



Australian
Institute of
Architects

INQUIRY INTO ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND DATA CENTRES



Senate Environment and Communications References
Committee

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF ARCHITECTS

**SUPPLEMENTARY SUBMISSION: GOVERNING AI IN ARCHITECTURE AND THE
BUILT ENVIRONMENT**

Submission date: 31 AUGUST 2026

ABOUT THE INSTITUTE

The Royal Australian Institute of Architects (Institute) is the peak body for the architectural profession in Australia. It is an independent, national member organisation with more than 13,500 members across Australia and overseas.

The Institute exists to advance the interests of members, support professional standards and contemporary practice, 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.

-
- + At the time of this submission the National President is David Wagner FRAIA. Hon. AIA
 - + The Chief Executive Officer is Cameron Bruhn Hon. FRAIA.

CONTACT DETAILS

Australian Institute of Architects
ABN 72 000 023 012
policy@architecture.com.au

The Royal Australian Institute of Architects recognises the unceded sovereign lands and rights of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the First Peoples of these lands and waters.

This recognition generates acknowledgement and respect for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Countries, Cultures and Communities, and their ways of being, knowing and doing.

Caring for Country practices including architecture and place shaping have existed on this continent since time immemorial.

The Institute recognises a professional commitment to engage and act meaningfully through reciprocal partnership and relationships with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples. Together we will support and develop the emergence of new possibilities for our shared future.

INQUIRY INTO ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE AND DATA CENTRES – SENATE ENVIRONMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS REFERENCES COMMITTEE

Supplementary submission: Governing AI in architecture and the built environment.

1. Introduction

The Royal Australian Institute of Architects (the Institute) welcomes the opportunity to provide this supplementary submission to the Senate Environment and Communications References Committee regarding its inquiry into artificial intelligence and data centres.

The Institute is the peak body for the architectural profession in Australia, representing around 13,500 members across practice, government, education and industry. The Institute advocates for the role of good design in delivering public benefit, including improved liveability, sustainability, resilience, accessibility and long-term economic value.

As design professionals, architects are uniquely positioned to coordinate complex systems, integrating engineering, planning, environmental performance, procurement, regulation and community outcomes across the full lifecycle of development.

The Institute provided an initial submission to this inquiry on 26 June 2026, focused on the infrastructure implications of data centre growth, including planning, energy, water, embodied carbon, design quality, First Nations engagement and community outcomes.¹ This supplementary submission should be read alongside that submission. It responds to the broader implications of artificial intelligence for architectural practice, the built environment and public interest.

The extension of the Committee's reporting timeframe provides an important opportunity to consider how Australia can capture the benefits of artificial intelligence while managing its risks. The Institute supports AI being used to improve productivity, sustainability and design quality. However, AI must be governed in ways that protect public safety, professional accountability, intellectual property, cultural knowledge, community trust and long-term public value.

¹ Australian Institute of Architects, *Submission to the Senate Environment and Communications References Committee inquiry into artificial intelligence and data centres*, 26 June 2026, available at:

https://www.architecture.com.au/wp-content/uploads/Senate-Inquiry-AI-and-Data-Centres_RAIA-26062026-1.pdf

The key question for the built environment is not simply whether AI can accelerate design, documentation or construction. The more important question is whether AI improves the quality, safety, sustainability and equity of the places it helps create.

2. The evolving national policy context

Australia's National AI Plan sets out three broad goals: to capture the opportunity of AI, spread the benefits across regions, industries and communities, and keep Australians safe through regulatory frameworks and responsible practices.² The Institute strongly supports these objectives.

The Australian Government's establishment of an Office of AI within the Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet on 15 July 2026 signals an important shift toward a more coordinated national approach.³ The Prime Minister's speech on AI also emphasised the need for Australian standards, stronger protection for creative works, and clear rules for large data centres.⁴

This policy direction is significant for the architectural profession and the built environment. AI will increasingly influence how buildings, precincts and infrastructure are planned, designed, assessed, procured, documented, constructed and managed. These are not only technical questions. They go directly to public safety, professional competence, design quality, productivity, sustainability and community trust. The built environment is a priority sector because it sits at the intersection of AI-enabled cognitive work and the emerging application of AI, automation and robotics to physical design, construction, operation and maintenance.

The Institute considers that AI policy should be developed with explicit regard to the built environment. Buildings and places are long-lived public assets. Decisions made with the assistance of AI can shape neighbourhoods, housing outcomes, infrastructure

² Australian Government, *National AI Plan*, Department of Industry, Science and Resources, December 2025, available at: <https://www.industry.gov.au/publications/national-ai-plan>.

³ Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet, *Office of AI*, available at: <https://www.pmc.gov.au/domestic-policy/office-ai>.

⁴ Prime Minister of Australia, *AI in Australia's interests*, 15 July 2026, available at: <https://www.pm.gov.au/media/ai-australias-interests>; see also Senator the Hon Tim Ayres, *AI in Australia's Interests*, 15 July 2026, available at: <https://www.minister.industry.gov.au/t-ayres/media/ai-australias-interests>.

performance, cultural heritage, climate resilience and community wellbeing for decades.

The Institute also notes that the effective adoption of AI across the built environment will require governance frameworks extending beyond individual professions. The Australian Government should consider mechanisms that facilitate ongoing collaboration between industry, academia, professional bodies and regulators to support the development of practical governance, accountability and implementation frameworks for AI in the built environment.

The Institute considers that national AI policy should also recognise the role of state and territory Architects Registration Boards. At present, there is no nationally consistent guidance on how AI use interacts with professional competence, registration, certification, conduct and disciplinary obligations. Until such guidance is developed, existing statutory and professional obligations should be understood to continue in full and should not be diluted by the use of AI tools.

3. AI offers significant opportunities for the built environment

AI has potential to support better outcomes across the built environment when used responsibly and with appropriate professional oversight.

In architectural practice, AI can support research, design testing, visualisation, project administration, data analysis, sustainability assessment and documentation support.⁵ These applications may improve efficiency and help practitioners explore more options earlier in the design process. Used well, AI can support better decision-making and free professional time for the judgement, coordination and client engagement that are central to good architecture.

AI may also contribute to national productivity objectives. In housing and infrastructure, it can support more efficient feasibility testing, scenario planning, planning analysis, compliance checking, coordination of complex documentation and early identification of risks. This has potential relevance to housing supply, modern methods of construction, prefabrication, infrastructure delivery and whole-of-life asset management.

AI can also assist resilience and decarbonisation outcomes. It may help optimise building performance, test design options, reduce material waste, support lifecycle analysis and improve the coordination of energy, water and carbon outcomes. These

⁵ Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, *RAIC Statement on Artificial Intelligence in Architecture*, 28 April 2026, available at: <https://raic.org/news/raic-statement-on-artificial-intelligence-in-architecture/>

opportunities align with the Institute's Decarbonisation Plan and with the broader need to reduce emissions across the built environment.⁶

However, productivity gains should not be treated as an end in themselves. AI should be assessed by whether it improves public value. Faster design and delivery are only beneficial if they also support safe, sustainable, inclusive, high-quality and resilient built environment outcomes.

4. AI must assist, not replace, professional judgement

The most important principle for the built environment is that AI must support, not replace, human professional judgement.

Human professional accountability is non-delegable. No AI tool should be treated as the final decision-maker on any matter requiring human professional judgement, statutory certification, client advice or regulatory sign-off.

Architects are legally and professionally accountable for the advice, documentation and decisions they provide. The National Standard of Competency for Architects establishes the standard for architectural education and assessment of professional competency prior to registration in Australia.⁷ Regardless of the tools used, architects must continue to demonstrate the competencies required by this national standard and remain accountable for professional services delivered under their supervision.

International architectural and regulatory bodies are converging on this point. The Royal Architectural Institute of Canada has affirmed that AI may assist practice but does not replace the architect's duty of care, professional judgement, ethical responsibility or accountability.⁸ The American Institute of Architects has similarly emphasised that AI should support, not replace, professional judgement, and that architects remain accountable for work products and decisions produced with AI assistance.⁹ The National Council of Architectural Registration Boards has stated that AI is reshaping

⁶ Australian Institute of Architects, *Architecture Industry Decarbonisation Plan 2025–2050*, May 2025, available at: <https://www.architecture.com.au/advocacy-news/policy/architecture-industry-decarbonisation-plan-2025-2050>

⁷ Architects Accreditation Council of Australia, *National Standard of Competency for Architects*, available at: <https://aaca.org.au/>

⁸ Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, *RAIC Statement on Artificial Intelligence in Architecture*, 28 April 2026, available at: <https://raic.org/news/raic-statement-on-artificial-intelligence-in-architecture/>

⁹ American Institute of Architects, AI Task Force, January 2026, available at: <https://www.aia.org/resource-center/ai-task-force>.

practice and regulation, but that architects must remain responsible for evaluating outputs and maintaining the standard of care.¹⁰

Similar principles are emerging in planning. The Planning Institute of Australia's guidance on AI in development assessment recognises AI's potential to assist planning processes but cautions against replacing expert human judgement, particularly where transparency, bias, public trust and accountability are at stake.¹¹

The Institute supports this approach. AI-generated outputs can appear authoritative while containing errors, omissions or assumptions. This is particularly concerning where AI tools are used for design decisions, code interpretation, planning advice, accessibility assessment, fire safety, environmental performance or other matters affecting public safety and regulatory compliance.

Professional accountability must remain clear. Where AI is used in architectural practice, appropriately qualified professionals must remain responsible for reviewing, validating and accepting outputs before those outputs are relied upon by clients, regulators, builders or the public.

This should include expectations for human oversight, professional competency, quality assurance, documentation of AI use where material to professional outputs, and clear accountability for final decisions. AI-generated outputs should be reviewed by appropriately qualified professionals with the training and expertise necessary to understand their limitations, assumptions and implications.

As AI becomes integrated into regulated professional services, government should also consider nationally consistent guidance regarding liability allocation, professional accountability, record keeping and evidentiary requirements where AI-assisted outputs contribute materially to professional advice or decision-making.

5. AI presents public safety, regulatory and liability risks

AI is already being used or explored in areas that intersect with professional responsibility, including design generation, zoning analysis, code compliance,

¹⁰ National Council of Architectural Registration Boards, *How AI Is Reshaping the Architecture Industry*, 4 February 2026, available at: <https://www.ncarb.org/blog/how-ai-reshaping-the-architecture-industry>.

¹¹ Planning Institute of Australia, *Guidance Note: AI in Development Assessment*, February 2024, available at: <https://www.planning.org.au/common/Uploaded%20files/PIA/Policy/PlanTech/GuidanceNoteAIinDevelopmentAssessment.pdf>

specification writing, documentation review and project management. These applications can improve efficiency but also create new risks.

The risks are not limited to isolated errors. They include:

- incorrect or incomplete compliance advice
- reliance on outdated or inappropriate data
- design outputs that do not suit local climate, culture, regulation or site conditions
- lack of transparency about how a result was generated
- difficulty verifying assumptions embedded in AI outputs
- unclear professional liability where AI contributes to advice or documentation
- unintended bias of outcomes

These risks matter because the built environment is regulated to protect public health, safety and welfare. AI may assist with compliance, but it cannot hold professional responsibility. Nor can it understand the full context of a place, community, client, regulatory framework or construction process in the way a qualified design professional must.

The Institute considers that national AI standards should clarify the use of AI in regulated built environment services. This should include expectations for human oversight, professional competency, quality assurance, documentation of AI use where material to professional outputs, and clear accountability for final decisions.

Particular attention should be given to accountability where responsibility is shared across multiple parties, including software providers, AI developers, consultants, contractors and professional practitioners. Clear governance arrangements will be necessary to ensure responsibility for public safety outcomes remains identifiable, transparent and enforceable. Emerging uncertainty regarding professional indemnity coverage and liability allocation for AI-assisted services further reinforces the need for nationally consistent governance and accountability frameworks.

The Institute recommends that AI governance in architectural practice be risk-based. This should distinguish between prohibited uses, high-risk uses requiring pre-approval and documented professional review, controlled uses requiring approved tools and project records, and low-risk administrative uses. In particular, AI used for statutory submissions, code compliance, safety-critical analysis or professional opinions should be treated as high-risk and subject to explicit human review, record keeping and accountability requirements.

6. Copyright, intellectual property, confidentiality and architectural works must be protected

The Institute welcomes the Australian Government's commitment to protecting Australian creative works in relation to AI training and use.¹² Architectural works should be expressly considered as part of this policy work.

Architectural drawings, digital models, specifications, design concepts, images, reports and other professional outputs may be protected by copyright and moral rights and may also be subject to contractual, licensing and confidentiality arrangements. These works embody significant professional expertise, cultural knowledge, technical coordination, commercial value and, in some cases, confidential client information.

This is consistent with the Institute's broader advocacy that architecture forms part of Australia's creative and cultural workforce.¹³ Architectural works are not only technical documents. They are creative and professional outputs that shape the built environment and contribute to Australia's cultural, social and economic life.

The Institute is not seeking to displace legitimate contractual ownership or licensing arrangements. Rather, AI policy should ensure that architectural works and built environment information are not used for AI training, commercial reuse or data extraction without a lawful basis, appropriate transparency and regard to applicable consent, licensing, copyright, moral rights and confidentiality obligations.^{14 15}

Government should ensure that architectural and built environment works are expressly considered in future copyright, data and AI training reforms. This should include clarification of how existing protections apply and whether additional licensing, transparency, enforcement or governance mechanisms are required for AI-related use.

Government should also consider governance arrangements relating to ownership, licensing and authorised use of digital models, project datasets, digital twins and AI-

¹² ABC News, *Labor takes a stand on data centre rules and AI copyright*, 15 July 2026, available at: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2026-07-15/labor-to-set-standards-for-ai-data-centres-and-copyright/106918380>.

¹³ Australian Institute of Architects, *Towards a New National Cultural Policy*, 12 May 2026, available at: <https://www.architecture.com.au/wp-content/uploads/Towards-a-New-National-Cultural-Policy-RAIA-12052026-1.pdf>

¹⁴ Australian Institute of Architects, *Copyright*, Acumen, available at: <https://acumen.architecture.com.au/practice/legislation/copyright>

¹⁵ Australian Institute of Architects, *Moral Rights*, Acumen, updated 22 December 2022, available at: <https://acumen.architecture.com.au/practice/legislation/moral-rights>

generated outputs. Future disputes are likely to arise not only from copyright infringement, but also from uncertainty surrounding ownership, training rights, commercial exploitation and reuse of digital information assets developed through collaborative project environments.

The Institute also recommends that future AI guidance address the treatment of client-owned and confidential project information. Client briefs, client data, site information, digital models, drawings, specifications and project data should not be input into AI systems unless the relevant data, confidentiality, ownership and training-use terms are clear. Guidance should also address ownership of AI-generated outputs, particularly where outputs are created using approved enterprise tools compared with consumer or non-approved platforms.

AI also raises important questions about the longevity, provenance and evidentiary value of architectural records. Increasingly, built environment information is held in complex digital environments that depend on proprietary software, linked datasets and cloud-based platforms that may change over time. Where AI materially informs design, analysis or professional decision-making, records should identify the systems and data used, how outputs were verified, and how key decisions were reached. Government should consider national expectations for preserving significant project records beyond contractual and liability periods to support accountability, future learning and the long-term architectural record.

7. AI should deliver public value, not productivity alone

AI systems are often optimised for speed, cost, pattern recognition or precedent. These objectives are not the same as design quality.

There is a risk that AI tools could encourage generic, low-context or lowest-cost design outcomes if used without professional judgement. In the built environment, this could undermine liveability, amenity, accessibility, cultural responsiveness, climate resilience and long-term value.

This is also relevant to standardised design approaches, including pattern books, which can support quality and productivity when they are well-designed, properly attributed, fairly remunerated and adapted to local context, climate and community needs.

The Institute considers that AI should be assessed against public value outcomes, not productivity alone. This includes whether AI-supported processes produce places that are:

- safe and compliant
- climate-responsive and low-carbon

- accessible and inclusive
- culturally informed
- durable and adaptable
- connected to Country and community
- efficient over their full lifecycle

Public value also requires consideration of how the benefits, costs and risks of AI are distributed across communities, places, infrastructure systems and future generations.

Architects bring contextual judgement to these questions. They coordinate technical systems, design intent, place, culture, regulation, construction, users and long-term performance. AI can assist this work, but it cannot replace the ethical and professional responsibility required to make decisions that affect the built environment and the people who use it.

The success of AI in the built environment should be judged not by how quickly it produces outputs, but by whether it improves public value through better homes, buildings, infrastructure and communities.

The Institute encourages the Australian Government to evaluate AI initiatives not only by efficiency gains but also by their contribution to long-term community benefit, public trust, resilience, sustainability, liveability and professional accountability. Public value should remain a central objective of national AI policy.

8. AI systems must not reinforce bias or inequity

AI systems are shaped by the data on which they are trained. In the built environment, this creates risks because historical datasets may reflect past inequities in planning, housing, access, land use, design standards and infrastructure investment.

International regulators and professional bodies have identified bias in AI design workflows as a present concern, including where tools draw on historical data related to zoning, land use and housing.¹⁶ The Planning Institute of Australia has similarly cautioned that AI systems trained on historical data may reproduce outdated assumptions, overlook local context and reinforce flawed reasoning if not subject to careful oversight.¹⁷

¹⁶ National Council of Architectural Registration Boards, *How AI Is Reshaping the Architecture Industry*, 4 February 2026, available at: <https://www.ncarb.org/blog/how-ai-reshaping-the-architecture-industry>

¹⁷ Planning Institute of Australia, *AI in Planning*, available at: https://www.planning.org.au/common/Uploaded%20files/PIA/Policy/PlanTech/AI%20in%20Planning_WEB.pdf

Without appropriate safeguards, AI could reinforce poor precedents or inequitable outcomes, including:

- inaccessible housing or public spaces
- design approaches that fail to meet diverse cultural or household needs
- planning recommendations that replicate historical disadvantage
- under-recognition of regional, remote or First Nations contexts
- over-standardisation of housing and community infrastructure

AI-enabled design and planning tools should therefore be subject to transparency, professional review and critical testing. Public sector use of AI in planning, housing and infrastructure should include safeguards to ensure outcomes are fair, inclusive and context-responsive.

Safeguards should include more than individual professional review. Some AI risks, including bias, exclusion or poor performance across particular communities or project types, may only become visible when outcomes are monitored over time. Public sector AI use in planning, housing and infrastructure should therefore include ongoing outcome monitoring, periodic review and mechanisms to update tools or governance settings when material risks or inequitable impacts are identified.

9. First Nations knowledge, Country and cultural data require specific protection

The Institute has consistently advocated for stronger engagement with Traditional Owners, and for built environment decisions to be led or genuinely informed by First Nations knowledge and care for Country.

AI policy must also address Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP) rights and First Nations data sovereignty. AI tools may scrape, store, reproduce or generate content based on cultural imagery, design, language, stories, landscapes, ecological knowledge or community information. Without proper safeguards, this risks extraction, misuse or misrepresentation of cultural knowledge.¹⁸ These risks reinforce the importance of recognising and protecting ICIP in the development, training and application of AI systems used in the built environment.

¹⁸ Australian Institute of Architects First Nations Advisory Committee, *Protecting Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property (ICIP): Guidance Note*, Issue 2, July 2026, available at: https://www.architecture.com.au/wp-content/uploads/Protecting-ICIP_FNAC_Guidance-Note_Issue-2-1.pdf.

The National AI Plan aims to ensure AI benefits are shared across communities and uphold Australia's values.¹⁹ In the built environment, this requires ensuring that AI systems do not bypass the need for meaningful engagement with Traditional Owners or substitute generated cultural references for genuine relationship, consultation and consent.

The Institute recommends that AI standards and guidance include explicit protections for ICIP in built environment contexts, including the use of cultural datasets, images, place-based knowledge, design precedents and Country-related information.

10. AI will reshape skills, education and graduate pathways

AI will change the skills required of architects, graduates and built environment professionals. The issue is not only whether AI will displace tasks, but whether the profession is equipped to use AI critically, ethically and effectively.

Architectural education and continuing professional development will need to address:

- AI literacy
- data literacy
- ethical use of AI
- copyright and confidentiality
- verification of AI outputs
- public safety obligations
- digital practice management
- climate and performance modelling
- human-centred and culturally informed design

International architectural bodies are developing guidance, training and resources for responsible AI adoption in practice and the Institute is well placed to build on this work in the Australian context.²⁰

Particular attention should be given to the impact of AI on graduate pathways and early-career development. Many of the tasks currently used to build core technical

¹⁹ Australian Government, *National AI Plan*, Department of Industry, Science and Resources, December 2025, available at: <https://www.industry.gov.au/publications/national-ai-plan>

²⁰ American Institute of Architects, *AI Task Force*, available at: <https://www.aia.org/resource-center/ai-task-force>; Royal Institute of British Architects, *RIBA AI Report 2026*, available at: <https://www.riba.org/work/insights-and-resources/ai-report/>; Royal Architectural Institute of Canada, *RAIC Statement on Artificial Intelligence in Architecture*, available at: <https://raic.org/news/raic-statement-on-artificial-intelligence-in-architecture/>

competency, professional judgement and project experience may become increasingly automated. AI adoption should therefore be accompanied by deliberate workforce planning, mentoring, supervision and education reform to ensure future professionals continue to develop the capabilities required for registration and practice.

This aligns with the Institute's broader interest in strengthening pathways for graduates and ensuring early-career practitioners can develop the skills, confidence and experience required for professional practice.²¹

In addition to technical literacy, future capability frameworks should include AI governance, risk management, ethics, accountability, data stewardship and critical evaluation of AI-generated outputs. These capabilities will be increasingly important across all built environment professions.

As AI capability and risk are evolving rapidly, isolated or generalised continuing professional development will not be sufficient. Government, registration bodies, education providers, professional bodies and employers should support structured lifelong learning frameworks that enable practitioners to maintain current knowledge, understand emerging risks and meet their continuing professional obligations.

Practices will also need governance capability, including the ability to classify project data and AI use by risk, identify approved and non-approved tools, recognise when escalation is required, maintain records of material AI use and report AI-related incidents. Continuing professional development should therefore address practical AI governance as well as awareness of emerging tools.

11. AI and procurement must support quality, not only speed

AI may change client expectations about the time, cost and scope of architectural services. If AI efficiencies are treated primarily as a mechanism to reduce fees, professional scope or project timeframes, there is a risk that design quality, coordination, documentation, professional development and accountability will be eroded. Productivity gains should instead support improved design quality, sustainability, risk management, workforce capability and community outcomes.

Government procurement should avoid incentivising superficial AI-enabled outputs at the expense of quality, public value and whole-of-life performance. Instead, AI should

²¹ Australian Institute of Architects, *Submission to the Senate Education and Employment References Committee inquiry into Australian university graduates*, 5 June 2026, available at: [Senate-Inquiry-Australian-University-Graduates_RAIA-05062026-1.pdf](#)

be used to support better briefing and data, scenario testing, risk identification, lifecycle assessment, coordination and evaluation of options.

This is particularly important in public projects, housing programs, schools, hospitals, social infrastructure and major precincts. Public procurement should require transparency about the use of AI where it materially contributes to design, analysis, documentation or decision-making. It should also recognise the continuing value of professional judgement, ethical responsibility and design leadership.

Government procurement frameworks should also consider model requirements addressing disclosure of AI use, data ownership, intellectual property, confidentiality, cybersecurity obligations, audit rights and professional accountability. Public procurement can play an important role in establishing consistent market expectations regarding responsible AI use.

12. AI infrastructure and AI practice must be considered together

The Institute's initial submission to this inquiry focused on data centres as the physical infrastructure underpinning AI growth. This supplementary submission focuses on AI's broader implications for practice and the built environment.

These two issues are connected. AI policy should not separate digital tools from their physical consequences. AI depends on energy, water, land, data infrastructure and supply chains. It also influences the design and operation of buildings, cities, workplaces and homes.

The Institute therefore supports a national AI framework that brings together:

- responsible AI governance
- AI infrastructure
- professional accountability
- intellectual property
- data governance, confidentiality and digital stewardship
- workforce capability
- decarbonisation
- public value
- First Nations knowledge and Country
- design quality and community outcomes

This is a systems challenge. The built environment professions have an important role in helping government ensure AI improves real-world outcomes, not just digital outputs.

The Institute considers there may be value in establishing an ongoing national built environment AI forum or advisory mechanism comprising government, professional bodies, industry and academia. Such a forum could provide practical advice regarding governance arrangements, professional accountability, intellectual property, workforce capability and emerging risks associated with AI adoption across the built environment sector.

13. Recommendations

Based on the issues outlined above, the Institute recommends that the Committee consider the following actions:

1. Recognise the built environment as a priority sector in national AI policy

Ensure national AI standards address the built environment's intersection with AI-enabled professional work, automation and physical delivery, including risks and opportunities for public safety, design quality, sustainability, planning, procurement and professional accountability.

2. Maintain professional accountability for AI-assisted design and decision-making

Ensure AI tools assist but do not replace professional judgement. Qualified professionals must remain responsible for design decisions, regulatory compliance, documentation and public safety outcomes. National guidance should address accountability, liability, record keeping, traceability of material AI use and review by appropriately qualified professionals.

3. Clarify and protect rights in architectural works used by AI systems

Ensure architectural and built environment works are expressly considered in copyright, moral rights, licensing and AI training reforms, including arrangements for lawful use, transparency, consent where required, attribution, enforcement and appropriate rights management.

4. Promote the responsible stewardship and use of built environment digital assets

Establish clear legal, storage, governance and preservation frameworks for architectural and design information used in AI systems, including drawings, digital models, specifications, project datasets, digital twins, AI-generated outputs and significant project records. These frameworks should support transparency,

authorised use, accountability, provenance, evidentiary value and long-term accessibility.

5. Support AI applications that improve housing, infrastructure, decarbonisation and climate adaptation outcomes

Encourage AI use that supports better design quality, more efficient and reliable housing and infrastructure delivery, whole-of-life performance, net-zero aligned and low-carbon outcomes, climate resilience and more responsive planning, design and construction following disasters.

6. Embed safeguards for the ethical use of AI

Require AI systems used in planning, housing, design or infrastructure decision-making to be transparent, reviewable, subject to human oversight and monitored over time to reduce risks including bias, poor quality, inequitable outcomes and loss of local context.

7. Protect Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property in AI systems and datasets

Ensure AI policy and standards recognise First Nations data sovereignty and protect Indigenous Cultural and Intellectual Property, particularly where AI systems use cultural knowledge, imagery, language, stories, design references, datasets, restricted knowledge or place-based information.

8. Invest in AI literacy, lifelong learning and workforce capability across the built environment

Support structured education, continuing professional development, mentoring and graduate pathways that build AI and data literacy, governance, ethics, accountability, data stewardship, risk management and critical evaluation of AI-generated outputs throughout professional careers.

9. Require transparency in public procurement where AI materially informs outputs

Ensure public projects disclose material AI use while maintaining professional responsibility for final outputs. Procurement and contract documents should address data ownership, confidentiality, intellectual property, cybersecurity, audit rights, human review, record keeping and professional accountability.

10. Align governance of AI systems, AI infrastructure and professional practice

Ensure national AI policy recognises the interdependence of AI systems, AI infrastructure and professional practice. Governance frameworks should support cross-jurisdictional coordination and address public value, community outcomes, workforce capability, digital stewardship, infrastructure impacts and professional accountability. The Australian Government should also consider establishing an ongoing built environment AI forum or advisory mechanism to support collaboration between government, regulators, professional bodies, industry and academia as AI technologies and governance frameworks evolve.

14. Conclusion

Artificial intelligence presents significant opportunities for Australia's built environment. It can support better design, stronger analysis, improved sustainability, climate adaptation, more efficient delivery and more informed decision-making. However, these benefits will only be realised if AI is governed in ways that protect public safety, professional accountability, intellectual property, cultural knowledge, community trust and long-term public value.

AI should not be judged only by how quickly it produces outputs. In the built environment, it should be judged by whether it improves long-term economic, social, cultural and environmental outcomes. Short-term efficiencies that result in poorer quality buildings, weakened professional capability, unreliable records or diminished accountability ultimately reduce productivity and transfer costs and risks to future owners, governments and communities.

The Institute supports a national AI framework that captures opportunity, spreads benefits and keeps Australians safe. Built environment expertise should therefore be included in the development of AI standards, policy and implementation pathways, with clear arrangements for professional accountability, ethical use, workforce capability, digital stewardship and continuing review as technologies evolve.

The Institute would welcome the opportunity to provide further information to the Committee, including appearing at a public hearing, and to contribute to future policy and reform processes relating to AI and the built environment.

-END-