

A TIME FOR ACTION

Australian Institute of Architects

2022 Federal Election Policy Statement

ISSUE 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.”¹

Research² 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.

BACKGROUND

RAIA POSITIONING STATEMENT:

The Australian Institute of Architects is committed to proactively promoting equity, fairness and equality in practice and the profession, including equal access to opportunities, resources and the built environment. We will foster, value, respect and celebrate the contributions of those who bring diverse experiences, views and needs so that everyone can benefit from good architecture.

STATISTICS

Data obtained from [Workplace Gender Equality Agency](#)

¹ <https://www.theurbandevolver.com/articles/construction-industry-pay-gap-widens-to-26pc>

² 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/>

	Construction	Architectural, Engineering and Technical Services	Architectural Services
Participation	25.9% women 74.1% men	27.8% women 72.2% men	45.5% women 54.5% men
Full time pay gap	24.0%	24.8%	18.5%
Total pay gap (incl. part-time and casual)	30.6%	25.0%	17.4%
Female Leadership	CEO 4.4% KMP 20.9% Director 17.8%	CEO 6.7% KMP 21.1% Director 16.9%	CEO 6.3% KMP 27.3% Director 22.1%
Offer paid primary carers leave	38%	68.3%	68.6%

Jenkins Respect@Work: Sexual Harassment National Inquiry Report 2020³

Australia has ratified, a number of international treaties that recognise fundamental human rights relevant to workplace sexual harassment:

- Live and work free from violence and harassment
- Freedom from discrimination
- Security of person
- Work
- Just and favourable conditions of work

The *Sex Discrimination Act Cth 1984* establishes the office of the Sex Discrimination Commissioner, responsible for the national inquiry in 2020.

The report summarises the Commission's review on workplace sexual harassment and makes 55 recommendations around the following themes:

- Implementation of recommendations
- Understanding Sexual harassment - National Sexual Harassment Survey, Agency Data, National Sexual Harassment Research Agenda
- Prevention outside the workplace
- Legal and Regulatory Framework - Workplace sexual harassment council, ILO Convention concerning the elimination of violence and harassment in the world of work, Sex Discrimination Act Amendments, Fair Work Act / Fair Work Commission Amendments / review, Work Health and Safety, Workers Compensation, Other legal issues - NDA's, defamation, judicial education and training
- Preventing and responding to sexual harassment in the workplace
- Support, advice and advocacy

BUILDING AND DESIGN EQUALITY POLICY

Change to the Australian Construction Industry has enormous potential to symbolise a movement towards a culture of openness and respect. Construction represents approximately

³ https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/sex-discrimination/publications/respectwork-sexual-harassment-national-inquiry-report-2020?_ga=2.92412445.127361014.1650936125-2005753013.1648186421

7.2% of the total population, with associated consultancies and suppliers representing a further 7.9%⁴.

Introducing requirement for shorter and more flexible hours as a priority for this traditionally male dominated sector will bring huge benefit not only for those partaking firsthand, but also provide relief for uncounted partners, children and relatives. Furthermore, the exciting moves by the Victorian State Government to initiate the [Building Equality Policy](#)⁵ signals that the time is ripe for Federal support to bring the Australian Construction and Design Industries to the forefront of addressing gender equity in our society.

With specific regard to the state of Architecture in this country, research has highlighted a disproportionate attrition rate of women within the architectural and affiliated professions, with a need for the development of guidelines and policies leading to the provision of rights and benefits to enable equal opportunities with their profession. Introduction of nation-wide Building and Design Equality Policy addressing the identified obstacles of inflexibility in workplace, lack of support and cultural/systemic impediments, coordinated with a re-allocation of priorities in all procurement processes, both large and small, is vital in leading the way toward an inclusive industry.

Further opportunity exists for the development of Government procurement processes to enable targeted reporting of gender in project teams, with an onus on suppliers/providers to develop and implement meaningful action plans. Programs such as 'Gender on the Tender' lead to the successful implementation of Building and Design Policy.

⁴ Data drawn from: <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/labour/jobs/jobs-australia/latest-release> comparing 2018-19 data for industry sectors of "construction" and "professional, scientific and technical services"

⁵ <https://www.vic.gov.au/victorias-women-construction-strategy>
<https://www.genderequalitycommission.vic.gov.au/about-gender-equality-act-2020>
<https://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-10-17/women-in-construction-government-can-do-more/10382932>
<https://infrastructuremagazine.com.au/2021/12/07/new-gender-equality-policy-for-the-construction-industry/>
<https://roadsonline.com.au/new-vic-gov-policy-to-drive-industry-equality/>