

**AUGUST 2023**

# NATIONAL OFFICE MONTHLY REPORT

## FROM THE CEO

August was a flurry of activity with a multitude of parliamentary meetings on housing and industrial relations, briefing Member Association Boards, attending Member Association Awards and speaking at several events, including Constructive – the conference of Master Builders Association of New Zealand who, have all the same issues as us in Australia except industrial relations.

Our campaign on seeking the federal government to provide incentives to state and territory governments to remove barriers to housing supply finally paid off with the decision of the National Cabinet on 16 August, with the Federal government pledging \$3 billion if the states and territories reach a stretch target of 1.2 homes over five years through the housing accord of 1 million

homes by increasing supply of land, reducing approval times, and planning reforms. We first commenced our pitch on this incentive in 2017 with our unlocking supply report. It's great to see it finally come to fruition. We know that labour supply will be an impediment to reaching the targets and, as such, continue to push for further work in training, women in building, and migration.

Industrial Relations advocacy continued, and it is great to see the cooperation between the main industry associations. We were involved in the two days of assessment of the draft legislation. Disappointingly, the government had not considered the myriad of concerns expressed by employers.

## ADVOCACY

August saw the return of Parliament and a range of external events that provided an opportunity to advance our advocacy efforts in several policy areas including housing and industrial relations.

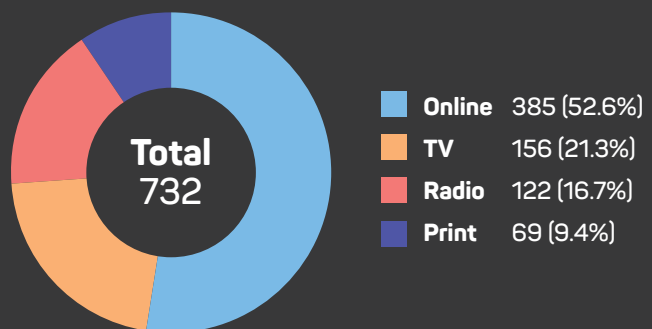
Over the month, the National Office responded to around 40 media queries, participated in six live interviews and distributed four media releases which contributed to over 700 news items across online, print, TV and radio. The coverage included 16 front page print and 17 front page online ranking and had a cumulative audience potential reach of 52 million.

## HOUSING

The start of August saw the RBA hold interest rates for another month at the same time the ABS data into building approvals, consumer price index, producer price index and lending data were painting a bumpy outlook.

Building approvals fell by 7.7 per cent in June driven by a slump of 21 per cent in higher-density approvals. While a welcome reduction in the price of steel prices (-10 per cent), other materials such as cement were seeing an increase in the inflation rate.

With the above figures and Parliament returning, the National Office urged the Parliament to pass the Housing Future Fund and housing supply bills. Unfortunately, this has now been referred once again to a committee inquiry process.



### Property bosses back 'gamechanger' plan

**PROPERTY BOSSSES** have welcomed the government's plan to build a million homes over five years through the housing accord of 1 million homes by increasing supply of land, reducing approval times, and planning reforms. The Property Council of Australia (PCA) says the plan is a "gamechanger" for the industry and the nation's housing crisis.

### Building approvals plunge to lowest in three years

The construction industry has offered a grim warning as rising costs and soaring demand see the sector bear the brunt of inflation's impact.

In the lead up to National Cabinet, Denita penned an [opinion article in The Australian](#) on the importance of tackling housing supply challenges across the housing spectrum and avoiding the temptation of band-aid solutions such as rental caps and freezes as pushed for the Greens. The opinion article was well received and generated a front-page story and led the editorial for that day.

Thankfully, our calls were answered with National Cabinet announcing an array of housing measures to tackle housing supply pressures in a coordinated way. Federal, state and territory leaders announced an increase of the Housing Accord target from 1m to 1.2m, new government incentives for states to exceed their targets and a housing planning reform blueprint.

We [applauded the announcement](#) as a constructive pathway to boost much-needed housing supply and acknowledged the universal acceptance that the common constraint across the whole housing spectrum is supply. Denita did several live interviews across TV and radio including Sunrise, Sky News, ABC TV, RN and 2GB.

## DEFENCE ESTATE AUDIT


The Deputy Prime Minister announced an audit into Defence owned property to report back later this year to ascertain which bases are no longer fit for purpose and whether they can be designated for essential residential and commercial construction.

The National Office used this opportunity to advocate for this approach to be extended across all Commonwealth departments and pointed to the lack of readily available public data to show what other land release opportunities are available at a Commonwealth level.

## NATIONAL ALP CONFERENCE

The National ALP Conference was held in-person for the first time since 2018. There were several policy motions that were being followed closely by the National Office including silica, expansion of union powers and the Australian Jobs Code and provided commentary on the negative impacts these policy positions would have on the industry and broader economy.

**Employers blast Labor procurement code as 'union racketeering'**



Employers have blasted Labor's endorsement of a procurement code for federal projects that will privilege union rights and wages, calling it union "racketeering" that threatens to drive up costs of construction projects.

The Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry and Master Builders Assoc today say Friday urged the Albanese government to reject the union-backed [Secure Australian Jobs Code](#) that will apply to tenders for all Commonwealth-funded projects and services.

*David Martin Gorman  
Workplace correspondent*

**'Deplorable' union boss behind Labor motion**

**Workplace rules**

David Martin Gorman  
Workplace correspondent

The CMIE official who helped push through Labor's commitment to union wages has admitted he has been described by a judge as having a "deplorable personal history of dishonesty" including installing backdoor deals pointing if the government moved to implement. Institute for change to reflect the amended ALP platform.

The unions talk about the right of entry but what about the rights of workers?

Joe Ryan

low, "Joe Ryan is one of worst offending officials".

"The fact that he spoke in support for the amendments would be laughable if it wasn't so serious," she said.

The Federal Court has held Mr Miles breached workplace laws over 2000 pages, including coercion, discrimination, illegal entrapment and non-compliance with laws.

In a 2022 judgement, Justice Dickson

## INDUSTRIAL RELATIONS

Our [Defend Your Rights campaign](#) continues to gain traction with advertising appearing on devices 8.13 million times driving over 41,000 unique visitors to the website since its launch.

Over 4,000 people have signed the online petition and over 800 letters have been sent directly to local members of parliament. Our community database has now grown to 8,000 people whom we are able to communicate with directly whenever there are any major developments.

The website also provides an opportunity for participants to 'have their say' and publicly share how they are feeling about the changes. We've had over 140 messages from a range of industries, which allows us to generate more emotive and resonating social media content. Examples of messaging below:

"The ability to employ sole traders and ABN holders in construction is vital to the survival of my Business.

I cannot afford to the increased costs of permanent employees."

– Alex, NSW

"I am a small independent contractor. I choose to be and have been successfully for over 25 years. My team mates are also contractors. We work together successfully and do a really good job at renovating and restoring some of Ballarat's beautiful period homes. We love it and we especially love the freedom we have to work the hours we wish and be responsible for our own destiny. Please leave it that way."

– Dan, VIC

"Yes definitely. It will drive many out of the industry. The recent code changes are hard enough without this."

– Adam, QLD

"I have been a contractor all my life some 40 years if I am unable to continue with the present arrangements I will become a burned to society and will no longer be a significant contributor to our community !!"

– Mel, NSW

"We are a building company and it these changes were to go through, many people will loose there jobs because it is that ridiculous we would simply just close the doors."

– Anon, VIC

"This has been tried before and the only reason it is back again is because the Labor Government sees an opportunity to give more power to the unions which is dwindling and they believe they now have carte blanche between state and federal power to control an individual's rights. This of course is not only limited to the building industry but is a blatant attempt to wipe out subcontractors and gain power and it is why Australians and in particular West Australians should never give an individual Government autonomous control, there needs to always be a minimum of 2 parties who can represent all industry focus to ensure fair and equitable debate in all cases and not one bias."

– Anthony, WA

Since launching, Master Builders has featured in almost 200 unique stories (over 470 if you include syndication) across online, print, radio and TV with a cumulative potential audience reach of 34.38 million.

In addition to reactive media commentary following any government announcements or events relating to industrial relations, the team has proactively looked for opportunities to insert our concerns on how these changes will impact other key policy objectives such as housing.

The activities of the CFMEU and broader union movement are also providing further opportunities to point out the dangers of giving unions broader powers in workplaces.



Over the last month, we have held or scheduled around 50 meetings. The meetings have included key cabinet Ministers, the Opposition leader, opposition members, the Greens, and crossbenchers in the lower house and the Senate including Teals, One Nation, Jackie Lambie Network and United Australia Party.

Meetings have also occurred with members of the Government's workplace relations committee to provide them with important background information before they commence the legislation inquiry process.

Since launching the campaign, we've been approached by a number of industry associations and businesses who would like to partner with us. The National Office has decided to broaden the scope of our campaign to include all other sectors of the economy that will be impacted by the industrial relations changes.

By setting up the campaign infrastructure through a central website, these businesses have an opportunity to create a personalised page relevant to their sector at a low cost while also providing an opportunity for our campaign to reach even more people and build our community database.

# NATIONAL ECONOMIC DATA SNAPSHOT

## NON-RESIDENTIAL BUILDING

July 2023

2,854 non-residential building jobs valued at \$5,680.1 million were approved in AUS.

\$1,990,200 average value of non-residential building jobs approved.

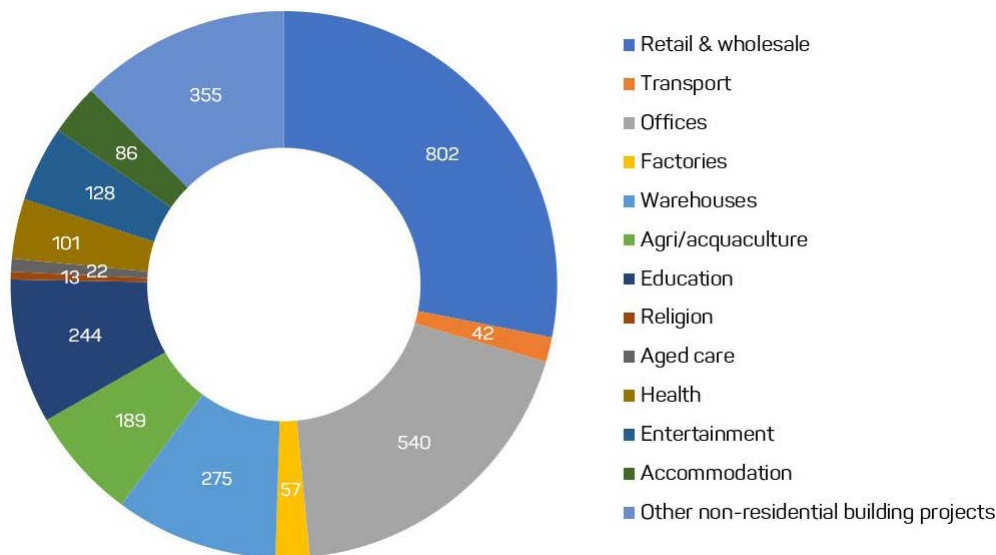
33.9% public sector share of non-residential building jobs approved.

Non-residential building jobs approved

### Building Product Inflation %

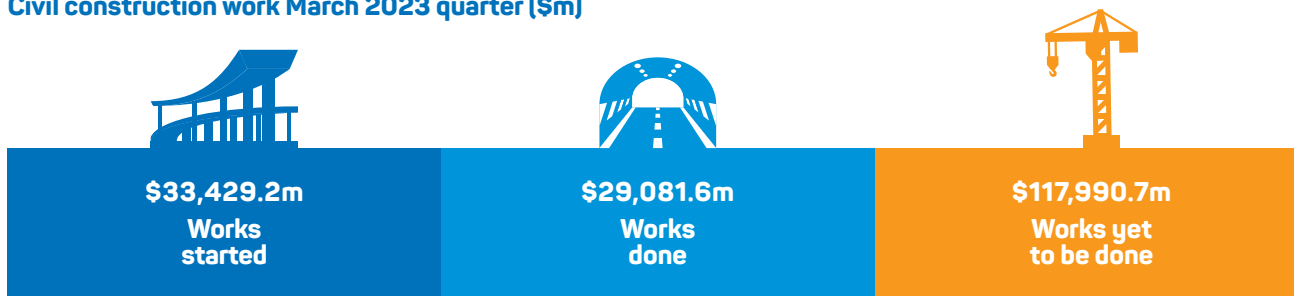


**+7.4%**  
Year to  
June 2023



## CIVIL CONSTRUCTION

Civil construction work March 2023 quarter (\$m)



Civil works by activity, March 2023 quarter (\$m)

Activity	Started	Done	To be done
Bridges, railways and harbours	\$5,954.6	\$4,630.1	\$21,769.7
Roads, highways and subdivisions	\$8,255.3	\$7,328.6	\$34,876.8
Water storage and supply, sewerage and drainage	\$2,970.8	\$2,201.5	\$8,797.7
Electricity generation, transmission and distribution incl pipelines	\$7,086.4	\$5,201.0	\$16,188.4
Telecommunications	\$1,977.1	\$1,767.9	\$363.0
Heavy industry	\$5,185.1	\$5,922.2	\$33,784.9
Recreation & other	\$1,999.9	\$2,030.3	\$2,210.2
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>\$33,429.2</b>	<b>\$29,081.6</b>	<b>\$117,990.7</b>

## RESIDENTIAL BUILDING

### House prices: year to August 2023



Capital city



Regional markets

### Unit prices: year to August 2023



Capital city



Regional markets

### Rental price changes in Australia

+2.5%  
During June  
2023 quarter



+6.7%  
Over year to  
June 2023  
quarter

### Building approvals: July 2023



12,668

Total new home  
building approvals  
-10.6%  
change on  
July 2022



8,177

Detached houses  
-16.8%  
change on  
July 2022



4,490

Units/apartments  
+3.5%  
change on  
July 2022



\$1,056.3 million

Home renovations  
+6.2%  
change on  
July 2022

### Residential building work done over year to March 2023

#### COMMENCED NEW HOMES

178,309

All dwellings

113,886

Detached houses

64,423

Apartments/units

#### COMPLETED NEW HOMES

174,285

All dwellings

112,038

Detached houses

62,247

Apartments/units

#### New homes still under construction on 31 March 2023



239,737

All dwellings

103,778

Detached houses

135,959

Apartments/units

#### New homes approved but not yet commenced as at 31 March 2023



32,629

All dwellings

10,337

Detached houses

22,292

Apartments/units

### Lending indicators: July 2023

2,398

Loans to owner occupiers for  
construction of new home  
-42.1% change on July 2022

1,870

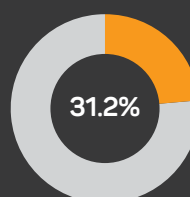
Loans to investors for construction  
of new home  
-1.0% change on July 2022

1,547

Loans to owner occupiers for  
residential land purchase  
-26.6% change on July 2022

1,094

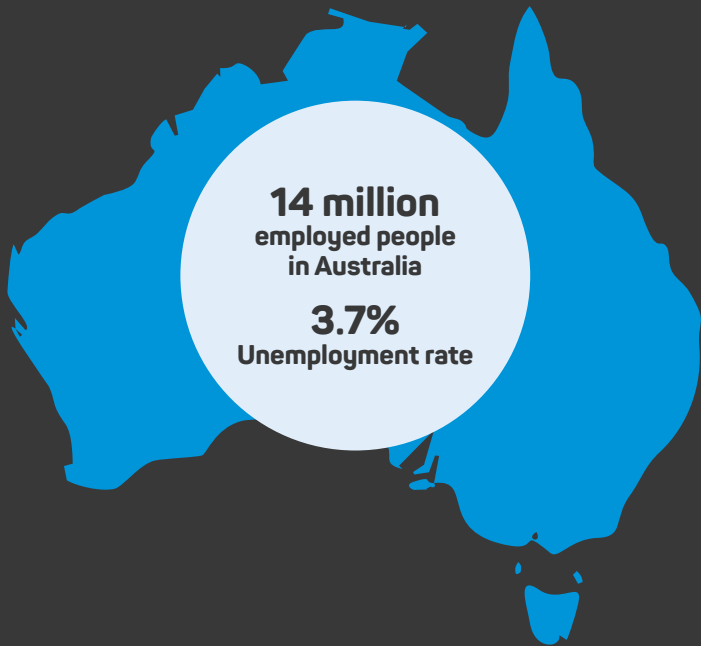
Loans to investors for residential  
land purchase  
+8.9% change on July 2022



First Home Buyers  
share of loans

## LABOUR MARKET

July 2023



## CONSTRUCTION WORKFORCE



**1,329,413**  
People employed in  
construction in Australia

**351,828** Resi/commercial  
builders

**142,942** Civil construction  
builders

**834,643** 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
<b>Building Regulation</b>	<p><b>Standards Australia</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Thermal insulation materials for buildings</li> <li>Pool Barriers</li> </ul> <p><b>Bushfire</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Office of the ABCB</li> <li>Building Codes Committee Meeting</li> <li>Technical Reference Group Condensation</li> <li>Technical Reference Group Waterproofing and Water Shedding</li> <li>Technical Reference Group - Improved Robustness of Performance Solutions (Structural)</li> <li>ABCB Forum</li> <li>BCC Flashings and Fixing for Windows Group Meeting</li> </ul> <p><b>WoodSolutions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Meeting regarding Resilient Timber Homes</li> </ul> <p><b>ASBEC Regulations, Codes and Standards Task Group Meeting</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>National Construction Code</li> <li>Resilience and adaptation</li> <li>State and Territory regulatory initiatives</li> <li>MBA lodged a submission to federal Government consultation on a <b>National framework for recycled content traceability</b>. You can access the submission <a href="#">here</a>. Improving product assurance and traceability is an important priority for building and construction and recycled content must be part of a better product assurance framework.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li><b>Future BRC meetings</b> to feature presentations and enable discussion on NatHERS, NABERS and supply of windows (AGWA).</li> <li>BRC online meeting with federal department DCCEEW on <b>home energy rating systems</b> 21 Sep 2023</li> <li><b>Building Ministers Meeting BMM</b> September 2023.</li> <li><b>Parliamentary Inquiry into residential electrification</b> – submission due 29 September. More information: <a href="#">Residential Electrification – Parliament of Australia</a> (aph.gov.au)</li> <li><b>Australian Building Codes Board</b> engagement. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>ABCB Forum - 31 October 2023 in Adelaide</li> <li>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.</li> <li>Condensation mitigation</li> <li>Weather and Waterproofing</li> </ul> </li> <li><b>Standards Australia</b> – The following key standards are currently under review. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Bushfire Standard</li> <li>Tiling Standard</li> <li>Pool Barrier Standard</li> <li>Demolition Standard</li> <li>External above ground waterproofing (expected)</li> </ul> </li> </ul>
<b>Contracts</b>	<p><b>Standards Australia – General Conditions of Contract Review</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>On the 2nd August, the National Office again attended another all-day meeting as a member of the technical committee tasked with the review of AS 4000.</li> <li>As part of a heavy agenda, this month saw heated debate over a raft of proposed changes to the dispute resolution provisions, with a view to providing alternative mechanisms to those (relatively limited) options currently provided for under the contract.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The Committee is now in the final stages of settling a final working draft with a view to the document being released for a public consultation period in the latter part of 2023.</li> </ul>

### Briefing on SoP to National Economics and Productivity Committee

- On 24th August, the NEPC was briefed on a project currently on-foot arising from the July F2F meeting of the NCAC. The Committee noted that the NCAC had agreed to the development of a preferred national Security of Payment ('SoP') model regime, with a view to it being adopted across State and Territory Governments.
- While noting the challenges associated with the development of a nationally consistent SoP framework, the aspiration is that, once agreed by the National Board, the model will assist MBA in advocating for greater simplicity and consistency across the country.
- A draft will be presented to the NCAC for its consideration in the coming weeks.

### National Contracts Advisory Committee

- While no meeting was convened this month of the NCAC, we continue to engage with the Committee on a raft of contracts-related matters out of session, including actions arising from the F2F meeting held in July.
- The NCAC's ongoing support is key in ensuring the most practicable and appropriate policy settings are advocated on behalf of our members.

### Economy & Productivity

- The **National Economics & Productivity Committee** met by Zoom on Thursday, 24th August 2023. Issues discussed included Security of Payments, federal housing policy initiatives and challenges around the sequencing of stage payments. The meeting also heard that building material cost pressures have largely subsided.
- Master Builders Australia published its **submission to the Senate Inquiry** on the Worsening Rental Crisis at the start of September. The submission emphasised that rental market pressures are best addressed by increasing the supply of new higher density homes.
- Master Builders Australia has written to federal **Minister for Industry & Science** setting out our proposals around how the capacity of our industry can be expanded. The letter covers the areas of innovation, energy transformation, quality, skills and productivity.
- **National Cabinet announced** new housing measures including: 1.2 million well-located new homes Accord target; \$3 billion Homes Bonus funding for states and territories who achieve more than their Accord targets and undertake reforms to boost housing supply and affordability; \$500 million Housing Support Program, for local and state governments to connect essential services, provide amenities to support new housing or support building planning capability; 10 areas of reform in a National Planning Reform Blueprint; and harmonising renters rights (grounds for eviction, limiting rent increases, phasing in minimum standards).
- The updated set of **Master Builders Australia forecasts** for the period up to 2027-28 are in preparation and due for release in mid/late September.
- Master Builders Australia has entered into agreement with an economic consultancy to deliver a **research report into selected economic productivity issues** in the industry. The report is due for completion by the end of the year. Two annual updates will also be provided in 2024 and 2025.
- MBA is preparing its submission to consultation on a new **National Housing & Homelessness Agreement (NHHA)** due in October. Community Forums are being held around the country if you're interested in participating directly in consultation. The consultation schedule is [here](#). A new NHHA is set to take effect in 2024 and run for a period of 10 years.
- In response to the New Homes Bonus announced at August 2023's **National Cabinet**, Master Builders Australia will produce a regular scorecard report comparing targets under the program with actual progress on the ground as well as with Master Builders forecasts of future activity.
- An independent **review of the Federal Government \$120 billion infrastructure pipeline** underway and expected to be released before the end of the year. More information is [here](#).
- The final 2023 meeting of the **National Economics & Productivity Committee** is due to take place by Zoom at the beginning of November.



## Industrial Relations

### **Meetings, meetings and more meetings as MBA continues its campaign in response to the Government's proposed IR reform**

- As part of MBA's IR campaign, the hectic pace of parliamentary meetings continued throughout this month, with the CEO and Deputy CEO collectively attending scores of meetings across the political spectrum including with Ministers, key members of the Opposition, cross and backbench.
- Briefings will continue in the coming weeks, with one-on-one meetings recently having taken place with the Treasurer and further scheduled with key members of the cross bench.
- We remain extremely concerned about the Government's IR agenda and will continue to meet with decision makers and relevant stakeholders alike to advocate on behalf of our members on this extremely important issue.

### **"Closing Loopholes" Bill Introduced into Parliament**

- The Government has now tabled a Bill giving effect to its latest tranche of proposed changes to workplace laws. The Fair Work Amendment (Closing Loopholes) Bill 2023 was introduced on the afternoon of Monday 4th September, containing a raft of changes including bargaining, 'wage theft', 'Same Job, Same Pay' and 'Employee-like' policies.
- A 26-page summary of the Bill and its key content was circulated to NIRAC the next afternoon, which followed a detailed briefing with the Committee covering the main areas and initial ramifications for building and construction employers held on that same day. Further analysis of the Bill and what it means for the industry has continued since that time. Materials to assist Member Associations provide information and updates about the Bill and its ramifications were sent to NIRAC on 13th September.
- Further analysis of the Bill and what it means for the industry continues.
- Despite Government's plans for the Bill to be debated and passed by the end of 2023, the Senate inquiry into the Bill has decided it won't report until early February 2024.
- National Office will prepare a submission ahead of the inquiry and continues to assist members with any questions about the Bill and its impacts.

### **ACCI Workplace Policy Committee**

- With IR remaining high on the Government's agenda, on 9th August the National Office attended a meeting of ACCI's Workplace Policy Committee, along with a further meeting on 5th September to discuss initial positions on the Bill.
- Working with ACCI's WPC continues to be important in facilitating a co-ordinated response across industry to such significant legislative changes.

### **Government Publishes guidance on Positive Duty under SDA**

- The Australian Human Rights Commission published this month a suite of materials that deal with the new positive duty under the Sex Discrimination Act.
- The AHRC's materials can be accessed [here](#).

### **Committee on Industrial Legislation ('COIL')**

- On 16th and 17th August, the National Office attended a 2-day COIL meeting held at the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations. The meeting was convened for COIL members to be briefed by Department officials on, and to review, hundreds of pages of amendments that will form part of the government's foreshadowed *Fair Work Legislation (Closing the Loopholes) Bill 2023*.
- Master Builders was required to sign a deed of confidentiality which precluded the two National Office staff members who attended from sharing any details associated with the consultation.
- A comprehensive summary of the contents of the Bill will be circulated amongst members once it has been tabled in the Parliament, likely on Thursday 9th September.
- Relatedly, Minister Burke gave an address to the National Press Club on Thursday 31st August, where he provided further detail around the government's IR reform agenda and the Bill.

### **Enterprise Agreement and Bargaining Working Group**

- On 8th August, the National Office attended a meeting of the Fair Work Commission's Enterprise Agreement and Bargaining ('EAB') Working Group. The meeting was largely convened to obtain feedback on recently enacted changes with respect to Protected Action Ballot Orders ('PABOs') and variations sought when provisions of EBAs don't meet the Better off overall test ('BOOT').
- As a member of the Commission's EBA & Small Business Reference Groups, we will continue to provide direct feedback as it rolls out relevant changes to its various guidance materials.

### **National Industrial Relations Advisory Committee**

- NIRAC met on the 4th, 11th, 25th of August and on the 4th and 12th of September, which provided an opportunity for the National Office to give an update on the cumulative progress of our IR campaign. At the meetings, the Committee also discussed developments arising from the ACT's [Operation Kingfisher](#), a research project commissioned by MBA NSW on the impacts of a 5-day working week, the Modern Award Manual, as well as what was going on "round-the-grounds".
- During recent meetings, the National Office reminded the Committee of the importance of keeping each other abreast of EBA developments and sharing information. The National Office also emphasised the ongoing need to track CFMEU conduct to support its advocacy for an industry-specific regulator.
- Ongoing consultation with the Committee, as well as the members they represent, will continue to be key as the Spring parliamentary sitting period looms large.

## Jobs & Skills

- **ACCI Employment and Skills Committee** met on 16 August 2023. The Committee was updated on progress of government initiatives – Skills Agreements, Apprentice Traineeship initiatives, TAFE Centres of Excellence, Migration, Jobs and Skills Councils, VET Qualification Reforms, Higher Education.
- **Skills Ministers met on 25 August** and discussed the next 5-year National Skills Agreement Skills; TAFE Centres of Excellence; Closing The Gap; Jobs and Skills Australia establishment; National VET Completions Project; Western Australia VET Initiatives; Quality Reforms: RTOs Standards and VET Workforce Blueprint update; New Fit and Proper Person Instrument - requirements for RTOs. Access the Communique [here](#).
- The next meeting of **JSC Committee** is scheduled for 24 October 2023 (online).
- **New Skills Agreement** to commence 1 Jan 2024 will embed a model for shared stewardship on the following:
  - Gender equality
  - Closing the Gap
  - Foundation Skills
  - Supporting the Net Zero transformation
  - Sustaining essential care services
  - Developing Australia’s sovereign capability and food security
  - Ensuring Australia’s digital and technology capability
  - Improving the quality of apprenticeships and improving completion rates
  - Delivering reforms to improve the regulation of VET qualifications and quality, and
  - Boosting VET workforce capacity
- A national network of **TAFE Centres of Excellence** to be established under the National Skills Agreement to provide skills for strategically important industries, They will partner with industry and universities to address skills need and productivity.
- **BuildSkills Australia** (National Skills Council) expected to be operating from October 2023. The CEO is Brett Schimming from Construction Skills Queensland.

## Work Health & Safety

### RIA developments

- On 4th August MBA attended an ACCI meeting to discuss in detail implications of recent changes to the impact analysis framework. MBA continues to hold significant concerns around a decision of National Cabinet which could have serious implications for a raft of WHS (as well as broader) regulatory issues.
- Members may recall that the decision effectively removed the requirement for SWA (and other agencies that are subject to directions of COAG-like forums) to conduct regulatory impact assessments prior to making recommendations for regulatory change.
- Our concerns around the issue were also raised during ACCI’s General Council meeting held this month in Hobart and we will continue to agitate the matter with the Government to ensure appropriate rigour is applied to all proposed regulatory changes.

### **Potential prohibition on the use of engineered stone now with WHS Ministers**

- As members may recall, in February 2023 WHS Ministers asked SWA to undertake further analysis and consultation on a prohibition on use of engineered stone. MBA made detailed submissions as part of the consultation process.
- On 16th August, SWA released a statement that following the RIS process it had provided a report making recommendations to Commonwealth, State and Territory WHS ministers on options to prohibit the use of engineered stone.
- **Relatedly**, at the recent ALP National Conference, members voted to amend the ALP National Platform in support of a ban on the manufacture, use and importation of 'harmful' engineered stone products; the introduction of mandatory silica awareness training; and a comprehensive health monitoring program during and after employment.
- We are aware that a Decision RIS (embargoed) on proposed options for a prohibition on the use of engineered stone is now being considered by WHS ministers out of session.
- Meanwhile, in terms of other related developments, we are still awaiting updates from the Government on further progress of additional regulation of high-risk crystalline silica processes (option 5a).

### **Further debate on Government's Occupational Respiratory Disease Registry Bill**

- On 3rd August a second reading debate took place in the House of Representatives to consider the [National Occupational Respiratory Disease Registry \(Consequential Amendments\) Bill 2023](#).
- If passed into law, the Bill will establish a national registry for reporting all occupational respiratory diseases, with the reporting of silicosis to be mandatory. The Government has also stated that the national registry will aid in the detection of new and emerging threats to workers' respiratory health, by monitoring trends and assisting in targeted intervention and prevention strategies.
- The Bill was referred to the Senate Standing Committee on Community Affairs for inquiry, which handed down a report on 30th August recommending passage of the Bill unamended.

### **MBA provides feedback on interactive SWMS Tool**

- Following a one-on-one demonstration of the Beta version of SWA's SWMS Tool to the NWHSC on the 3rd August, the National Office attended a feedback moderation meeting this month to provide MBA's collective feedback on the Tool.
- While providing comprehensive pinpoint feedback on both the Tool's functionality and content, MBA expressed its support for the project which we hope will provide simple and clear guidance for those responsible for preparing and using SWMS.

### ACCI Workshop – Incident Notification Review

- On 30th August, the National Office attended a workshop to determine a collective industry response to a raft of SWA proposals to amend the Incident Notification framework.
- Late last month SWA released a consultation paper on a range of potential options to amend the coverage and operation of the Incident Notification provisions in the model WHS laws. The proposed options seek to expand the framework to capture a broader range of harm and hazards, including potential notification and reporting requirements for psychological injuries and illnesses and exposures to psychosocial hazards like workplace violence, bullying and harassment.
- Given the broad range of options expressed in the SWA paper, we will be working closely with other industry stakeholders to ensure any proposed changes to the Incident Notification framework are appropriate and targeted.

### Federal Safety Commissioner Review

- This month MBA filed a comprehensive submission as part of Marie Boland’s review of the Federal Safety Commissioner. Members may recall the Reviewer has been engaged to review the functions of the Federal Safety Commissioner and that MBA has been appointed to the Reviewer’s Advisory Panel.
- Master Builders submission can be viewed [here](#).
- A summary of submissions has now been circulated with the Review Advisory Panel meeting this month to consider the Reviewer’s preliminary findings.
- MBA will provide ongoing feedback during the course of the Review, which will culminate in a final Report being handed to government sometime during the latter part of 2023.

### National Work Health and Safety Committee

- The NWHSC is scheduled to meet on 20th September with the agenda to focus on a number changes foreshadowed as part of the government’s IR (Closing the Loopholes) Bill, as well as recent developments following the September SWA Members’ meeting.
- The NWHSC’s ongoing support is key in ensuring the most practicable and appropriate policy settings are advocated on behalf of our members.

## KEY DATES IN SEPTEMBER

**WED, SEP 6** Policy Forum  
National Board Meeting  
2023 National Business Excellence Awards

**THURS, SEP 14** Finance Committee Meeting

**WED, SEP 27** Fortnightly Executive Directors Zoom

## WOMEN BUILDING AUSTRALIA

At Women Building Australia (WBA), our dedication to advocating, promoting career opportunities and fostering inclusivity for women in the construction industry remains unwavering. Here are some exciting updates from the past month:

### WOMEN BUILDING AUSTRALIA REPORTING

As a milestone requirement of the grant program Women Building Australia must provide Activity Work Plan (AWP) updates every 6-months. The AWP was submitted prior to the 31 July 2023 deadline with confirmation received in August from the Office of Women meeting the milestone requirement.

### CAREER EXPOS

In line with our mission, WBA actively participates in career expos to showcase promising career prospects available to young women in the construction industry.

The Career Expos WBA has participated in over August are:

- Canberra Careers Expo
- Darwin Careers Expo
- Victorian Skills West Careers & Employment Expo

And in September WBA will attend:

- Sydney Skills West Careers & Employment Expo

This is a total of 10 career expos for the year after already attending the following expo in 2023:

- VCE & Careers Expo Melbourne
- Adelaide Careers & Employment Expo
- Brisbane Careers & Employment Expo
- Western Sydney Careers Expo
- Perth Skills West Careers & Employment Expo
- Townsville Careers Expo

During expos we emphasised examples of successful women thriving in the field, encouraging young female school leavers to consider a career in construction.

### MENTORING ON DEMAND PROGRAM:

Thriving Mentoring Experience: Our Mentoring on Demand Program continues to thrive, offering a unique self-matching and on-demand mentoring experience. This program allows mentees to seek guidance for specific acute business issues they may be facing. We encourage experienced members of the construction industry, regardless of gender, to join us as mentors and support women in building robust businesses. Becoming a mentor not only enriches mentoring and leadership skills but also provides intellectual challenges, new perspectives, emotional intelligence exercises, and networking opportunities with industry practitioners.

### WOMEN BUILDING AUSTRALIA EVALUATION

WBA has developed an evaluation of the Women Building Australia program to assess and report on the outcomes of the WBA program. The research will include National Mentor program participants, Business Resilience training and mentoring on Demand Participants and women who have listed on the Female-led Business register.

The evaluation aims to:

- Identify and quantify the positive outcomes of the program.
- Identify and quantify any shortcomings of the program.
- Understand how the program positively impacts participants in the program over time including Mentors & Mentees, Business Resilience participants, and those on the Female-Led Business Register.

The evaluation will be conducted in two stages.

- Stage 1- Exploratory (Qualitative) to understand in detail the range of experiences, responses and outcomes from the Women Building Australia program. It includes:
  - A total of n=20 in-depth interviews including n=8 mentees, n=4 mentors, n=4 Business Resilience participants and n=4 Female-led Business Register participants.
  - 45-60-minute Zoom or Teams interview conducted by a senior researcher with a range of roles and locations
  - Explore the experiences of both past and current participants.
- A summary report will be created at the end of this stage including recommending inclusions for the quantitative (headcount) stage of research.
- Stage 2 - Headcount (Quantitative) to quantify the value of the program and its outcomes and includes:
  - 10-minute online survey sent to all current and past participants in the program
  - Includes participants from National Mentoring Program, Business Resilience & the Female Led Business Register.
  - Attempt to achieve as many completed surveys as possible via communication from WBA stressing the importance of participation.

WBA has developed the evaluation program over the past 6-month period and has engaged D&M Research professional research company to assist in the evaluation.

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



@WomenBuildingAustralia



@womenbuildingaustralia



@women-building-australia