

● NSW Architects  
Registration Board  
Strategic Plan 2017-2020



For more information on the NSW Architects Registration Board  
go to [www.architects.nsw.gov.au](http://www.architects.nsw.gov.au) or get in contact with us at:  
Level 2,  
156 Gloucester St,  
Sydney NSW 2000.

You can also follow us on Twitter at:  
[@ArchInsights](https://twitter.com/ArchInsights)  
Or on Instagram at:  
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# NSW Architects Registration Board Strategic Plan 2017-2020

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# 1

## What we do



- 1 The NSW Architects Registration Board administers the Architects Act. In this capacity the Board serves as the regulator for architectural services in NSW. The Board itself comprises sector-based representation from across design and architecture, property and construction, law, local government and the community. The Board is wholly funded from fees levied on architects.

In 2003, when the current Architects Bill was presented to the NSW Parliament, the purpose was for the Board to be concerned with consumer issues, and broader public and industry interests in architecture, while at the same time ensuring a strong professional sector is maintained and professional architectural knowledge is applied to the board's activities.

We believe that regulation continues to have a place in a rapidly changing environment. We see our role is to promote quality and choice for consumers in how they access architectural and design services - by levelling the playing field for consumers and their architects and allowing the best to be achieved.

We see a primary challenge of regulation is to maintain an adaptable mindset that is agile to shifts in technologies requiring adjustments in industry practice, and which keep pace with community expectations. The Board believes the right regulation can be valuable for the norms it can foster; enabling industry to co-ordinate practices that, in turn, means consumers can have greater confidence about the services they seek. Applied well, regulation can reduce transaction costs, create opportunities for industry to grow and develop, to demonstrate credibility, and deliver a public good.

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# 2

## Objects of the Act / Functions of the Board

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The objects of the Architects Act are to:

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

The functions of the Board are set out in the Architects Act itself. These functions are given effect through the Regulations, and Schedules of the Act that include the NSW Architects Code of Professional Conduct.

But our functions are also described in policies and procedures that give shape to the roles that appear in the Act. For example, the Board plays an active role in the review and accreditation of university courses in architecture. We recognise architects registered in neighbouring States and Territories through a mutual recognition procedure, and we administer the prestigious Byera Hadley Travelling Scholarship. Not all these functions are described in the Act, but all are part of our role and purpose.

The Architects Act describes the Board’s functions as including:

- the registration of architects,
- the investigation of complaints against architects,
- the taking of disciplinary action against architects,
- the investigation of matters referred to it by the Minister for advice and report in relation to the practice of architecture (including codes of professional conduct),
- co-operation with neighbouring jurisdictions to further a common and harmonious approach to the administration of legislation relating to architects,
- the accreditation of courses of study in architecture,
- the maintenance and operation of the Architects Fund,
- the promotion of community discussion about architectural issues,
- the provision of general advice to consumers of architectural services with respect to the ethics and standards of professional competence that are generally expected of architects,
- the provision of advice to the Minister with respect to any other matter in connection with the administration of this Act,
- such other functions as are conferred or imposed on the Board by or under this Act or any other Act.
- The Board may also develop model client agreements relating to home design for use by architects.

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# 3

## An enforceable Code of Conduct

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3 Schedule 2 of the Architects Regulation 2012 contains the NSW Architects Code of Professional Conduct ('the Code'). It provides architects and their clients with a statement of the standards required of architects when engaged to provide architectural services. It reflects the principle that the public interest is advanced if all architects recognize that the fundamental and overriding obligation of a profession is to serve and promote the public interest. While an architect has a duty to the client, the Code also recognizes that there is a parallel duty to the public.

The Code is intended to inform and guide architects as to what is expected of them in their professional conduct and in the provision of architectural services to clients. It also enables homeowners:

- (a) to understand the standards expected of an architect and the level of accountability expected of them in the provision of architectural services, and
- (b) to develop reasonable expectations of the services to be provided.

The Code is divided into 8 Parts.

Part 1 defines terms used in the Code and sets out the objectives of the Code.

Parts 2-8 detail the standards of behaviour expected of architects in their professional practice. Architects should use their best endeavours to meet those standards by applying their professional judgment. The standards relate to general practice standards, dealings with clients, insurance coverage, continuing professional development, alternative dispute resolution, dealings with the public and professional relationships with other architects.

A failure to comply with the Code constitutes unsatisfactory professional conduct for the purposes of the Architects Act 2003 and may be grounds for disciplinary action under Part 4 of that Act.

The Code is used on a day to day basis by the Board when providing general advice to homeowners and consumers who seek assistance when working with an architect. General advice is provided as part of a 'triage service' intended to provide information in real time. The Board provides general advice pursuant to s61(i) which includes the provision of general advice to consumers of architectural services with respect to the ethics and standards of professional competence that are generally expected of architects.

### **Getting on the same page sooner: the NSW Architects Code of Professional Conduct**

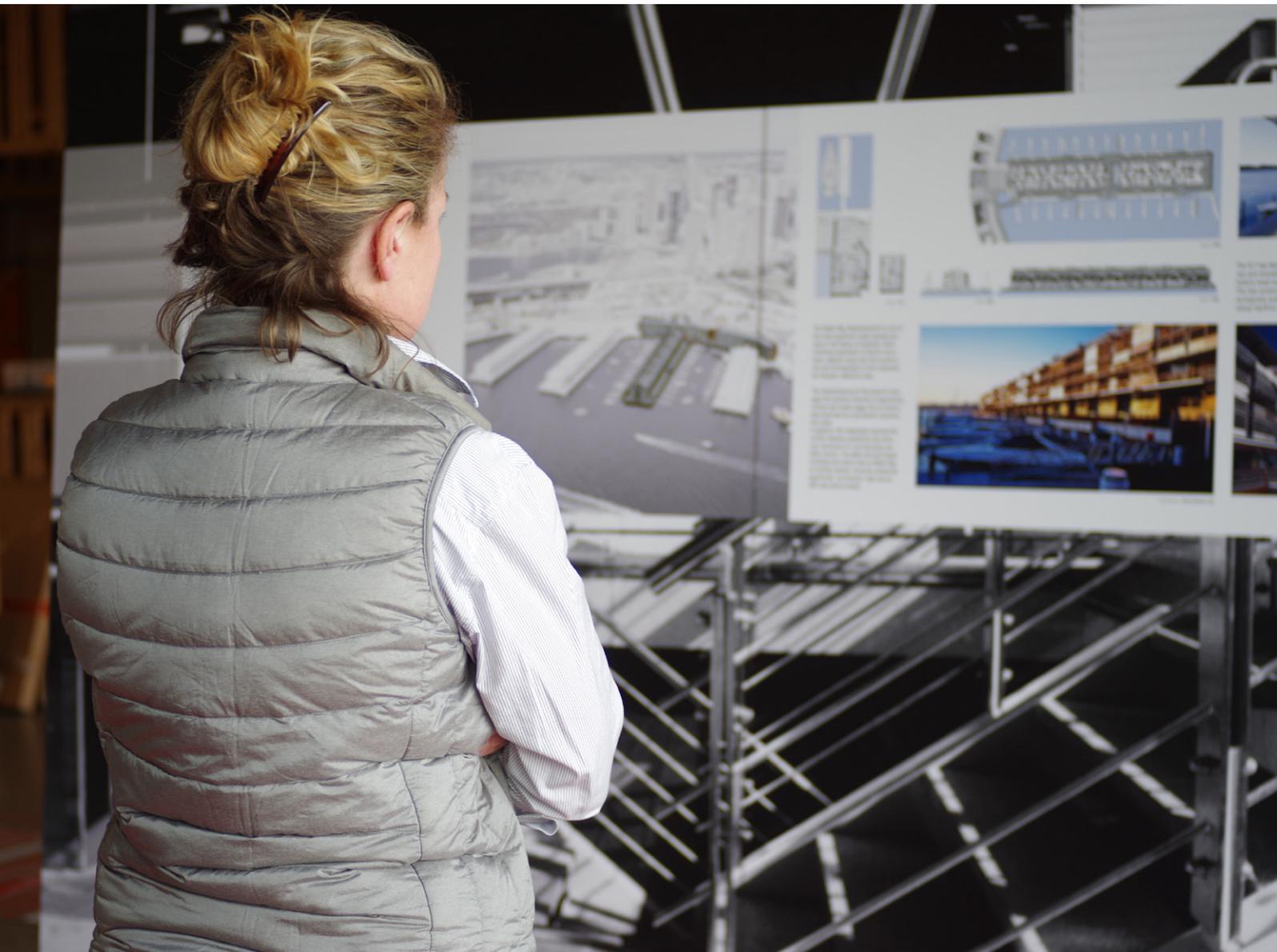
In 2016, the Board commissioned a short video to raise awareness of the NSW Architects Code of Conduct which serves as a guide for competence and conduct. Greater awareness can help homeowners and their architect can get on the same page sooner. The video was promoted on the Board's Twitter account @ArchitectureInsights and resulted in over 23,000 views.

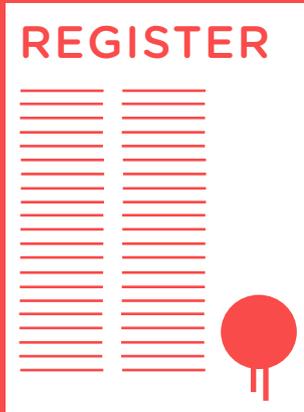
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The industries' design community, particularly from the built environment sector, has a key role in building better cities and suburbs, including regional centres, making them functional as well as socially and aesthetically attractive.

- Australian Government, 2011, Creative Industries, a Strategy for 21st Century Australia,

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# 4,930

Architects in New South Wales

# 50

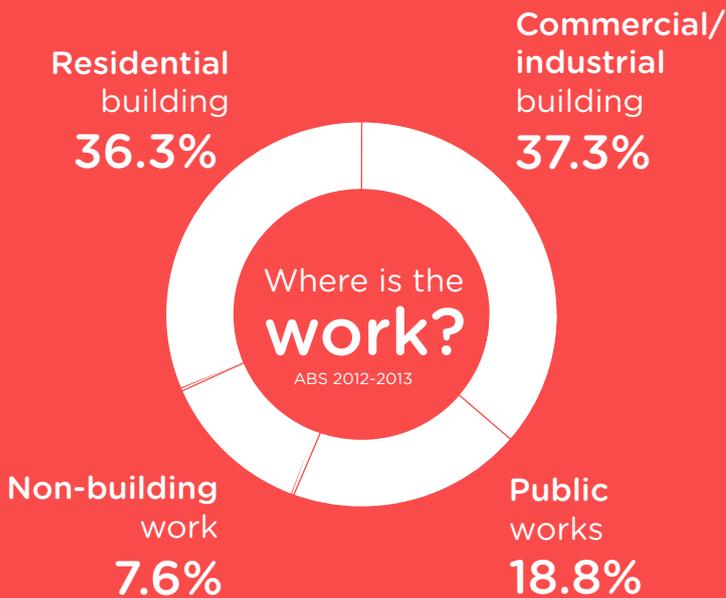
Average age of a  
**practising** architect



**26%**  
WOMEN



**74%**  
MEN



**\$27.3m**

university fees generated each yr at 4 NSW schools of architecture

UTS research



**17%**

value added to a building if using an architect

UTS research

**\$6.4bn**

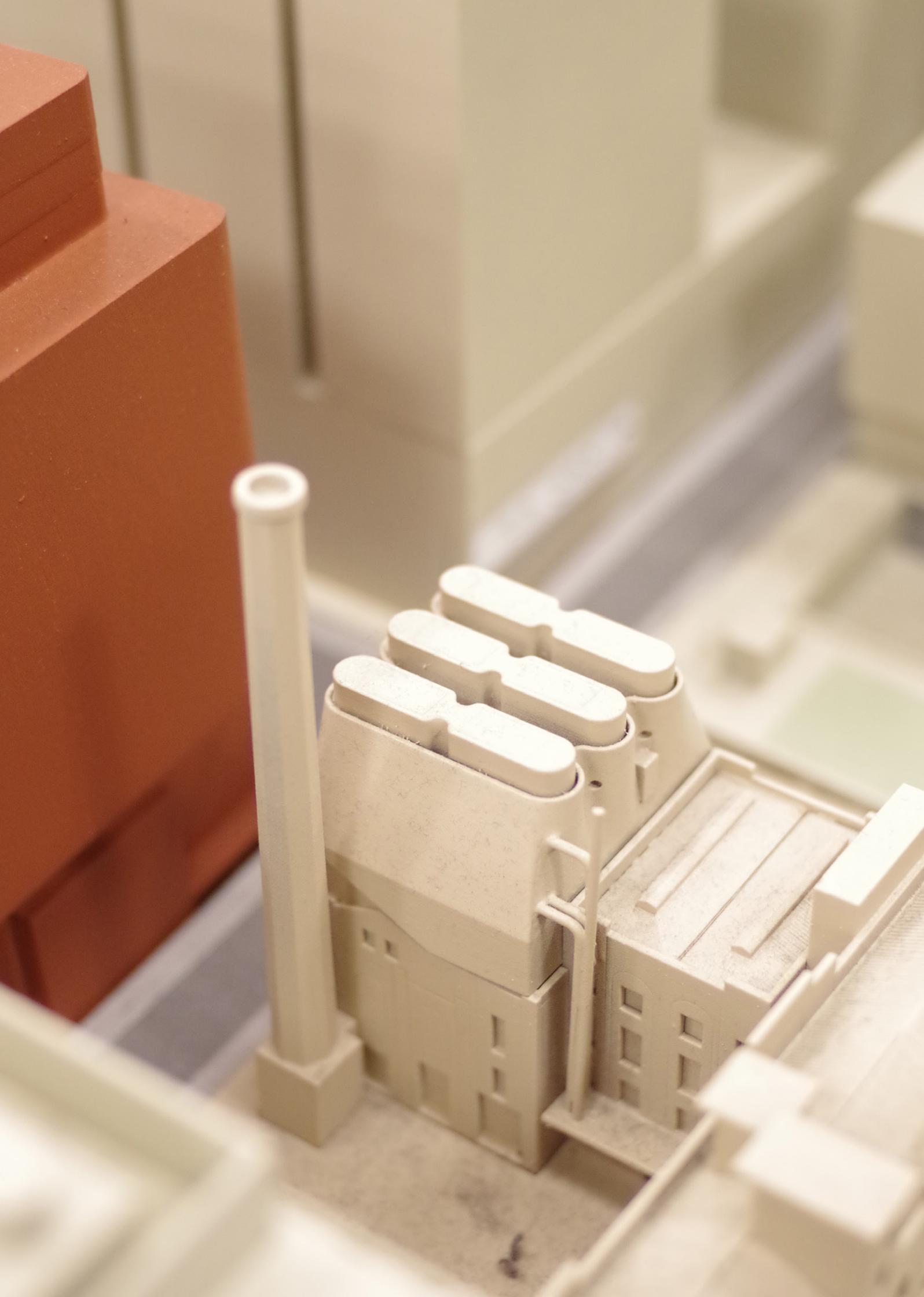
Annual revenue of Australian practice

IBIS World figures



value of Australian 'archi-tourism'

UTS research



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# 4

## So why regulate at all?

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Architects offer professional services. The design, planning, and construction process is complex, and can be baffling for a homeowner without professional support. And there is a lot at stake. Renovating or building for the first time can be the largest investment of our lives. The right regulation can safeguard the interests of the individual homeowner or client of the architect, and - because of the long term impact on our environment, residents and users of the city more broadly - the interests of the community in a more general sense. This is important as around 80% of Australians live in urban centres, and Australian cities consume around 75% of the energy we produce.

So why regulate at all?

- Professional services can be difficult to assess before they are purchased. Unlike goods - like groceries, a car or a home - you can't inspect a service before buying it.
- Architectural services require considerable skill to deliver and tailor to the consumer's particular needs. So, it can be difficult for the consumer to assess the quality of the services before they are purchased.
- The quality of professional services can also be difficult to assess even after the services have been purchased. For example, if a person hires an architect for a complex or controversial brief in a Council area known to be sensitive to contemporary design, and development approval is refused, it can be difficult for the homeowner to know if development consent was always going to be hard to secure, or if the quality of the architect's service was the reason.

- Most homeowners are first-time, single-time users of architectural services - meaning most homeowners haven't developed expertise in 'being a client'. Informational asymmetry between the professional and the homeowner can result in misunderstanding and miscommunication, producing conflicting expectations.
- The consequences of purchasing poor professional services can be significant. For example, architectural services generally a large expenditure for the consumer and a defective service can result in substantial financial, physical and emotional pain.
- Architecture lasts beyond the initial homeowner or client. Negative impacts or defects in a building are costly - and unlikely - to be reversed; imposing long term costs on neighbours, a strata body or the community at large.

We know consumers are changing. Once the majority of homeowners engaged architects for their own stand-alone home. But as more of us choose to live in apartments or townhouses, the chance to influence the work of the architect is limited. We also know that architecture is embedded in other sectors too. The work of architects can be the result of council planning decisions. The sector itself is a contributor to building and construction, and to building trade skills through high quality, challenging or innovative design features. Architectural education in our four schools of architecture represents a \$27m investment by students and their families. So we think getting regulation right can help promote a stronger, more resilient architectural sector for NSW.

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# 5

## How do we work?

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9 Beyond the statutory functions laid out in the Act, our approach to regulation is embodied in three key principles that drive the Board to inform, engage and educate those operating in the sector; architects and allied professionals, universities and training organizations, homeowners and the wider public.

### *10 years ahead, not 10 years' behind*

We know regulators can be, by nature, a bit slow moving. Where the relevant regulatory authority rests in an Act of Parliament, the will or imperative to update or modify the statutory instrument can be elusive. In the Board's case, the Architects Act (2004) was reviewed in 2009, with modifications recommended to bring the Act in to a more modern setting. And while those modifications are still pending, it hasn't prevented the Board from modernizing its ways of working.

In 2015, the Board identified opportunities to provide a more rapid response to consumer enquiries in relation to working with an architect. By working with partners such as the *NSW Civil Administrative Tribunal* and industry peak bodies, the Board has been able to develop innovative ways of working that are consistent with the Act, and centred on the consumer's needs. The Board believes it is critical for a regulator to operate with the trust of those it seeks to regulate. To earn this trust, a regulator must continually demonstrate that it travels at the forefront of the sector. This belief has led the Board to adopt a view that if we are not thinking 10 years ahead, we are probably operating 10 years behind. Actions by the Board to ensure it travels at the forefront of the sector include;

- To develop, publish and engage the sector in a forward-looking discussion paper on the future of architecture and the built environment, called '*Change. Architecture. Discuss*'. The discussion paper identifies key drivers of change in the built environment sector, outlines three grand challenges for architectural practice, and proposes a framework for harnessing potential growth through innovation across research, education and practice.
- Co-founding partner in a 10-year exchange program with Danish philanthropic organizations and local firms to better understand the emerging reality of multi-disciplinary design skills, in partnership with the Sydney Opera House.
- Early work towards a digital 'sandbox' with other government agencies and industry to pilot emerging design technologies for improved construction quality and the consumer experience in apartment buildings.

### *Education is the best form of regulation*

The Board considers it relevant that the Objects of the Architects Act include a duty to promote a better understanding of architectural issues in the community. Regulators with a legislated duty to promote an understanding of the field to which the regulation relates are empowered to operate beyond a merely punitive or reactive role - and adopt strategies that are educative and preventative.

So what does the Board do to inform the public? The Board informs the public through the conduct of a wide range of activities such as:

- partnering with local councils, state government



agencies, professional organizations, and not for profit groups, local communities and businesses to explore the built environment by hosting events, talks and festivals

- preparing advice and publications intended to equip people with the information they need to make the best choices about architecture
- commissioning research
- developing teaching materials for school students in partnership with appropriate organizations to engage the next generation and develop the skills needed to shape the world around them
- providing support for relevant exhibitions and events such as the Sydney Architecture Festival in partnership with others
- sponsoring the graduating students' exhibitions from each architecture school in NSW.

The Board promotes a better understanding of architectural issues across all ages, including the development of curricula for school-aged children like resources available on the Department of Education website, and flagship events like the Sydney Architecture Festival.

#### *Spacewise*

In this 10-13 week teaching resource, students study a local neighbourhood and consider how it meets the needs of the community. They explore its development and how it has changed over time. They consider issues of the conservation and preservation of any significant local historical and/or cultural features. In groups, students analyze a public space that is part of the local neighbourhood and use information from this analysis to design and produce a proposal for the re-development of a pub-

lic space to better meet the needs of users.

10

#### *Building the future*

This resource encourages students to explore their local neighbourhood and consider sustainability, aesthetic, cultural, safety and functional issues facing our community now and in the future. Students develop a deeper understanding of how places have come to be, how they are now and how they can be in the future. Building the Future is a collaboration between the Board, the Historic Houses Trust of New South Wales and Sydney Region, NSW Department of Education and Communities.

#### *Transforming the local*

Transforming the Local is a multi-layered resource aimed at supporting the teaching of architecture units as part of Visual Arts courses in Stages 4 and 5. This resource can be used for Stage 5 Visual Design and Stage 5 Photography and Digital Media. Building Connections: Transforming the Local is a collaboration between the Board, and the Visual Arts and Design Educators Association.

#### *Sydney Architecture Festival*

The Sydney Architecture Festival aims to inform the public's experience of architecture and design, by connecting people to place through talks, events and exhibitions. Since the inaugural event in 2007, more than 40,000 Sydneysiders have taken part in tours, events and talks in person, with our digital reach generating over 2,650,000 impressions on Twitter and through media interest including; Daily Telegraph, Sydney Morning Herald, Australian Financial Review, Sun Herald.

#### *Be the lead learner: earning legitimacy*

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# ..architectural services account for about two thirds of the total number of businesses in the sector. This result is in line with the City of Sydney's 2012 Creative Sector Report finding that architecture is the largest creative industry in the City.

- Mapping Culture: Venues and Infrastructure in the City of Sydney

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11 Contemporary institutions must operate with the trust and support of the industry they seek to regulate. Central to earning this trust is the 'legitimacy' earned by the institution through its sustained actions. A regulator can only perform its role if the community it seeks to regulate regard the rules as binding, and supports its functions. It is not enough for the community to agree that an institution is needed; it's important that the community views the institution as *worthy* of its support and trust. We see our role to be the lead learner and to share openly as we learn. Sharing our research is central to this purpose. Since 2004, the Board has regularly commissioned research through grants and partnership agreements with universities, including;

- *The impact of household and attitude change on the creation of affordable and sustainable neighbourhoods* - exploring the characteristics, barriers and opportunities of affordable housing within the context of the urban development value chain, including the potential of manufactured housing for more cost effective and mixed housing.
- *"They should fix the crack": Reflections on the built environment in the middle school years* - the project was initiated by the NSW Architects Registration Board because of our interest in how "consumers" of architectural design are learning about the design process and about the products of design activity. We wanted to learn how students in the middle years of their schooling thought about the built environment and the extent to which an understanding of the design process might influence their attitudes about the built environment - now and in the future.
- *I love this place because...: community perceptions of*

*the built environment* - The National Trust negotiated a media partnership on the project with ABC Radio, embodied in a formal Memorandum of Understanding. As a result, the competition was publicized on-air in pre-recorded 30 second promotional pieces across the ABC's 60 radio stations nationally, on a rotation of 30-50 times per week per station, for two weeks at the beginning of the competition and week at the end. The competition was also promoted on-line on ABC radio's 60 websites.

- *Suburban Adaptation: an investigation into the potential of adapting existing dwellings to improve affordability, increase occupancy rates and address the needs of the new demographic* - The project explored the demand for new dwellings in Sydney's metropolitan growth, along with a hypothesis that most of the demand for new housing comes not from population increase but from changes in the demographic composition of contemporary households.
- *Measuring Up: innovation and the value-add of architecture* - Architecture at its best can test the limits of technology or trade skill - like the new UTS Chau Chak Wing building, or Renzo Piano's Macquarie St apartments. Both buildings demanded new building products and technologies to be developed in order to realise the extraordinary vision of the architect. So how do we measure the value of innovation in architecture and our built environment? Or put another way, what contribution does architecture make to the innovation economy when it pushes the envelope of what's possible? The research shows:
  - o The architectural sector is structurally

under-valued by around 15% or \$1bn annually.

- o Interest in the Chau Chak Wing generates around \$46m each year in value thanks to local spend from tourists coming to see this exciting building.
- o Real value gets generated when cities develop great precincts. 'Bundling' great buildings, spaces and places - like Sydney's Central Park, a university campus or Green Square - attracts more visitors than a single icon alone.

- *Architects and Mental health*

In 2015, we were prompted by individual cases of mental illness in architects to commission Australia's first literature review in to the mental health of architects. Partnering with mental health experts and universities, the Board seed funded *A Draft Consolidated Framework for an Intervention for Improving the Mental Health of Architects*. The Board's primary role is to protect the consumer. We think we can do this best by encouraging work across the sector that supports architects who might need access to support and services. We convened Universities, students and recent graduates of architecture, employer groups like the Association of Consulting Architects, and the peak industry body, the Australian Institute of Architects. The Review was launched with two of Australia's leading mental health researchers, Prof Ian Hickie and Prof John Mendoza at the University of Sydney Brain and Mind Centre in November 2016.

- *Practice to project: Innovating Architecture*

In October 2016, we were a part of the creative direction for the 9th international conference of the Association of Architecture Schools of Australasia. This unique gathering brings together researchers and educators with practitioners and students to explore architecture as a learning environment. The conference coincided with the 10th annual Sydney Architecture Festival - resulting in around 70% of those attending the opening presentations at the conference for the first time.

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# 6

## 2014-2017 Presence, Knowledge, Innovation

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13 In 2014, the Board endorsed a 3-year strategy aimed at lifting the presence and identity of the Board among its audiences, and to use this enhanced presence as a platform to share the wealth of knowledge assets that had been developed by the Board over prior years. In doing this, we aimed to build a scaffold on which to explore areas of innovation and emerging opportunities for growth and diversity in NSW. This work continues. However, with the end point for this 3-year strategy now in sight, we want to build on our work of the last few years and chart a course for 2017-2020. Our engagement, research and events have shown us we're on the right track, but we know there's more work to do.

Our research partnership with UTS has taught us that making an impact in a city is about well-designed precincts, not individual buildings alone - suggesting that the best outcomes result from an integrated approach to design of buildings, spaces and places. It also reminded us that architectural practice needs to diversify to remain relevant in a rapidly diversified market.

New business models and approaches are needed to serve a market with new, or changing expectations. The Board exists to promote the public interest. For the public interest to be served, there must be access for consumers to quality and choice in architecture and design across the built environment. And for quality and choice to be on offer, a thriving and diverse range of professional services must be available. For the profession to thrive, it must be sustainable.

Our pioneering work in mental health suggests that more needs to be done to build professional networks that support those coming through if the clients of architects are to have confidence.

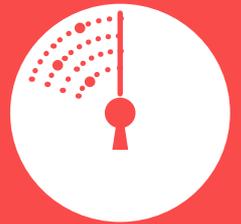
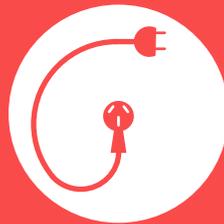
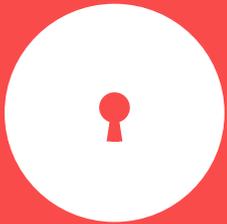
Finally, engaging with the sector on our own work in 2016, *Change. Architecture. Discuss.* revealed support for an even more ambitious agenda to map and explore the frontier of architecture.

This is the backstory to our 2017-2020 strategy. We see it continuing the work we began in 2014. But we also see the need to accelerate and expand our work if we are to be an effective organization that is capable of adapting in a changing business environment.



7

2017-2020  
ARB OPEN





Throughout 2014-2017, we've developed projects and programs that explore ways to be more open and more engaged as an organization. We now think it's time to embed this ambition in our strategic plan as a way to challenge ourselves to go further. 'ARB Open' aims to promote a more open platform for architecture. We see this working in four ways;

## Access

Since 1923, the Board has maintained a Register of Architects. Public access to this Register has been limited. A search of the Register reveals an architect's name, registration number, postcode and suburb. It doesn't provide information that members of the public or prospective clients may be looking for. For example, a website, company information, social media platforms or email contact. Would this information provide homeowners with more opportunity for greater choice? The Board's physical infrastructure is also an asset we'd like to share more openly. The Board's offices are located close to ferry, train and bus transit. As more of our operations move online, space becomes available to use for other purposes. Opening this space up to others can help to open channels of communication between the Board and industry; increasing the likelihood of chance encounters leading to new ideas or better ways of working.

### **Aim**

To share access with architects to modify and manage their own profile

### **That's why we'll**

Open access to some parts of the Register of Architects

### **So**

More useful information is contained in the Register

### **Aim**

Share data safely from the Register of Architects

### **That's why we'll**

Explore the development of API's and other software plug-ins to allow data to be presented dynamically for a range of research or other purposes

### **So**

A more comprehensive picture of the sector is possible

### **Aim**

Support architects in regional and rural NSW

### **That's why we'll**

Make our meeting rooms available for anyone needing a place to work or catch up while in Sydney

### **So**

We share our resources more effectively and support architectural services in regional NSW

### **Aim**

Make all contact with us easier

### **That's why we'll**

Adopt a digital-first, digital-only approach to all our work

### **So**

More of our data is searchable, accessible and easy to use



## 17 Inform

The Board has a broad digital footprint to ensure information and resources can be accessed at any time. A strong emphasis is placed on easily downloadable material in the form of pdf publications found on the website. But we also know not everyone spends their day checking our site. For this reason, the Board uses a range of digital media channels designed to appeal to a range of audiences. The Board aims to continue to increase its public engagement through social media and web resources in the 2016/2017 year, including a free podcast channel on Soundcloud. Original content available on Soundcloud includes podcasts from events like the Sydney Architecture Festival, forums and events hosted by the Board to explain our regulatory function, and interviews with our Byera Hadley Travelling Scholarship alumni.

### **Aim**

Encourage more podcasts from those interested in design and architecture

### **That's why we'll**

Lend out or bring along our podcast infrastructure, and make our sound booths available to anyone who shares our obsession with sharing knowledge

### **So**

More people can access a broader range of resources, perspectives and information on architecture and the built environment

### **Aim**

Encourage more architects to use social media as a way to expand their reach

### **That's why we'll**

Work with partners to promote and train architects to use a range of social media platforms

### **So**

More people can access information on architecture

### **Aim**

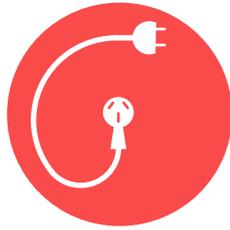
Expand the resources we offer on working with an architect to suit a more diverse audience

### **That's why we'll**

Work with partners to develop resources for those living in, or thinking of living in strata title apartments

### **So**

More homeowners that care about quality have the confidence to access architectural services



## Engage

Our role includes a responsibility to ensure that the public is appropriately informed about the qualifications and competence of individuals or organizations holding themselves out as architects, and to promote a better understanding of architectural issues in the community. We do this by engaging professionals and public at all levels in a range of different ways; online, in print and face to face. We aim to develop content that is accessible, and share knowledge that already exists. We believe in content-driven communication that resources people with new knowledge, not just marketing. Through programs like the Sydney Architecture Festival we're able to engage through media to promote a better understanding of architectural issues in more people.

### **Aim**

Promote project-based research that shows innovation through demonstration

### **That's why we'll**

Boost the profile of our assets like the Byera Hadley Travelling Scholarship alumni

### **So**

More architects engage in project-based research, and more homeowners have access to practical exemplars

### **Aim**

Resource educators with teaching aids that makes built environment education engaging

### **That's why we'll**

Develop a network of practitioners trained in working in schools

### **So**

More children are given the skills to shape the world around them

### **Aim**

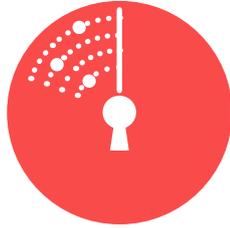
Encourage architects to develop a knowledge commons where more lessons are shared

### **That's why we'll**

Promote post occupancy evaluation

### **So**

Mistakes aren't repeated



## 19 Forecast

We know global trends and fast moving technologies mean that change is continual. Casualisation of the workforce means graduates from our universities might need to work in new ways. A demand for more integrated services may mean more inter-disciplinary business models emerge. A greater emphasis on automation could drive more dynamic feedback on performance as our buildings and spaces report in real time. Smart contracting may give rise to new financial instruments that drive a new development model. We think foresight can help forecast the future, and get us ready for whatever the it holds.

We will focus on the future of architecture through three lens':

- the future of the consumer
- the future of regulation
- the future of design practice

### **Aim**

To be a respected lighthouse for pathfinder thinking

### **That's why we'll**

Invest in partnerships that pull the future forward through thought leadership, events and resources that look 10 years ahead

### **So**

Architecture in NSW travels at the forefront of change

### **Aim**

To understand the future drivers for consumers in a changing environment

### **That's why we'll**

Work with industry, researchers and other regulators to intelligently forecast consumer needs

### **So**

Architecture in NSW travels at the forefront of change

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The importance of the architecture and design sector is also indicated by their high knowledge/creative content...97.7% of all businesses in the sector are involved in the creation role in the value chain.

- Mapping Culture: Venues and Infrastructure in the City of Sydney

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**Aim**

To understand the drivers of emerging regulation

**That's why we'll**

Work with partners to pilot new models of regulation that are suited to contemporary needs

**So**

We continue to serve the public interest and build capacity among architects

**Aim**

To be a leading resource on documenting shifts in architectural practice

**That's why we'll**

Work with industry and researchers to monitor and publish

**So**

We continue to earn the respect of the industry we regulate

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# Putting this plan in to action

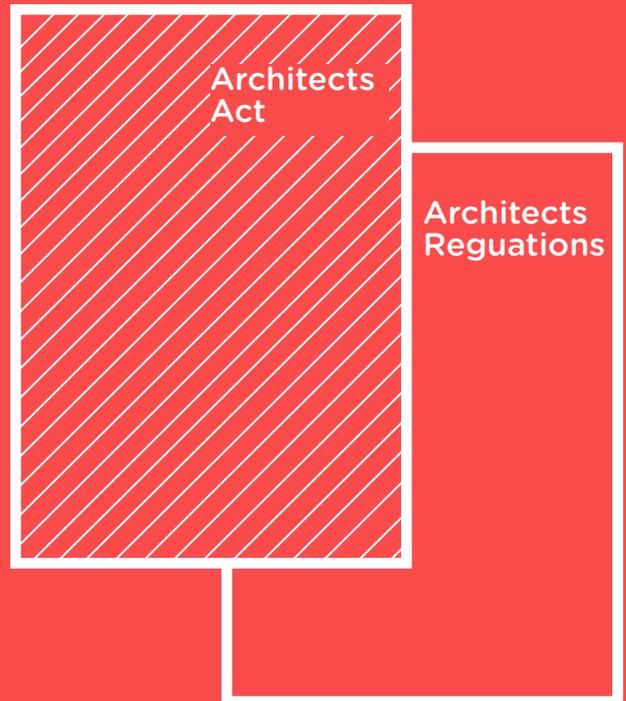
## STATUTORY AUTHORITY

21 Our strategic plan sets broad ambitions that are delivered annually through a Corporate Plan. Each year in April, the Board considers a draft Corporate Plan alongside the draft budget for the year ahead.

The Board's Annual Corporate Plan sets out the projects and priorities for the year ahead. These are identified against the four mission principles of the Board;

- Register Architects
- Protect the consumer
- Inform the public
- Promote architecture

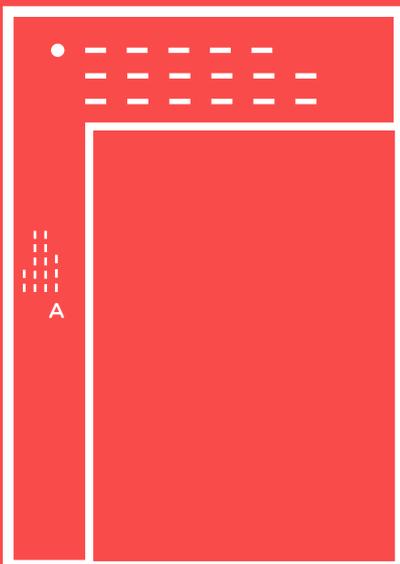
The Corporate Plan is considered and refined before being adopted in June, to commence on 1 July of the new Financial Year.



## STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

## OPERATIONAL PLANS

2017-2020  
3 year Strategic Plan

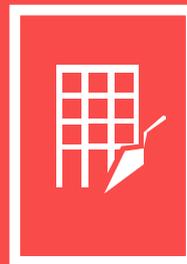


Annual  
Corporate  
Plan

Annual  
Budget

22

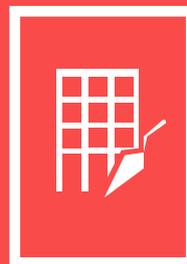
2017-2018



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2018-2019



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2019-2020



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