

APRIL 2023

NATIONAL OFFICE MONTHLY REPORT

FROM THE CEO

Highly successful national meetings were held in Adelaide to enable the Federation to come together to discuss the plethora of issues impacting the building and construction industry, including insolvencies, new building regulation, labour shortages, industrial relations, and the housing crisis. Significant alarm was raised over the proposed industrial relations changes to be introduced into parliament in the spring sittings that include the move to substantially abolish independent contracting, which would erase the benefits of independent contracting to well over 200,000 small businesses in our sector. It was agreed that Master Builders would continue its tradition of fighting back hard on any proposal that undermines the industry. The campaign will be launched in June.

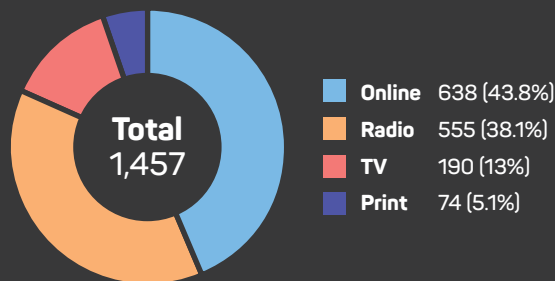
A briefing was provided on the latest insolvency figures in our industry, with concern that the trend may continue until at least September 2023. The National Office, along with Member Associations, continue to do all that we can to assist members adversely affected and respond to the myriad of media questions to maintain confidence, particularly given the negative impact inflation and interest rates are having on declining numbers of new contracts. On a more positive note, the National Board signed off on our long-term roadmap for industry sustainability that promotes an industry-led approach to viability, profitability, and consistency for the industry. The sustainability goals blueprint will be released in June.

ADVOCACY

April kicked off with the release of the National Housing Finance Investment Corporation's *State of the Nation's Housing 2022-23* report. On the day of its release Master Builders was quick to respond and lined up interviews with all major news outlets from Sky, ABC, 7 News, Ch 10, WIN, SBS, AFR, The Australian, SMH and commercial radio using the opportunity to promote our housing policy report and urge government to lift the handbrake on our industry by bringing down the cost of doing business.

The rest of the month saw a mixture of advocacy areas from labour market shortages, interest rates, inflation, insolvencies, building activity and silica.

We responded to over 60 media queries which generated over 1,400 news items across print, online, TV and radio at a national level alone. Our potential audience reach over the period was 36.27 million.



WORKFORCE BLUEPRINT

Master Builders released a policy recommendations report on the labour market shortages faced by the sector: [Future-proofing Construction: A workforce blueprint](#). The report highlights how the industry needs to find almost half a million new entrants into building and construction by November 2026 and makes several recommendations on attracting, recruiting, training and retaining workers. This was picked up across several news platforms including The Australian, West Australian, radio and TV. The blueprint is also being shared with all federal members of parliament and relevant Ministers.

WA needs 26,000 tradies in 3 years

for surveying tech structural steel workers (1349), an and stonemasons i

"With Australia projected to grow cent between 2022, hing nearly 50 in the industry will nificant workforce the necessary 1 construction work executive Denita V Ms Wren said i end the broad ed, which pushed y towards uniers expense of vocatio and training. She an improvement i of careers educat ary schools to i opportunities an lucrative pay in co

The blueprint migration to be more osuer and for efforts to make the sector more attractive to women

"The construction in attracts more male than workers, improving the tiveness of the indus women presents a n opportunity to increas

RIVE KIM MACDONALD
EXCLUSIVE

force by 27 per cent by 2026. Nationally, the 1.3 million workforce needs to grow by 486,000 workers.

WA's construction industry needs 24,000 new workers

The futureproofing Construction report said building



Builders needed

Master Builders Australia has released its blueprint for future-proofing the building and construction industry's workforce in the wake of a shortage of half a million workers.

This includes its policy priorities for attracting

'500,000 new builders are needed soon'

Builders are calling on the federal government to tackle an emerging workforce crisis in construction, amid projections the sector will need half a million new entrants by 2026.

Releasing a major new blueprint to help address workforce shortages, Master Builders Australia says a systemic lack of workers is a critical problem

INSOLVENCIES

April saw 246 construction businesses enter insolvency, the highest monthly total for insolvencies since records began in 2013. The surge in construction business insolvencies is largely the result of the sharp and unanticipated increases in the cost of key building materials and trades combined with the mandatory nature of fixed-price contracts in some areas of the market. Media has frequently approached Master Builders for comment in response to latest data or a big company collapsing. In response, we have empathised with the builders going through this difficult period as well as their employees, subcontractors and clients. We are reminding the media that prior to March 2023, construction insolvencies had been on par with the 10-year average. While we are alert to this recent spike, we are not alarmed. March typically sees a spike in insolvencies each year and we had forecast this year to be particularly difficult, so it is not unexpected. A lot of what we are seeing here is the hangover effect from COVID-19 which saw supply chains disrupted, a massive spike in demand for renovations and building, followed by a rapid rise in inflation and interest rates. On an advocacy front we are calling for changes to fixed-price contracting arrangements, better risk-sharing between parties and downward pressure on business costs.

'There will be more builders going broke'

SCOTT HUTCHINSON
HUTCHINSON BUILDERS CHAIRMAN

'The RBA must live in a parallel universe'

PHIL KEARNS
AVJENNINGS CHIEF EXECUTIVE

'We are dealing with the most severe skills shortage on record'

PETER LANGFELDER
METRICON CHIEF EXECUTIVE

Calls for intervention to save builders

BEN WILMOT
CHRIS HERDE

Top executives in the construction industry expect more building projects to go broke because of "terrible" conditions in the sector, with the collapse of Porter Davis prompting warnings that governments must act to prevent more companies going to the wall.

Porter Davis called in liquidation

est rates rise and the existing labour force can't handle the high volume of often profitless work.

Hutchinson Builders chairman Scott Hutchinson described conditions as "terrible". "It's ridiculous. I have never seen it like this. There will be more builders going broke," he said.

He is sceptical about the prospects of governments being able to save failing builders.

"There's nothing governments can do to help," he said.

ment construction. Mr Hutchinson said the company would make no money this year but would be protected by a strong balance sheet.

"What happened is a rash of work cancellations. Prices have gone up and there's not the labour force to handle it," he said.

"It's completely overheated, especially on the Gold Coast, which we think may be heading for a crash."

slumping due to the uncertainty generated by constant hikes. "The RBA must live in a parallel universe because we see from inquiry levels, right across the market, it's killing the market off," he said.

While the land developer is able to push ahead with its projects, he said banks were demanding presales for high-rise projects which was pushing back many towers. "The main panacea to fix it is interest rate stabilisation," he said.

ing a return to its volumes before the coronavirus crisis.

Meticon chief executive Peter Langfelder said he believed 2023 would be more stable as housing demand came off unprecedented levels.

"Sales of new homes have slowed. However, Meticon is still expected to continue to contract a high number of homes, with forecast figures aligning with pre-pandemic levels," he said.

NATIONAL CABINET

Towards the end of the month, National Cabinet met and made several housing related announcements which were welcomed by the industry. This included a national approach to planning reforms where Master Builders will work closely with planning ministers to ensure all options are on the table to tackle the housing crisis. The Commonwealth Government also announced a series of other measures to boost investment for increasing housing supply including: increasing the depreciation rate for eligible new build-to-rent projects, and reducing the withholding tax rate for eligible fund payments for managed investment trusts to foreign residents on income from newly constructed residential build-to-rent properties.

Fixed price contracts oppress whole sector

CONSTRUCTION
Millie Muroi
Sarah Dankert

A quarter of Australia's \$240 billion residential building sector is locked into fixed price contracts, putting pressure on the industry as rising construction and funding costs squeeze businesses.

The Master Builders Association

from Grant Thornton said on Friday they were speaking with interested parties keen to take over some partially completed buildings, and hoped to have a solution this week.

All of Porter Davis' contracts for its Victorian fixed price price of th months be NSW and

of peak developers' body the Urban Development Institute, agreed a large percentage of work contracted to volume home builders would include fixed prices, giving little leeway for price increases. "I would jority of volume acts to be fixed have escalation if construction with a certain

Time to lift handbrake on building industry

THE LATEST National Housing Finance Investment Corporation (NHFC) State of the Nation's Housing 2022-23 report confirms builders' concerns about achieving Australia's housing needs.

Master Builders Australia CEO Denita Wren said the report is more evidence that we are

"The government needs to take the necessary steps to ensure interest rates do not need to rise any further and take some of the heavy lifting of our construction off mortgage holders and business owners. From here, there are no easy choices.

"There needs to be a conversation around

ENGINEERED STONE

We published our submission to Safe Work Australia's public consultation on the prohibition on the use of engineered stone. Master Builders supports the proposition that silica-related

diseases are preventable and must be comprehensively addressed in those industries where there is a high-risk of accelerated silicosis and other occupational lung diseases.

We strongly support a risk-management approach to managing silica hazards underpinned by controls that are appropriate, practical and proportionate to the level of silica risk where it is present. This is consistent with the 'Robens-based' approach which underpins our legislative framework.

In the event the Government determines there is evidence the current approach is not working and a prohibition of the use of engineered stone is the most appropriate option, Master Builders would support Option 3.2 with minor amendments to ensure it is targeted and workable for industry.

In the interim, we urgently call on the Government to provide funding for industry to undertake exposure level monitoring of a broad sample of workers in on-site construction, to establish accurate risk matrices beyond those working regularly with engineered stone.

Builders give conditional support for benchtop ban

Angus Thompson
Industrial relations reporter

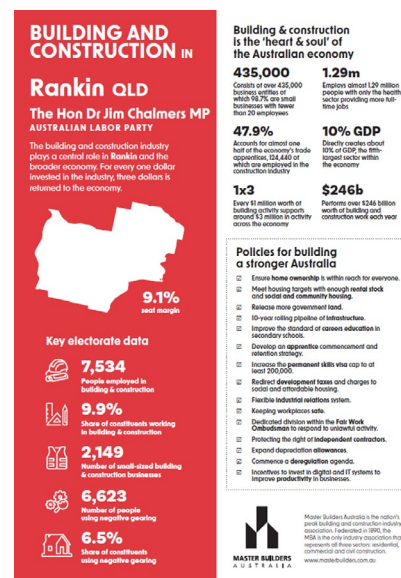
A major building lobby backs a ban on engineered stone benchtops with deadly concentrations of crystalline silica, and has called on the government to urgently fund the testing of workers on construction sites.

Industry body Master Builders Australia said it would support a ban on kitchen slabs with more than 40 per cent silica, a substance that causes irreversible lung damage, but only if tradesmen tasked with removing or modifying existing benchtops aren't subject to additional red tape.

"Master Builders' submits that the need to obtain a licence by those who might only ever undertake infrequent work with engineered stone with more than 40 per cent crystalline silica would be administratively unreasonable," its submission to a government inquiry reads, cautioning against

ELECTORATE PROFILES

The National Office has analysed federal electorates based on the latest official data from the ABS concerning construction employment, the number of building and construction businesses, and the share of constituents who rely on negative gearing. The analysis is based on the electorate boundaries used in the 2022 federal election. It allows us to gauge the importance of the building and construction industry to local economies and communities. The data also highlights the 20 electorates with the highest share of construction jobs within their constituency and the highest number of building and construction businesses. A profile was developed for every federal member of parliament and a copy sent to them along with our housing and skills policy documents. A digital copy of each profile can be found [here](#).



SURVEY

BEHAVIOUR STUDY OF CONSTRUCTION & DEMOLITION PLASTIC WASTE MANAGEMENT



SCAN TO PARTICIPATE

What is the project about, and who is undertaking the research?

The aim of this PhD research project is to understand the environmental impacts of converting waste plastics from construction and demolition (C&D) waste stream to construction applications. It involves a series of management and recycling activities: on-site and off-site waste management behaviours, recycling of C&D plastic waste, and remanufacturing of those recycled plastics into construction applications.

This project is being conducted by Liancheng Li, a PhD student at The University of Adelaide. This research will form the basis for the degree of PhD at the University of Adelaide under the supervision of Jian Zuo and Ruidong Chang.

NATIONAL ECONOMIC DATA SNAPSHOT

NON-RESIDENTIAL BUILDING

February 2023

2,790 non-residential building jobs valued at \$5,720.6 million were approved in AUS.

\$2,050,410 average value of non-residential building jobs approved.

38.0% public sector share of non-residential building jobs approved.

Non-residential building jobs approved

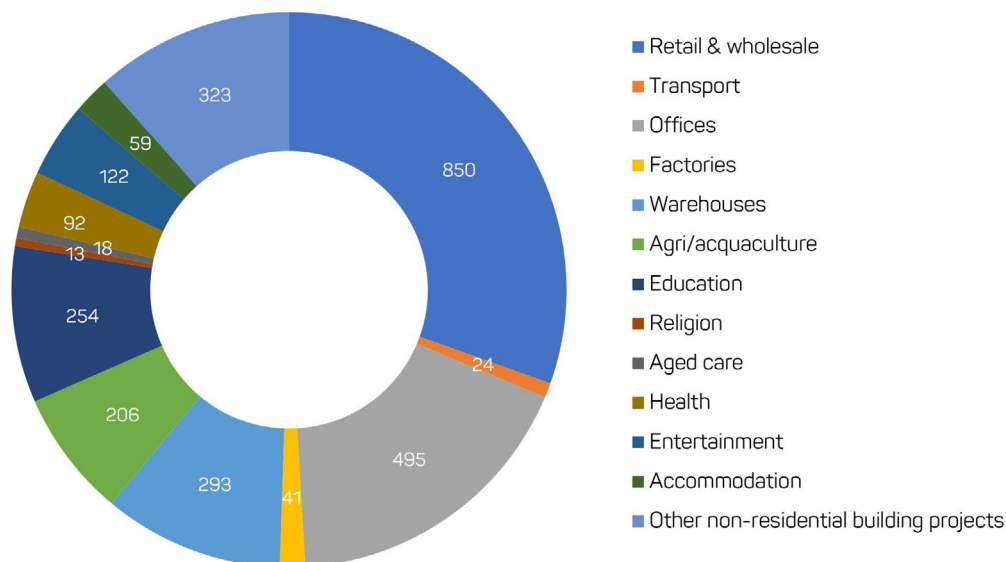
Building Product Inflation %



+14.2%

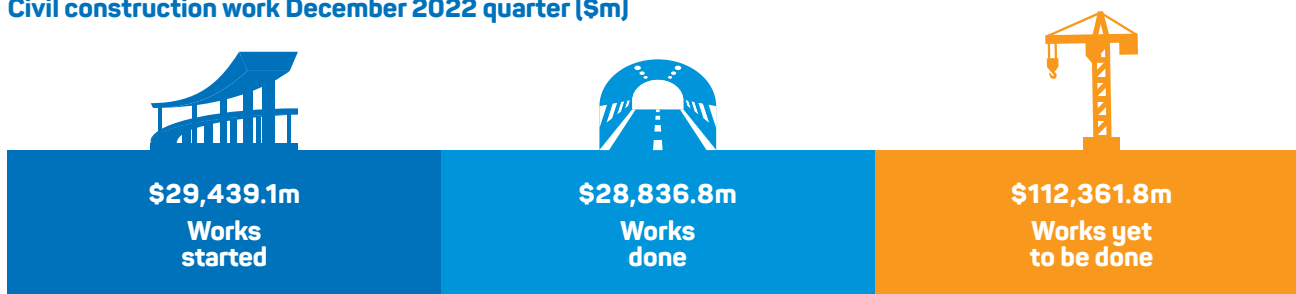
Year to

December 2022



CIVIL CONSTRUCTION

Civil construction work December 2022 quarter (\$m)



Civil works by activity, December 2022 quarter (\$m)

Activity	Started	Done	To be done
Bridges, railways and harbours	\$3,362.3	\$3,947.0	\$18,893.7
Roads, highways and subdivisions	\$6,435.9	\$6,528.8	\$33,419.3
Water storage and supply, sewerage and drainage	\$1,916.0	\$1,843.0	\$8,026.2
Electricity generation, transmission and distribution incl pipelines	\$6,048.8	\$4,802.3	\$14,482.3
Telecommunications	\$1,817.8	\$1,757.6	\$398.2
Heavy industry	\$7,101.8	\$6,014.6	\$34,492.7
Recreation & other	\$2,756.6	\$3,943.4	\$2,649.4
TOTAL	\$29,439.1	\$28,836.8	\$112,361.8

RESIDENTIAL BUILDING

House prices: year to March 2023

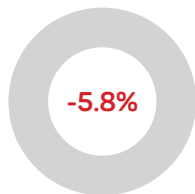


Capital city

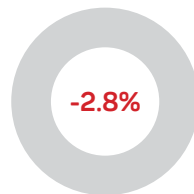


Regional markets

Unit prices: year to March 2023



Capital city



Regional markets

Rental price changes in Australia

+1.2%
During Dec
2022 quarter



+4.0%
Over year to
Dec 2022
quarter

Building approvals: February 2023



12,661

Total new home
building approvals
-31.1%
change on
Feb 2022



8,623

Detached houses
-13.6%
change on
Feb 2022



4,038

Units/apartments
-51.9%
change on
Feb 2022



\$1,024.9 million

Home renovations
+5.6%
change on
Feb 2022

Residential building work during December 2022 quarter

COMMENCED NEW HOMES

183,388

All dwellings

119,736

Detached houses

63,652

Apartments/units

COMPLETED NEW HOMES

172,388

All dwellings

114,688

Detached houses

57,700

Apartments/units

New homes still under construction on 31 December 2022



238,475

All dwellings

105,111

Detached houses

133,364

Apartments/units

New homes approved but not yet commenced as at 31 December 2022



37,616

All dwellings

11,469

Detached houses

26,147

Apartments/units

Lending indicators: February 2023

8,692

Loans to owner occupiers for
construction of new home
-31.6% change on Feb 2022

4,697

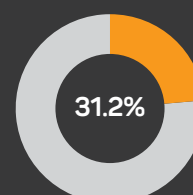
Loans to investors for construction
of new home
+0.4% change on Feb 2022

4,495

Loans to owner occupiers for
residential land purchase
-37.4% change on Feb 2022

2,546

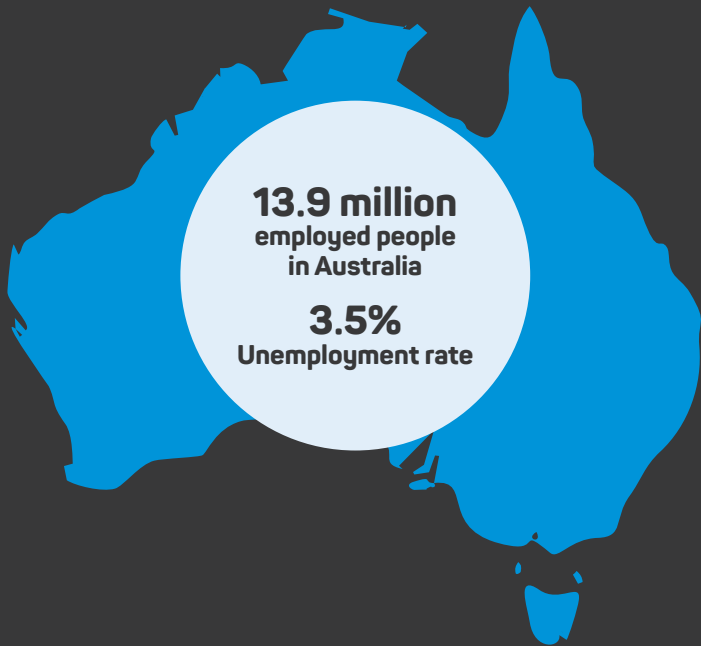
Loans to investors for residential
land purchase
-23.6% change on Feb 2022



First Home Buyers
share of loans

LABOUR MARKET

March 2023



CONSTRUCTION WORKFORCE



1,318,252
People employed in
construction in Australia

335,813 Resi/commercial
builders

144,056 Civil construction
builders

837,395 Resi/commercial
subcontractors



Of Australian
jobs are in
construction



Account for women
working in Australian
construction

CONSTRUCTION BUSINESSES

445,081

Construction Businesses
(at June 2022)

Number of workers



258,272	0
180,814	1-19
5,790	20-199
205	+200

Turnover



20.5%
turnover >\$50,000

1.4%
turnover <\$10m

CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY APPRENTICES AND TRAINEES

121,490

Construction apprentices in-training
(at September 2022)



54,824 new starts
(year to Sept 2022)

23,837 completions
(year to Sept 2022)



Female share of construction
apprentice commencements
(year to Sept 2022)



6,212
apprentice carpenters
in training



3,913
apprentice plumbers
in training

PRIORITY POLICY ISSUES

POLICY AREA	KEY ACTIONS	ISSUES PROGRESSING
<p>Building Regulation</p>	<p>MBA Building Regulation Committee Meeting - Online</p> <p>Standards Australia</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Demolition Standard Update Bushfire Standard Committee meeting – Scoping Wind Loads for Housing <p>Office of the ABCB</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> NCC 2022 Adoption Weatherproofing and Water Shedding Condensation <p>ASBEC sponsored Every Building Counts report was released in April. It sets out property focused policy goals to help Australia achieve decarbonisation goals. The platform outlines eight key policy recommendations, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Set out a long-term strategy for zero-carbon-ready buildings Require all new residential and commercial buildings to operate on high-quality electric equipment in National Construction Code 2025 Accelerate the shift to high performance buildings with targeted incentives Deliver an accelerated trajectory for resilient, all electric, zero carbon buildings in the building code Embed the ‘energy efficiency first’ principle in the National Electricity Objective and other relevant legislation, statements and policies Commit zero-carbon-ready for all new and existing government owned and leased buildings by 2030 Expand NABERS to cover all building types and extend the CBD program; and empower owners, buyers and renters with a single national rating for home energy performance Adopt a credible national framework for measuring embodied carbon <p>The Government announced it is piloting a program with CSIRO and CoreLogic using artificial intelligence to get in-depth insights into home energy efficiency. It has developed a tool called RapidRate that calculates an energy star rating which includes detailed information on heating and cooling efficiencies. The tool’s star rating will align with the existing Nationwide House Energy Scheme (NatHERS) currently used for new dwellings. More information is here.</p>	<p>Australian Building Codes Board engagement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Energy Efficiency for commercial buildings is the focus for 2025 NCC. This will include class 3 to 9 buildings and public areas in class 2 buildings. This will focus on services, distributed energy resources and electric vehicle charging. Condensation mitigation Weather and Waterproofing is another focus. <p>Standards Australia</p> <p>The following key standards are currently under review.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Bushfire Standard Tiling Standard Pool Barrier Standard Demolition Standard Wind Loads for Housing <p>Resilience roundtable</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Partnering with the Insurance Council of Australia and the Planning Institute of Australia for a roundtable on resilience.

Contracts

Standards Australia – General Conditions of Contract Review

- The National Office continues its close engagement in the review of AS 4000.
- The review is progressing rapidly, with the committee currently considering a number of draft changes to update the contract for currency.
- We have raised our sustained objection to the inclusion of a number of new proposed provisions that would impose additional and more restrictive obligations with respect to construction programming and other contractual arrangements.
- We will continue to remind Standards Australia that the technical committee must not deviate from the project's narrow scope.
- Notwithstanding, the Review will likely result in publication of an updated AS 4000 towards the end of 2023 and then the ultimate withdrawal of AS 2124.

Economy & Productivity

- Master Builders Australia delivered to 60+ ASIC staff on prospects for building and construction industry to 2026-27. Emphasised the need for flexibility with respect to design of contracts and need for governments to take accommodative approach in their role as our industry's clients.
- During April, Master Builders Australia held separate meetings with federal Treasury and the Australia Small Business & Family Enterprise Ombudsman (ASBFEO) in order to outline the key challenges faced by our industry (particularly small businesses) with respect to labour shortages, material costs and regulation.
- The Government announced new tax incentives for Build to Rent housing investments including reducing minimum withholding tax from 30 to 15% and increasing the depreciation rate from 2.5 to 4% from 9 May 2023. More information is [here](#).
- Next NEPC meeting to take place by Zoom, week commencing 22nd May 2023.
- Master Builders Australia to attend 'lock up' event for federal budget on 9th May 2023.
- Preparation of factsheet by national office with regard to \$3m+ superannuation funds and potential effects of proposed policy changes.
- Research update on recent household savings trends following issues raised at NEPC.
- Information note on apparent divergence between building materials prices at retail/wholesale level and on international markets.
- Compilation of Master Builders Australia's response to the Productivity Commission's 5-Yearly Review.

Industrial Relations

First tranche of 2023 IR changes before Senate Committee

As noted in earlier updates, the [Fair Work Legislation Amendment \(Protecting Worker Entitlements\) Bill 2023](#) was recently tabled in the Parliament and included changes to:

- Strengthen protections under the FW Act for migrant workers;
- Guarantee superannuation as a right under the NES;
- Streamline payroll deductions for authorised purposes; and
- Provide stronger access to unpaid parental leave ('UPL').

The Bill is currently before the Senate Standing Committee on Education and Employment who are due to report back by 28th April.

Consultation commences as part of next phase of more controversial IR reform

The Government has now released the following discussion papers, as part of its ongoing consultation with respect to the controversial next tranche of workplace relations changes:

- Same Job, Same Pay (available [here](#));
- Compliance and enforcement: Criminalising wage theft (available [here](#));
- Extend the powers of the Fair Work Commission to include 'employee-like forms of work' (available [here](#)); and
- Provide stronger protections against discrimination, adverse action and harassment (available [here](#)).

Ahead of the release of the three papers, Master Builders was engaged in a series of consultations with DEWR about the proposed upcoming changes, which will likely be introduced in the second half of this year.

ACCI Workplace Policy Committee

With IR remaining high on the Government's agenda, the National Office attended four meetings of ACCI's Workplace Policy Committee ('WPC') to discuss the Government's next tranche of reform.

- The contents of the Bill are largely uncontroversial, however, have been the subject of some suggested amendments to allow small businesses to reasonably refuse UPL in certain circumstances, as well as to ensure safeguards are in place around any changes to payroll authorisations.

- We, along with other key employer groups, have significant concerns about the proposed amendments and their impact on workplaces.
- Our chief concern is that considered collectively, the changes represent a real and serious threat to the legitimate, lawful and long-standing use of independent contracting as a form of engagement.
- Following endorsement at the recent National Board meeting, Master Builders will soon launch a campaign to raise awareness about the proposed changes and drive action to protect the interests of the industry.
- In addition, the National Office will continue to meet with Government and relevant stakeholders to advocate on behalf of our members of this important issue.

- As noted above, the proposed legislative changes are significant and the WPC will be important in facilitating a co-ordinated response across the ACCI network.

Master Builders appointed to FWC's new EBA advisory group

This month Master Builders received an invitation from The Hon. Justice Adam Hatcher to be part of the Fair Work Commission's enterprise agreements and bargaining group.

The group was established as part of the implementation of changes to the enterprise bargaining and enterprise agreement approval processes that commence on 6 June 2023 as a result of the [Fair Work Legislation Amendment \(Secure Jobs, Better Pay\) Act 2022](#).

The FWC has established the advisory group to consult with those who represent users most impacted by the changes, and to provide feedback on their implementation on an ongoing basis.

- The first meeting of the advisory group will take place within the next four weeks and will be co-chaired by DP Masson, National Practice Leader for EBAs and DP Hampton, National Practice Leader for Bargaining.
- The appointment to the advisory group will provide Master Builders with an ongoing opportunity to ensure the changes are implemented a way that minimises the impact on our members, as far as is practicable.

Government hosts Respect@Work Industry Forum

- On the 3rd April, the National Office attended the Government's Respect@Work Industry Forum.
- The event's speakers, which included the Sex Discrimination Commissioner, the Fair Work Ombudsman and General Manager of the Fair Work Commission, provided an overview of recent legislative changes and their various roles in implementing them.
- Members will recall the most significant development is that employers and PCBUs now have a positive duty to eliminate workplace sex discrimination and harassment.

- Master Builders will continue to call on the Government to develop practical guidance on how employers can meet their new duty and to provide a clearer overview of how the new regulatory framework will be implemented.
- In the interim, information can be found on the Respect@Work website [here](#).

National Industrial Relations Advisory Committee

- As the Government continues to roll out workplace reform, NIRAC met in April on two occasions so that the National Office could provide a briefing and discuss MBA's national response.

- The coming months will again be a busy time for the committee and the Master Builders' movement more broadly, particularly as we roll out our national campaign to preserve the rights of independent contractors.

Jobs & Skills

Future-proofing construction: A workforce blueprint

This month Master Builders launched our blueprint for Australia's building and construction workforce.

We are facing critical workforce shortages and a coordinated evidence-based approach is needed to ensure we can attract, recruit, train and retain the workers our industry needs now and into the future.

Our Blueprint outlines strategies to

Attract workers by:

- Improving the quality of careers education in schools
- Improving gender diversity
- Reframing the apprenticeship story
- Improving immigration settings

Recruit workers by:

- Providing opportunities to test the waters
- Improving work-readiness
- Nurturing success through support services and mentoring

Train workers by:

- Improving information on training quality
- Strengthening work-integrated learning pathways
- Improving VET-uni pathways

Retain workers by:

- Improving the consistency of occupational licensing
- Embracing a culture of life-long learning
- Strengthening business acumen.

Jobs and Skills Councils (JSCs)

- JSCs, formerly Industry Clusters, will have carriage of vocational training product development, career mapping and workforce analysis.
- Master Builders is leading the development of a tripartite JSC for the built environment.
- The Foundation Members are meeting in early in May and it is anticipated the first Board meeting and company registration will also occur in May.

VET data streamlining

- Master Builders made a submission in support of the VET data streamlining bill in April.
- The proposed legislative amendments will update and streamline data collection processes and would enable information at the RTO level to be made publicly available.
- Promisingly, the amendments may pave the way for quality indicators and student outcomes to be published at the RTO level enabling users to make more informed decisions and incentivising RTOs to strive for excellence in training delivery.

Data

- Job advertisements – online job ads rose 16% in the month to March 2023. In our industry job ads increased the most for home improvement installers (up 27%), fencers (up 26%) and roof tilers (up 26%).
- Apprentices – 121,479 apprentices in training on 30 Sept 2022 are employed in construction. Construction is the top industry for apprentice employment. 54,810 apprentices commenced in the year to 30 September 2022.
- Labour Force – 1.32 million construction workers in Australia in February 2023, including 140,000 carpenters and 124,000 construction managers and builders.

Work Health & Safety

SWA seeks views on the potential prohibition of the use of engineered stone

- This month, Master Builders filed a submission in response to SWA's consultation paper which considered a number of options around the potential prohibition on the use of engineered stone.
- The three options under consideration included either a total or partial ban on the use of engineered stone products. The various proposals also incorporated a licensing regime and substantially broadened regulatory framework for working with silica-containing products.
- In our submission, Master Builders supported the proposition that silica-related diseases are preventable and must be comprehensively addressed in those industries where there is a high-risk of accelerated silicosis and other occupational lung disease via application of the hierarchy of controls.
- We stated that if the Government determined there was evidence the current approach however was not working and a prohibition on the use of engineered stone was most appropriate, then the preferred option would be a prohibition on the use of engineered stone products containing 40% or more silica. We also stated that amendments would be required to any associated licencing regime to ensure it is targeted and workable for industry.
- Master Builders strongly supports a risk-management approach to managing workplace hazards underpinned by controls that are appropriate, practical and proportionate to the level of silica risk where it is present.
- We will continue to call on the Government to provide urgent funding for industry to undertake exposure level monitoring of a broad sample of workers in on-site construction, to establish accurate risk matrices beyond those working with engineered stone.
- The current consultation will likely result in SWA presenting a range of recommendations to the State/Territory WHS Ministers for their consideration later this year.
- More information on the consultation and proposed options can be found [here](#).

Silica Reference Group meets to consolidate its position

- Ahead of the submission deadline, ACCI's Silica Reference Group met on two occasions earlier this month to consider its position in response to SWA's consultation on the prohibition on the use of engineered stone.
- The Reference Group has been formed to consider the raft of regulatory reform currently proposed, or on foot, with respect to silica-containing materials.
- Together with Master Builders, the Reference Group is made up of a number of like-minded industry associations who have a direct interest in improving WHS outcomes with respect to respirable crystalline silica.
- It is key that ACCI Working Groups continue to work together and in a consistent manner to ensure the best outcomes are achieved for industry more broadly.

Safe Work Australia Silica Workshop

As part of the silica consultation process, the National Office also attended a face-to-face meeting of Safe Work Australia Members and WHS Regulators earlier this month to discuss options for a prohibition on the use of engineered stone, as well as regulation of high-risk crystalline silica processes.

In terms of the latter issue, members may recall that at their last meeting, WHS Ministers' agreed to progress further regulation of high-risk crystalline silica processes for all silica-containing materials. At the workshop, attendees were asked to consider:

- A definition for high-risk crystalline silica process;
- When and how frequently air monitoring may be required;
- When a silica risk control plan should be required (e.g. for all crystalline silica processes or just for high risk crystalline silica processes); and
- What training requirements should be included.

MBA consulted on SWA SWMS tool

- This month the National Office provided feedback on a first draft of guidance that will form part of SWA's online SWMS tool.
- Members may recall that SWA undertook to develop an online SWMS learning resource and information toolkit in response to a recommendation arising from the Model WHS laws review.
- The interactive tool is intended to provide necessary information and actions to complete a SWMS, to signpost and reinforce SWMS requirements, and to increase knowledge and understanding of the practical purpose of SWMS.

- When addressing the broader regulatory reform proposed for all silica-containing materials, we again highlighted that any definition of high-risk processes must be based on sound evidence and contemporary exposure data.
- We noted that higher order controls and air/health monitoring obligations must be targeted and address those tasks and occupations at highest risk.
- With respect to any relevant training requirements, we strongly advocated for the soon to be formed Jobs and Skills Council, Buildskills Australia, to be tasked with the development of a publicly owned, transparently developed national unit of competency for silica awareness.

- As part of SWA's SWMS Working Group, the National Office will have a key role in shaping the tool to ensure that it is both user friendly and contains information that will actually improve SWMS compliance and useability.

Committee meets to discuss International Performance Evaluation Standard

- The National Office attended two meetings this month to review a new draft international standard which provides guidance on how to evaluate WHS performance.
- ISO/DIS 45004 – *Occupational health and safety management – Guidelines on performance evaluation* is intended to help organisations effectively monitor, measure, analyse and evaluate OHS (WHS) performance.
- The document is significant, as it has a strong focus on the selection and use of performance lead indicators to assist businesses in taking a proactive approach to managing WHS.
- Representatives from the Australian Standards WHS Committee have played an integral role in the development of the international standard to date.
- Master Builders is in the process of reviewing the draft, with a view to providing substantive feedback to Standards Australia.
- Once published by the ISO in the latter parts of this year, the Australian Committee will then consider whether to adopt the document as an Australian Standard.

Master Builders continues to raise its concerns about international psych guidelines

- Meanwhile, the National Office has continued to raise concerns about Standards Australia's proposal to identically adopt ISO 45003 – *Occupational health and safety management – Psychological health and safety at work – Guidelines for managing psychosocial risks*.
- While the ISO Standard provides some sound guidance for businesses to manage psychosocial hazards, if identically adopted as an Australian Standard, the content would cause significant confusion for businesses due to its inconsistency with Australian WHS frameworks.
- The National Office will brief Standards Australia's Development and Accreditation Committee ('SDAC') in early May to outline our concerns and respond to any questions around our sustained objection to ISO 45003 being adopted as an Australian Standard.

National Work Health & Safety Committee

- The NWHSC met again this month to affirm its position in response to increasing calls for the Government to prohibit the use of engineered stone products and as part of the SWA Consultation process.
- The National Office has again been extremely grateful for the generosity of the NWHSC in giving such a significant amount of its time this month to consider such an important issue.

WOMEN BUILDING AUSTRALIA

WOMEN BUILDING AUSTRALIA BUSINESS RESILIENCE MENTORING ON DEMAND

The Women Building Australia Business Resilience Mentoring on Demand aims to assist in developing and sustaining female-led or operated businesses within the building and construction industry.

The program pairs mentees seeking guidance and support with experienced industry practitioners who are willing to commit time and energy help the mentee with an acute business issue.

- Business Reliance Mentoring on Demand is a business management-focused mentoring program aiding female owners /operators of SMEs in the building and construction industry.
- Mentoring on Demand aims to assist in developing and sustaining female owned and/or operated businesses within the construction industry to help attain individual and business success and growth.
- The program provides a safe and confidential space for a woman to interact with an industry mentor (male or female) to help the mentee solve an acute business issue and develop as a business leader.

Business Resilience Mentoring on Demand is a self-matching on-demand mentoring experience to help with a specific acute business issue the mentee is facing. Mentees can view available mentors and directly request matches through the 'find a match' tile on their platform when a need arises.

Mentors can sign up at the program's start or at any time during the program and use the availability function to determine the periods when they are available to be matched.

Each pair's mentoring purpose is focussed, with mentees seeking the achievement of a specific goal and/or short-term guidance and support for a specific acute business issue.

BUSINESS RESILIENCE TRAINING

Business Resilience Training will commence in May. Training Provided in conjunction with MYOB the training will be on-demand with participants able to commence and attend training at times that suit the individual while allowing participants to move through the training program at their own pace.

Business Resilience Training included curated training specifically applicable to running a business in building and construction, plus a community for women to ask questions and have practical discussions with experts about training topics to implement into their business. The initial on-demand training will cover the following topics:

1. Start up fundamentals
2. Finding a market
3. Digital marketing
4. Understanding cash flow
5. Checking your business health
6. Managing compliance

Be sure to follow us on our social media handles for timely updates on all WBA Activities at the below links:

 [@WomenBuildingAustralia](https://www.facebook.com/WomenBuildingAustralia)

 [@womenbuildingaustralia](https://www.instagram.com/womenbuildingaustralia)

 [@women-building-australia](https://www.linkedin.com/company/women-building-australia)

KEY DATES IN MAY

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|---------------------|---|
| THURS, MAY 4 | Monthly Board Zoom
Finance Committee Meeting |
| TUES, MAY 9 | FEDERAL BUDGET NIGHT 2023 |
| WED, MAY 24 | Fortnightly Executive Directors Zoom |
| MON, MAY 29 | PUBLIC HOLIDAY (ACT) - Reconciliation Day |