

Gender Equity Policy

The Australian Institute of Architects Gender Equity Policy establishes a set of policy principles to ensure that the Institute and its members are aligned in valuing and exhibiting principles of fairness and equity, which lead to the provision of equal opportunities, rights and benefits to all people, regardless of gender, engaged within the architectural profession, and to eliminate gender-based impacts on the participation and progression of women within the profession.

Context

The Institute aims to continuously improve its operations and its approach to member engagement and guidance, based upon best practice principles. By adopting a comprehensive and ethical approach, the Institute aims to ensure that it engages fairly and equitably with all its members, staff and other stakeholders, regardless of gender, in a positive, respectful and constructive manner. Equally importantly, the Institute aims to assist the whole architectural profession to do the same.

Discrimination on the basis of gender is illegal. However, legal constraints on gender-based discrimination have, for most practical purposes, been limited to instances of overt and intentional discrimination. Many systemic, often unintended and largely invisible effects continue to impact on the participation and progression of women within the Australian workforce, and specifically within the architecture profession.

The research that led to the development of this policy demonstrated that women are under-represented in every measure of participation in Australian architecture. This is particularly apparent at senior levels, despite the fact that the proportion of women graduates has been close to parity for decades. It found that women in architecture tend to follow 'atypical' career paths, and many leave, step sideways, or don't return from a career break. There is also clear evidence of gender-based pay gaps, while architects working part-time are often sidelined. Low pay, long hours, and difficulty in reconciling professional and family life are also problems for men in architecture, but they impact in different, specific, and compounded ways for women in the profession.

The Gender Equity Policy aims to ensure that Australian architecture offers equitable opportunity for all, and the profession is able to meet the needs and expectations of the whole community.

Background

This policy was developed in 2013 by the Australian Institute of Architects in collaboration with the research team undertaking the *Equity and Diversity in the Australian Architecture Profession: Women, Work and Leadership* study.ⁱ The Institute was an industry partner on this research, which provided extensive evidence of gender inequity in Australian architecture. This research built on earlier studies, including Paula Whitman's 2005 study *Going Places: The Career Progression of Women in the Architectural Profession*, along with earlier reports undertaken by the Institute.ⁱⁱ

There has been some improvement since 2013, particularly in the numbers of women attaining registration as architects, however strong gendered patterns remain, as is demonstrated in the findings of the 2018 *Parlour Census Report 2001-2016: Women in Architecture in Australia*.ⁱⁱⁱ

This policy has influenced international policies on gender and architecture, most notably by International Union of Architects Policy on Gender Equity in Architecture, which was approved by the UIA Assembly in Seoul, South Korea in 2017.

Scope

This policy sets out principles designed to maximise fair and equitable access to opportunities for women relating to:

- **Ownership and leadership in the architecture profession** (including recognition of a wide range of contributions and achievements, new succession strategies, and new models for progression to partner/owner roles);
- **Participation as employees in the architecture profession** (including matters such as equal pay, equal responsibility, meaningful part-time work, more flexible career pathways, flexible working conditions and retention of women in the profession);
- **Representation and governance within the Institute** (including committees, National and Chapter Councils, juries and selection panels);
- **Institute programs, services and events** (including membership options, professional development, conferences and events, awards and prizes, products and services); and
- **Operational activities within the Institute** (including employment and recruitment practices, pay equity, leadership, management and succession).

Principles

Best practice principles adopted as the foundation for fair and equitable participation within the architecture profession are:

- 1. Acknowledge the profession's obligation to accommodate the diverse needs of the community:** Architects must have the capacity to understand and respond to the diverse needs of clients and the broader community. This is best achieved when all levels of the profession reflect the diversity of the community. The Institute will develop and promote strategies to ensure this outcome.
- 2. Recognise and respond effectively to the diversity of members:** In all key decisions and activities, the Institute will account for the diverse interests and circumstances of all members, taking particular account of gender, career stage and access to services.
- 3. Incorporate provisions to ensure gender equitable outcomes in all Institute initiatives.** In considering all programs, services and activities, the Institute will evaluate the program for its contribution to gender equity, as well as other parameters such as financial impact, risk, time and resource requirements.
- 4. Communicate the value of gender diversity in leadership roles:** The Institute will address the gender imbalance in leadership and ownership of architectural practices. It will advocate for the benefits of a more gender-balanced approach to design direction, project management and business management.
- 5. Promote equality of employment arrangements.** The Institute will adopt, and promote within the profession, equitable employment and recruitment practices. This includes addressing pay inequity and supporting equitable recruitment, advancement and promotion processes.
- 6. Support alternative and flexible career pathways within the profession:** The Institute will identify, validate and offer guidance on supporting diverse and non-linear career paths, and ensuring that systems of recognition, reward and career progression are not predicated on traditional linear career paths. This includes the Institute's own activities.
- 7. Develop mentorships and networks available to all genders.** The Institute will facilitate and encourage informal access by all genders to the influence and experience of leaders, networks and mentors in the profession, ensuring diversity in their pairings and associations.
- 8. Educate the profession about the impact of gender stereotypes.** Recognising that many contemporary workplaces and professional systems retain vestiges of processes and cultures that structurally benefit men as a group, the Institute will inform and educate members about these impacts, the resulting barriers to equality, and strategies to address them.

- 9. Actively seek input on the needs of all members:** The Institute will provide effective and readily accessible channels for members of all genders to provide feedback or unsolicited suggestions, ideas, concerns or complaints relating to gender equity and gender-based bias and discrimination.
- 10. Develop and coordinate specific programs to give effect to this Gender Equity Policy.** The Institute will establish and maintain an effective forum to create, maintain, review and report on specific programs designed to implement the principles of this policy.
- 11. Demonstrate leadership on gender balance in all Institute activities.** The Institute will make every effort to achieve a 40 / 40 / 20 gender balance in all organisational and public activities (40% women / 40% men / 20% any gender). This includes, but is not limited to: membership or leadership of Institute committees, juries, representation at conferences, participation in event programs and panel discussions. Institute endorsement of, or participation in, external panels, conferences or competitions must also accord with this policy.

Implementation

Every effort should be made to achieve a **40 / 40 / 20 gender balance** (40% female / 40% male / 20% any gender) for membership or leadership of Institute committees, juries, representation at conferences and on panel discussions, or Institute endorsement of external panels, conferences or competitions in line with this policy.

The Institute commits to supporting ongoing data collection and research, and to regularly report on findings both within the Institute and the greater profession.

Review

This policy and the ideas embodied in it will be reviewed as required, but generally at not more than 3-yearly intervals.

ⁱ The first iteration of the policy was developed by the Australian Institute of Architects' Gender Equity Working Group, and was guided by the Institute's Gender Equity Steering Committee, chaired by Shelley Penn. The research project "Equity and Diversity in the Australian Architecture Profession: women, work, leadership (2011–2014)" was initiated and led by Dr Naomi Stead and was funded under the Australian Research Council Linkage Grants scheme, LP 100200107. Researchers were Professor Naomi Stead, Justine Clark, Dr Gill Mathewson, Dr Karen Burns, Dr Amanda Roan, Professor Gillian Whitehouse, Professor Julie Willis and Professor Sandra Kaji-O'Grady. Industry partners were Bates Smart, BVN and PTW, the Australian Institute of Architects and Architecture Media. Another outcome of this research is the research-based advocacy Parlour: women, equity, architecture Inc.

ⁱⁱ Paula Whitman, *Going Places: The Career Progression of Women in the Architectural Profession*. Brisbane: Queensland University of Technology, 2005. Other reports include: *Women in the Architectural Profession: A Report by the Australian Institute of Architects to the Human Rights Commission* (1986); *Towards a More Egalitarian Profession: The Findings of the Royal Australian Institute of Architects Committee on the State of Women in Architecture* (1991); and *The Career Progression of Men in the Architectural Profession* (Australian Institute of Architects, 2006).

ⁱⁱⁱ *Parlour Census Report 2001–2016: Women in Architecture in Australia* (Melbourne: Dr Gill Mathewson and Parlour, 2018).