practice's services or messaging for further engagement on the matter.



## Bringing clients closer in - design education as requested by clients.



## Extending the Value Proposition - What other services would clients like from an architectural Practice?



# PERSPECTIVES – CLIENT EDUCATION TO DESTIGMATISE MODULAR

Looking outside of architectural practice, we can turn to other business leaders in the built environment for tips on how to grow our practice strategically. This case study from Sensum Group demonstrates that businesses without dedicated business development personnel can grow their business, develop their culture, establish strong client relationships and influence changes across the market with a simple and authentic approach.

## Transforming the education sector through destigmatising modular – a business case for client education

We are PMs who are passionate about giving back, modular enables us to do that. We're proud of the leading role we played, and continue to play, in the growth of modern methods of construction (MMC) across Australia, because we're passionate about the benefits they can provide to our clients, the community and our planet.

While it's not all we do, we have successfully delivered over 135 permanent modular school buildings to 100+ schools, exceeding \$500M in value. Our team has the knowledge and the applied experience of modern methods of construction.

Without experience and evidence of what modular construction could do for them, we found that the education sector had an unfounded perception of MMC and modular construction. Being so passionate about the environment and understanding what modular delivery can do, we saw an opportunity to change the narrative around MMC, its benefits and potential as a delivery solution with both clients and partners. This required a significant investment in client education. The education took many forms, however in a nutshell this was about creating trust through building relationships and connections, and really – understanding people.

### **Changing hearts and minds through relationships, understanding and evidence.**

People like to see tangible evidence of a solution in application; with this in mind, we organised group visits through factories and finished projects to give a glimpse

of the potential, and what could and was being achieved in the industry. This was especially important in changing the perception of what a modular building would look like as a finished product.

The second key to providing evidence was through real results. In addition to the site visits and study tours, we completed a number of feasibility and project peer reviews for clients to demonstrate how the benefits could relate to their projects. This was a very important step for us to show real project data and how it would benefit them directly. If it's one thing that is important to Sensum, it's the idea of really understanding clients projects, the parameters to work within and drivers, and make sure our solution is actually a solution.

Support systems and processes were also needed to support this shift in mindset. We also regularly ran workshops for clients to assist them in changing their internal processes, updating contracts and their payment claim processes to enable a smooth transition to a modular project from traditional.

This education of the client goes a long way to building trust and greater relationships with them. It has been beneficial for us to do this with new clients as it is generally a low risk and low-cost entry, that has the potential to create larger long-term opportunities. I have always been a big believer in really understanding a client, discovering a problem and then going back to them with the solution. Creating the work and not waiting for it to come knocking.

**Change is everyone's responsibility.  
The key is a genuine connection.**

This approach has not only helped us change the mindset of our clients, it's an ongoing process to change the industry. We are keen to lead where we can in driving change, we are also well aware it's bigger than just us, we want to inspire others to do the same.

We don't have a dedicated business development manager or staff. At Sensum, our why is lived by all of our team; by simply making connections and being genuine in the benefits and solutions we bring, we are driving change and development. This is what it's about. The terms 'sales' and 'business development' are usually off-putting, with good reason I couldn't think of anything worse than cold calling.

The growth of our business, the idea of transforming how projects are delivered and educating our clients is everyone's responsibility. The education piece is about building trust and relationships with key clients

and the best people to do that is the team who are delivering the work. It also isn't too far from what they are already responsible for on a day to day basis – through project advisory, design and delivery our team build relationships and trust, the education and business development is building on that.

We provide ongoing training and support to the team throughout the year to ensure they are supported in stepping out of their comfort zone in having conversations. We also don't put too much pressure on the team, building relationships and connections should naturally unfold through their development.

We've found this approach works for Sensum. It aligns with who we are and the way we do business.

**Nick Strongman**

CEO  
Sensum Group





# COLLABORATION WITH RIBA TO CREATE CLIENT FEEDBACK REPORT

The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) was as a key source of information in the development of this survey, consulting with their team to leverage their 2016 “Working with Architects” client survey. Read below to learn more about RIBA and their Client Liason Group.

We set up the RIBA Client Liaison Group in 2013 with the aim of

1. making the RIBA more outward facing;
2. providing a forum to hear views directly from client bodies;
3. providing a vehicle to feed ideas and initiatives from the institute back to them and
4. identifying the tools and skills that architects need to improve their service to clients

Over the eight years we have been active we have carried out a number of programmes, in collaboration with the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS) and Chartered Institute of Building (CIOB), to achieve these goals.

Going back to 2014/15 we initially undertook a series of roundtables with clients covering a range of sectors and client types including contractors, housebuilders, education, workplace, sport, heritage, healthcare, retrofit and local government clients. We published our findings in a series of articles in the RIBA Journal and on architecture.com in [Client and Architect – developing the essential relationship](#). We then followed up in 2016 with an online client survey [What Clients Think of Architects](#) where we polled nearly 1,000 clients, split roughly in thirds between commercial developers, contractors and private domestic clients. We carried out our most recent in 2020/1, focusing specifically on housing clients.

In response to the 2016 findings, we also developed a report, [Building in Quality](#), and an associated [Quality Tracker](#) (2018) in the wake of the tragic Grenfell Tower fire in London and the Edinburgh Schools inquiry. These pieces of work were aimed at improving understanding (and thereby project outcomes) between architects and their contractor clients primarily in Design & Build procurement.

Each of the consultations we carried out provided wide-ranging, honest client feedback for RIBA members that they can use to focus their business planning and business development efforts and improve their working practices. We heard from some of our practices that they had used the results as a benchmark to survey their own clients. Architects who respond to the data we shared will be in a position to give their clients the sort of service and roles clients are telling us they want architects to perform. And thereby to grow their practices and increase their revenue.

For UK architects at least, one issue seemed to have prominence. Clients see us as skillful designers, able to meet and even exceed the ambitions set out in their brief – but our project management duties need to be improved. There was a degree of correlation in this with the AIA survey where 80% of clients say they do not use architectural practices for project management. These are slightly different matters, but it is clear that both RIBA and AIA members should look closely at why clients do not feel completely confident in our ability to deliver a role that we were performing regularly a generation ago.

It is enormously gratifying to see the AIA picking up the baton through its 2021 Client Feedback Survey and we were very pleased to play a small part and share our learning with the AIA team. We are convinced that it is only through this sort of collaboration that we will continue to deliver world class outcomes and we very much hope this exercise will be the start of a long collaboration between our two institutes.



**Nigel Ostime**

Partner at  
Hawkins\Brown,  
RIBA member and  
chair of the RIBA  
Client Liaison Group



**Linda Stevens**

RIBA  
Head of Client  
Services

RIBA   
Architecture.com

# 5\_ KEY THEMES IN THE RESPONSES

Respect for the profession of architecture is alive and well with intelligent, forward-thinking design applauded and highly valued by clients.

Respondents recognised the lead role that architects play in driving the integrity and quality of their projects with over 80% strongly agreeing/tending to agree that the profession assisted them to:

- Realise design aspirations
- Create sustainable buildings
- Create assets of lasting architectural quality

As architects are engaged as consultants working across a variety of projects, they are recognised for bringing a wealth of new ideas and technologies to benefit client projects. Clients value sector expertise and profile gained from other successful competitor projects, with the potential to bring brand value and kudos for future marketing activities.

Stand out areas for growth within design outcomes delivered the profession are:

- Risk reduction within project delivery
- A deeper understanding and/or articulation of the impact on end users
- Designing buildings that are easy to use, operate and maintain



CREATIVITY. WE WANT THE BEST ARCHITECTS AND WE WANT THE BEST WORK.

WE LOOK TO THEM FOR DESIGN APPROACH, CAPABILITY, PERSONA AND REPUTATION.

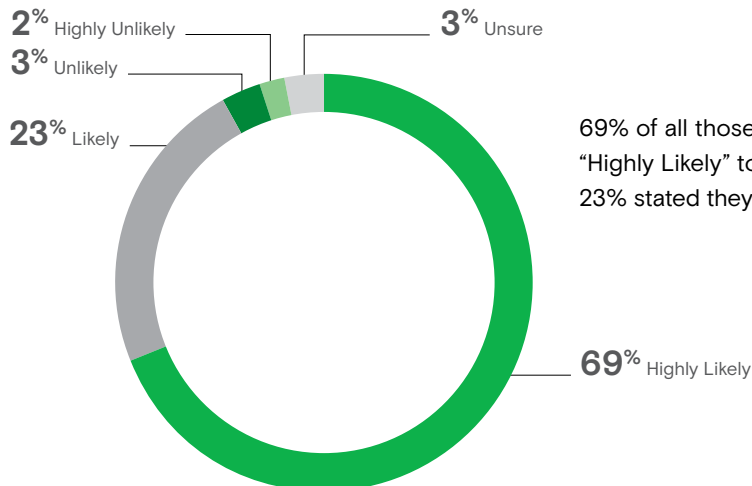
WE SEEK A DESIGN RESPONSE THAT HELPS TO DIFFERENTIATE (OUR) PROJECT FROM COMPETITORS.



We can see within the responses above that this should not be interpreted that practices are delivering poorly within these areas, but rather be taken as an indicator that there is room for research and development to further outcomes. In each of these areas, practices are recognised for adding value, however, in other areas clients have highlighted a much stronger value proposition offered by architects.

An opportunity exists for practices to gain a competitive advantage and strengthen collaborative skills through partnering with another Practice or a client in research and development across these key areas. Clients with a Build to Rent portfolio or other assets which they will design, build and operate are already engaging in collaborative research.

## Are clients likely to engage in an architectural practice again?



69% of all those surveyed confirmed they would be “Highly Likely” to use the services of an architect again. 23% stated they would be “Likely” open to doing so again.



UNDERSTAND OUR CUSTOMERS BETTER BY TALKING TO THEM.

BECOME MORE USER FRIENDLY BY PARTNERING WITH BUILDING COMPANIES EARLY IN THE DESIGN STAGE.

WE WOULD LIKE MORE INFORMATION TO UNDERSTAND THE CUSTOMER OF THE BUILDING - HOW THE BUILDING PERFORMED IN USE AFTER THEY FINISH AND USE THIS TO INFLUENCE THE FUTURE DESIGN. PRACTICES SHOULD PARTNER WITH DEVELOPERS ON RESEARCH THROUGH INVESTMENT LINKED TO OUTCOMES.



While on the face of things, this is positive, commentary within the survey responses indicates that there is an underlying lack of consistency within architectural service provision. In such a complex field, there is no silver bullet to address this, but we must ask how can architects bridge the service gaps and turn all clients into repeat customers and advocates for their profession?

When the chief gain for an architect is universally to see the project they are engaged on succeeding in terms of design outputs, delivering enduring operational and community value, we need to look for new and authentic ways to remedy misconceptions about the profession and promote key strengths.

Practices should consider utilising some of the frameworks for analysis within this report to benchmark their performance with clients. Fostering a culture of continual improvement will help your practice understand its strengths and weaknesses and adapt for improvement.

**CLIENT FEEDBACK:  
COMMUNICATION AND TRUST**

Communication shares an invisible yet powerful thread with client satisfaction and trust. Clients seek relationships with architectural practices that deliver opportunities for meaningful collaboration.

With the increasing complexity of the design and build processes, in addition to the project hierarchy presented by specialised professionals employed on the client-side, architectural practices are required to show leadership by being a productive part of the project team - adapting to different ways of working and communication requirements.

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**70.4%** of respondents rated the ability of a firm to collaborate as extremely important.

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COLLABORATION, RESPONSIVE TO FEEDBACK AND UNDERSTANDING OF CONTEMPORARY PRACTICES IN THE RELEVANT FIELD.

GOOD COMMUNICATION SKILLS AND ABILITY TO WORK WITH COMPLEX CLIENTS AND STAKEHOLDERS.

COMPETENCY, STAKEHOLDER MANAGEMENT, ABILITY TO WORK COLLABORATIVELY AND UNDERSTAND THE BRIEF.

WILLINGNESS TO COLLABORATE WITH OTHER CONTRIBUTORS...AND BUILDING RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEOPLE WORKING ON THE PROJECT.

AN ARCHITECT THAT HAS A PASSION FOR QUALITY AND RELATES WELL TO THE CLIENT.



The ability to effectively collaborate via active listening and communication is an attribute that positively influences the perception of the client towards the firm.

Strong collaboration leads to positive outcomes with rigorous briefing processes as having the power to translate a project vision into a high-quality outcome.

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Practices need to consider how they foster the “soft skills” required to enhance the client experience.

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When asked to rate the level of interaction they sought with their appointed firm, the majority of respondents, 92.67%, looked for an engaged relationship, seeing the architect as a lead project consultant, and viewed a high level of collaboration as instrumental to the project.

A progressive step forward would be taking on board account management principles to determine resourcing in conjunction with project deliverables and timelines. In doing so, practices should consider

- When will the client need more senior input?
- How can this be supported by more junior team members when the timing is right?

The assembly of the right resources at the right time, to support the human and technical requirements of the project journey can yield enduring benefits for the project at hand, and for new business opportunities, when client satisfaction is enhanced.

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Communicating the *value* of architectural services is a prominent barrier for practices in the architect/client relationship – not the cost of services alone.

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## CLIENT FEEDBACK: VALUE & PRICING

While 73.3% believed that architects’ services represented value for money, concern was expressed around the elasticity of architects’ fees and cost blowouts.

The predominant reason for this concern was a perceived gap in knowledge between the design process and a technical understanding of the construction process and materials used. This gap resulted in time delays, the perception of inefficient work practices and high levels of frustration.

Clients are seeking improvement in the connection between the design integrity provided by practices and their abilities to relate to the practicalities of construction and technical requirements:



EARLY CONTRACTOR ENGAGEMENT TO IDENTIFY BUILDABILITY ISSUES OR COST SAVINGS BEFORE TENDERING.

DEVELOPMENT OF A BETTER UNDERSTANDING OF THE DURABILITY OF MATERIALS AND BUILDABILITY DETAILS.

IT ASSISTS IN THE WHOLE LIFE COSTING DURING THE DESIGN STAGE.

GREATER DESIGN ACCURACY WILL BE SUPPORTED BY GREATER CONSTRUCTION KNOWLEDGE.

MORE ACTIVELY ENGAGING AND TAKING RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CO-ORDINATION OF DESIGN INTENT AND DOCUMENTATION.



A large proportion of respondents indicated there was room for improvement with service pricing models. 61.67% believed that a fixed price agreement would be the most preferred form of fee structure, while only 16.67% agreed the traditional % of total project cost model was best suited.

While clients didn't appear to have suggestions on alternate pricing models, they appeared willing to have further discussions on the subject:



I AM ALWAYS OPEN TO LISTEN TO AN ARCHITECTS RECOMMENDATIONS, DIFFERENT PROCUREMENT METHODS, PARTNERSHIP ARRANGEMENTS, OR RISK-SHARING MODELS.

...OPINIONS AS TO ALTERNATIVE PROCUREMENT METHODS THAT CAN IMPACT/IMPROVE THE COST, QUALITY, SAFETY AND OR PROGRAMME OF A PROJECT ENGAGEMENT SHOULD ALWAYS BE CONSIDERED.



Navigation between the requirement for tailoring bespoke project service pricing and more regular models that make sense for architectural practices is a big job and requires consideration from senior management.

Practices would do well to consider ways to structure a value-based pricing model rather than a cost-based structure, where the focal point of the latter only ultimately focuses on driving costs down vs the benefit of enduring value. The briefing process provides a key opportunity to engage in meaningful discussions with the client to discuss service scope, realistic plans and value beyond cost.

When considering future investment in sustainable design 55.93% of clients stated that a benefit-driven argument; one that places a focus on the improvement of usage and conditions for end-users would be the most persuasive for internal influencing of decision making.

When considering future investment in sustainable design

55.93%

of clients stated that a benefit-driven argument; one that places a focus on the improvement of usage and conditions for end-users would be the most persuasive for internal influencing for decision making.

#### CLIENT FEEDBACK: PLAYING TO STRENGTHS

We know clients recognise that architects contribute strongly towards the aesthetic of built form projects. They also confirmed that competent technical outputs were fundamental key performance indicators, with the following capabilities valued as extremely important to the perception of success and efficiency of project delivery:

The most highly valued outputs were:

- 70.4% - The design meets the brief
- 69.01% - Work is delivered on time
- 69.01% - Documentation is clear and practical to use

Beyond these anticipated fundamentals, clients also ranked as important a firm's ability to provide more progressive advice, including assistance with meeting sustainability objectives 57.5%.

Taking a deeper dive into understanding what would help practices to elevate their role in providing advisory around longer-term sustainability issues, we see that 35% of clients are concerned about their ability to stay on top of sustainability requirements and are seeking data-driven information, practical to commercial outcomes.

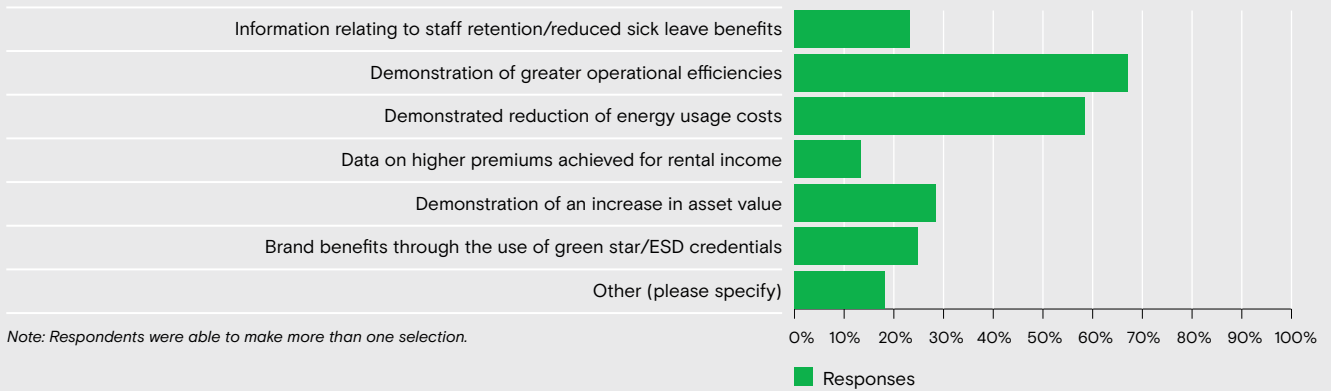
With some practices already harnessing intelligent data to support their own design objectives, remove the barriers for organising this information and sharing with clients would seem to be a quick win to reinforce knowledge and expertise with clients. For those who are not currently engaging in this space, we highly recommend exploration where possible and relevant.



WE'RE LOOKING FOR POST-OCCUPANCY EVALUATION BUT WITH SKIN IN THE GAME. ARCHITECTS SHOULD INVEST IN THIS TO PROVE INTEREST IN KNOWING HOW THE BUILDING PERFORMS.



### What data could architects provide to support financial investment in sustainability initiatives?



A progressive use of design technology to support innovation in design and operational efficiency was important to 47.89% of clients.

38.98% of respondents indicated that their firm **had not** provided them with useful information to help educate their team on the advancements and benefits of BIM, with a further 23.73% stating that they were unsure.

**59%**

of clients told us that looking at their future pipeline, they felt pressure to keep up with new trends and advancements in the areas of:

- Climate change
- The demand for more sustainable design
- Improved methods of construction delivery



(WE REQUIRE) BIM, PROPER CONSTRUCTION DOCUMENTATION, PLANNING EXPERTISE, VALUE ENGINEERING.

(WE REQUIRE) HIGH-LEVEL 3D MODELLING TO HELP CLIENT, AUTHORITIES AND OTHER STAKEHOLDERS UNDERSTAND DESIGN DEVELOPMENT IS CRITICAL.



While architects are working well with their clients and communicating around project deliverables, efforts to educate them on the ROI delivered by design technology, may not be taking place at the level required. Doing so as part of the project design and reporting process may leverage valuable data already being produced, and yield commercial and reputational benefit, and a valuable point of difference for practices.

### CLIENT FEEDBACK: IT'S IN THE BRIEF

Methods for procuring architectural services were varied and spoke to the broad range of sectors responding to the survey.

Practices working in the public sector were strongly reliant on panel selection, however of those, only 31.82% of clients confirmed they provided formal briefs for practices to respond to. This is a relatively low number given the sector and client mix within the responses. We know that the absence of a good brief correlates with a misaligned response to the project vision and fee provision – a disappointment for both parties.



THE DOCUMENTATION PRODUCED BY AN ARCHITECT CAN TAKE MUCH OF THE GUESSWORK OUT OF A PROJECT – MUCH MORE ATTENTION TO DETAIL IS NEEDED TO ENSURE IT IS DELIVERED AS PER CLIENTS BRIEF.



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To enhance opportunities for success, practices need to show confidence in requesting their clients step up with the provision of clear briefing material in order to adequately address design intent, project complexity and timing for delivery.

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### CLIENT FEEDBACK: ROOM FOR GROWTH

80.2% of clients surveyed indicated they did not use architectural practices for project management services – noting that 13.86% of survey respondents were project managers, and that “one-off residential” clients who accounted for 35.64% of responses were most likely to take on board the role of project management themselves, due to the smaller scale of the project.

For larger scale, more complex residential, commercial and public projects, while the presence of an architect on-site was valued to support the client relationship and assessment of construction progress, project management as a paid service delivered by architects was not seen as a value add by clients. The intended role, scope and value of the architect need need to be clearer in this remit.

The key areas of resistance in engaging practices for this service was a perceived lack of impartiality between design conceptualisation and project delivery and a common view that architects do not have the technical skills to provide project management services to the standard required.

When it comes to sourcing an architectural firm for a new project clients looked towards the following sources of referral:

- 71.2% relied on word of mouth
- 51.2 % used their known contacts
- 10.6 % looked towards the Institute’s list of members



I SEE THE MOST IMPORTANT ROLE AN ARCHITECT PLAYS IS TO BE A CREATIVE, NOT ADMINISTRATIVE INFLUENCE. THEIR INPUT ON-SITE IS INVALUABLE BUT NOT AS A WATCHDOG.

FOR AN ARCHITECT ENGAGED BY A BUILDING CONTRACTOR, THERE IS NO NEED FOR THE ARCHITECT TO ACT IN THIS SPACE ALTHOUGH THERE IS A REQUIREMENT FOR THE ARCHITECT TO HAVE A SITE INSPECTION ROLE AND ADDRESS ALL DESIGN ISSUES DURING THE CONSTRUCTION PHASE.

(THE) MAJORITY OF ARCHITECTS LACK DELIVERY EXPERIENCE OUTSIDE TYPICAL DESIGN OR DOCUMENTATION ROLE. HARD TO COMPETE WITH EXPERIENCED PROJECT MANAGERS FROM A PROJECT MANAGEMENT CONSULTANCY.

WE ENGAGE A QUALIFIED PM AS OUR PROJECTS ARE OF A LARGE SCALE AND RISK.

WE USE THEM (ARCHITECTS) AS A SECONDARY RESOURCE TO CONFIRM COMPLIANCE WITH DESIGN INTENT.



Significantly, many saw project management as a specialised skill, existing as a stand-alone profession to de-risk gaps in the design to delivery process. Client's broad preference is to engage organisations that deliver this service as a core focus.

With 25.4% of clients indicating they would use project management services if provided by an architectural firm, the implication is to consider the viability of employing a dedicated project manager resource in house, or alignment with a preferred project management company for a more seamless delivery process that allows architects to be called on at the right time, and used with greater respect and efficiency.

Further investment in educating clients on the technical capabilities of architects such as the development of case studies demonstrating enhanced outcomes, more effective pricing structures and value-based discussions may be worth the effort to secure greater project management opportunities moving forwards.

**35.9%**

of respondents indicated they would consider using an in-house engineering service provided by an architectural firm.



## 6\_ SUMMARY

The findings from this report provide Australian architecture practices with an opportunity to reflect on their performance in terms of delivering successful project outcomes for clients.

Considering client feedback can only provide an opportunity for improvement, growth and insight that will support strategic planning initiatives to help architects step ahead of client requirements and opportunities for the future.

INSIGHT	WHAT THIS MEANS FOR PRACTICE
<p>While some clients want their architects to just “stick to designing” many are open to room for growth in service provision including access to project management, engineering and other specialist services not traditionally provided by practices.</p>	<p>Consideration by directors and senior management regarding what represents an authentic direction for future business growth and the practices’ appetite to break away from traditional service offerings to meet future client requirements.</p>
<p>The architectural profession is highly regarded by all sectors of clients who responded to this survey, viewing design innovation and aesthetics as the most valued skill brought to projects.</p>	<p>Positive reinforcement is always valuable and should be celebrated, however, being known for just one speciality presents constraints for future growth and internal skills development.</p>
<p>Practices will continue to navigate the provision of adequate resourcing across projects and the quality of communication provided as a lead consultant.</p>	<p>Steps need to be made towards employing stronger internal client management skills that seek to satisfy client contact expectations: providing the right skills at the right time to protect a practices’ resources and support client satisfaction.</p>
<p>Perceptions of architectural services being too expensive to prevail, and rationale around costings don’t always seem clear to clients.</p>	<p>Increased efforts applied to providing greater service cost clarity to demystify fees, in addition, to focus on using value-based information in discussions and proposals instead of a limiting cost-based focus.</p>
<p>Solid collaboration is taking place between clients and architects, however often becomes strained during the build and delivery process due to a perceived gap in architects technical knowledge.</p>	<p>Further investment is required in taking the time to educate clients on practices’ technical capabilities.</p>
<p>Sustainable design and BIM provide key areas of opportunity for thought leadership and business growth for practices.</p>	<p>Making efforts to visibly demonstrate in-house expertise and knowledge in these areas by providing existing data that may prove useful to client planning and education. Taking clients on an educational journey throughout the project delivery process.</p>



# 100

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We've reached a tonne, but couldn't have done it without you. So as we celebrate 100 years of manufacturing steel building products in Australia, we'd like to acknowledge the industry support we've received along the journey. Thank you to the architects and engineers who specify Lysaght, to our employees who manufacture, deliver and support our products, to our distributor and reseller partners who brilliantly support the brand, and to the builders and tradies who install our products. To remain a successful manufacturer in Australia it takes support and commitment from all supply chain partners, so to the Australian Building Industry, **we say thanks.**



# ABOUT

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## THE AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS

Established in 1930, the Australian Institute of Architects is the peak body for the architecture profession in Australia. We represent over 12,000 members globally and are dedicated to improving our built environment and the communities we call home by promoting quality, responsible, sustainable design.

The Australian Institute of Architects and its members are dedicated to raising the quality of the built environment for all and to the advancement of architecture. We seek to improve the health and well being of all who live and work in our diverse communities.

By raising design standards in our cities, urban areas, commercial and residential buildings, the profession as a whole alongside the Institute plays a major role in shaping Australia's future.

[www.architecture.com.au](http://www.architecture.com.au)

## LYSAGHT

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