

NSW Architects Registration Board **Strategic Plan** 2020 - 2023



NSW
Architects
Registration
Board





NSW Architects Registration Board 2020-2023 Strategic Plan

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Introduction

About us

Established in 1921, the NSW Architects Registration Board (the 'Board') administers the Architects Act 2003 (the 'Act'), the legislation regulating architects in NSW. It is a government agency, wholly funded from fees levied on architects.

The Board is subject to the general direction and control of the Minister for Better Regulation and Innovation and governed by an 11 person Board, six members of who are directly appointed by the Minister for their sector-based expertise in architectural matters, property and construction, Australian building and construction law, local government, and community.

The work of the Board is supported by the Registrar and a staff team with multidisciplinary backgrounds in architecture, law, finance, and administration.

Objects of the Act

The objects of the Architects Act are:

- to ensure that architects provide services to the public in a professional and competent manner,
- to provide mechanisms to discipline architects who are found to have acted unprofessionally or incompetently,
- to ensure that the public is appropriately informed about the qualifications and competence of individuals or organisations holding themselves out as architects, and
- to promote a better understanding of architectural issues in the community.





The Functions of the Board

The functions of the Board are set out in the Act and given effect through its Regulations and Schedules, including the NSW Architects Code of Professional Conduct (the 'Code of Conduct').

The Board's functions include:

- protecting consumers of architectural services by ensuring that architects provide services to the public in a professional and competent manner,
- ensuring that individuals or corporations or firms do not misrepresent themselves to be architects,
- registering architects and monitoring their Continuing Professional Development and Professional Indemnity Insurance obligations,
- investigating complaints against architects and disciplining architects found to have acted unprofessionally or incompetently,
- accrediting NSW architectural qualifications for the purpose of registration and administering the Architectural Practice Examination for registration as an architect in NSW,
- providing general advice to consumers of architectural services with respect to the ethics and standards of professional competence that are generally expected of architects, and
- promoting a better understanding of architectural issues in the community.



The Value of Registering Architects

The regulation provided by the Act safeguards the interests of architects' clients and the community more broadly.

This is important because:

- architecture has long-term impacts on the built environment and the quality of our cities,
- poor design and building defects are often difficult to reverse and impose high costs on the community,
- most consumers of architectural services are first-time, single-time users and have no expertise in 'being a client', making it difficult for them to assess the quality of architectural services upfront, and
- architectural services require considerable skill to deliver and tailor to a consumer's particular needs.

The registration of architects establishes a well-regulated, professional system that sets the bar for other building professionals. Architects are highly trained, with recognised skills in design, documentation, project delivery and practice management. They have the knowledge, skills, and capabilities to provide a higher level of service to consumers than other building designers.

This is important in the current context of recent building failures that raise the need for greater regulatory controls across the construction industry more widely.

2020-2023 Strategic Plan

Purpose

The 2020-2023 Strategic Plan for the NSW Architects Registration Board is intended to guide the priorities and work of the Board by combining:

- Strategic insights for the future work and direction the Board,
- The tactics that will deliver upon objectives, and
- The measures by which success will be assessed.

Vision

Our vision is to protect consumers and extend the integrity of a high-quality architecture profession through initiatives and regulation that provide for today, as well as considering the future.

Mandate

- Accredite NSW architecture programs,
- Register architects and maintain standards,
- Discipline architects when needed, and
- Promote architectural issues to the public.





What Guides the Board's Vision and Future Direction?

The Board's future direction is guided by delivering the objects of the Act through relevant current and future areas of focus. The Act, the Code of Conduct and the National Standard of Competency for Architects (the 'National Standard of Competency') remain the primary framework within which the Board regulates, protects and shapes the profession and engages with its diverse stakeholder base.

The following considerations are key to guiding the vision and future direction of the Board:

Clear value proposition as a Board

The Board's value proposition is two-fold: providing for consumers a clear definition of what a registered architect is, and articulating the benefits and value an architect can bring; and providing for architects a clear understanding of the role of registration and continuing professional development in protecting and promoting the integrity and reputation of the profession and optimising the quality of architectural services.

Consumer protection focus

The spate of high-profile cases of building failures in the multi-residential sector

are casting a wide-reaching shadow and pose clear regulatory challenges for the construction industry broadly. The Board continues to tirelessly promote a better understanding in the wider community of the value of engaging a registered architect and the consumer protection provided under the Act. This includes the ongoing development of more digital resources for consumers of architecture and architects.

Changing societal expectations

The Board provides support to architects, who must remain well-informed and take a forward-facing approach to engaging with the evolving professional context, including lifting their performance and setting new agendas to keep pace with change.

Promoting registration of NSW architects

Experienced practitioners who meet the standards required for registration and more recent graduates of accredited architecture programs are encouraged and supported by the Board to become registered architects. Registration is a mechanism that assists to upskill the sector and optimise the professionalism and quality of architectural services provided, which in turn enhances the built environment and the quality of our cities.

Diversity and inclusion

The Board provides support to encourage a diverse and inclusive architecture profession, which is essential to the continuing relevance of the profession to ensure that it can address the societal expectations of the broad consumer base it serves.

Current global health, economic and societal context - 2020

The global health and economic impacts of COVID-19 are expected to have a significant impact on society in the medium-longer term. Of relevance to architecture and the built environment are impacts on:

- high density areas, such as the CBD of Sydney,
- the construction industry and property sector broadly,
- how we commute,
- the way we work together and the requirement for workplaces for large numbers of people,
- how we use technology, and
- how we facilitate social gatherings, such as events and conferences.

Strategic Priorities

There are 3 primary areas of focus, called strategic pillars. These have been given simple titles to explain what they are designed to achieve, but also for ease of reference. The strategic pillars have been framed to keep activities, projects and updates oriented to the delivery of strategy in the most practical way.

Pillar 1: Relationships

Understand and extend key collaborative relationships, ensuring they support the Board's work without challenging the Board's integrity or independence as a respected, critical member of the community.

This pillar focuses on helping the Board meet its remit of administering the Act through relationships with key stakeholders across government, professional bodies, cultural institutions, universities, architectural practices, architects and other relevant stakeholders.

These stakeholders may impose a variety of interpretations on the Act depending on their area of representation, different organisational perspectives and lived experiences. This raises the need for targeted initiatives, communicated well to each stakeholder group, ensuring that the Board is delivering deliberate and clear value to all.

Pillar 2: Trust and Values

Renew and promote the community's trust in the profession of architecture across NSW by building greater awareness and understanding of the value of architects and architecture.

This pillar focuses on improving community understanding of the role of architects, the specific contributions they make and the value they bring.

The Board must clearly showcase the value of architect registration and, in the context of current regulatory challenges, contribute to rebuilding and enhancing public trust in the construction industry more broadly.

A crucial component of this pillar is the complaints process itself, ensuring that the Board's investigations of complaints are conducted in a transparent and timely fashion; uphold the public interest view; and apply appropriate disciplinary mechanisms for architects who are found to have acted unprofessionally or incompetently.

Pillar 3: The future

Understand and inform the future of the profession and use the Board's calm and considered voice to provide leadership in the shaping and equipping of the architect of the future.

This pillar focuses on listening to, understanding, and acting upon national and international conversations around culture, climate, and diversity.

As a small regulatory body, the Board does not have a formal advocacy role. Instead, its ability to influence the future of the profession will come from refining the Code of Conduct, contributing to the re-shaping of the National Standard of Competency, and through its role as a Partner Investigator in the ARC Linkage Project, Architectural Work Cultures: professional identity, education and wellbeing.

It is noted that the unfolding impact of the COVID-19 crisis may inform further development of this pillar, as we deal with unprecedented social and economic change.



Strategic Pillars

The strategic pillars will help the Board to:

- Support collaboration with stakeholders while maintaining integrity and independence,
- Improve the understanding of the role and value of an architect and bring that value to life, and
- Understand and inform the future of the profession.

Enablers and the Everyday Work of the Board

The strategic pillars are enabled and supported by continued vigilance on the everyday work of the Board:

Maintaining professional standards

- Code of Conduct
- National Standard of Competency
- Proactive communication and resources
- Automatic National Mutual Recognition

Administering registrations and complaints

- Trusted and valued architect registration process
- Streamlined complaints process

Outreach and engagement

- Social media
- Website
- Sydney Architectural Festival
- Publications and case studies

Research

- Stakeholder relationships leveraged to pursue research
- Case studies
- Surveys and data

NSW Architects Registration Board – Strategic Plan 2020-2023

Mandate: Accredite NSW architecture programs; register architects and maintain standards; discipline architects when needed; and promote architectural issues to the public.

Vision: To protect consumers and extend the integrity of a high-quality architecture profession through initiatives and regulation that provide for today, as well as considering the future.

Enablers and the Everyday Work of the Board

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- Leverage stakeholder relationships to pursue research
- Case studies
- Surveys and data

Strategic Priorities

Pillar 1: Relationships

Understand and extend key collaborative relationships, ensuring they support the Board's work without challenging the Board's integrity or independence as a respected, critical member of the community.

Priorities:

- 1.1 Understand the stakeholder environment across the NSW community, prioritise key relationships and pursue meaningful connections
- 1.2 Develop a strategic approach to communication via the website and social media, beyond clicks and views to engagement and interaction
- 1.3 Develop a networked approach to engage, beyond Sydney, with regional NSW
- 1.4 Comply with government requirements in the day-to-day work of the Board

Measures of Success:

- Development of a clear Stakeholder Map
- Prioritised stakeholder relationships and agreed forward plans
- Number of co-hosted initiatives / events
- Social media metrics clearly articulated and measured on an ongoing basis
- Number of events hosted through NSW Regional Network Group
- Government policies complied with as appropriate to size, scale and nature of Board operations

Pillar 2: Trust and Values

Renew and promote the community's trust in the profession of architecture across NSW by building greater awareness and understanding of the value of architects and architecture.

Priorities:

- 2.1 Expand Board resources for diverse audiences articulating the value of using an architect and the consumer protection provided under the Act so that more people understand, and have confidence in accessing, architectural services
- 2.2 Streamline the complaints process
- 2.3 Continue work to protect the title of 'architect'
- 2.4 Grow the number of registered architects
- 2.5 Elevate the Board's voice on regulatory reform of the construction industry

Measures of Success:

- *Working with Your Architect* resource re-launched
- Number of schools / children benefitting from *Building Connections STEAM Futures* program
- Streamlined complaints process
- Lessons learned from Board Determinations shared with architects / consumers to avoid mistakes
- Increased number of NSW registered architects
- Relevant metrics are clearly articulated and measured on an ongoing basis

Pillar 3: The future

Understand and inform the future of the profession and use the Board's calm and considered voice to provide leadership in the shaping and equipping of the architect of the future.

Priorities:

- 3.1 Update / maintain the integrity of the Act and the Code of Conduct
- 3.2 Contribute to reviews of the National Standard of Competency
- 3.3 Invest in future-facing research partnerships with industry, universities, and other regulators. Provide thought leadership relevant to the architecture profession through associated events and resources
- 3.4 Strategically involve the Board's voice in debates about the future of architecture

Measures of Success:

- Updated Act, Code of Professional Conduct and National Standard of Competency
- Automatic National Mutual Recognition remains a standing agenda item, nationally
- Number of future-facing Board events / resources
- Sydney Architecture Festival (SAF) appeals to broad audience and is a platform to involve Board's voice in debates about the future of Architecture
- SAF metrics are clearly articulated and measured on an ongoing basis



How will this Strategy be used?

We will use the Strategy on a Page to orient the way Board members and the staff team will work with each other. As a self-funded agency with limited resources, it is necessary for everyone to be clear on intent and priorities, and to understand the deliverables and their measurement. We will constantly tie our work back to this Strategic Plan to deliver the greatest possible value as a small regulatory body.

Our work will be supported by:

- Making regular reference to the Strategic Plan in Board meetings,
- Undertaking 6-monthly reviews and updates of the Strategic Plan (by Registrar), and
- Establishing an operating rhythm that sees the staff team regularly bring their work and updates on their progress to Board meetings for insight and feedback.

Role of Board Members

Board Members:

- Provide governance oversight of the Board,
- Have a view and bring their voice to the table,
- Constructively contribute to the Board Strategy, and
- Bring skills that contribute the fulfilment of the Board's functions, such as financial acumen, Australian legal qualifications, public interest acumen, construction and property development industry expertise, architectural experience.

Board Members are supported by the Registrar.



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