We build Australia.

2016 Policy Priorities of the Australian Construction Industry Forum
About ACIF

The Australian Construction Industry Forum (ACIF) is the meeting place for leaders of the construction industry in Australia. ACIF facilitates and supports an active dialogue between the key players in residential and non-residential building, engineering construction, other industry groups, and government agencies.

Our members are the most significant Associations in the industry, spanning the entire asset creation process from feasibility study through design, cost planning, construction, building and management.

ACIF’s Agenda

ACIF seeks to develop a successful, strong and sustainable construction industry in Australia.

ACIF is focused on creating a competitive construction and property industry that is a leader in building Australia’s prosperity. As well as facilitating communication within the construction sector, ACIF provides governments and other agencies with a central and efficient industry liaison point.

ACIF Members

- Air Conditioning and Mechanical Contractors’ Association of Australia
- Association of Consulting Architects Australia
- Australian Institute of Architects
- Australian Institute of Building
- Australian Institute of Building Surveyors
- Australian Institute of Quantity Surveyors
- Engineers Australia
- Fire Protection Association Australia
- Housing Industry Association
- Insulated Panel Council Australasia
- Master Plumbers Australia
- National Fire Industry Association
- Property Council of Australia

Find out more at www.acif.com.au

The Australian Construction Industry Forum calls on Australia’s political parties to consider and adopt ACIF’s policy priorities.

The Australian construction industry employs over 1.1 million Australians, and in 2015-16 had a turnover of $212 billion.

Therefore, the construction industry is one of the main drivers of the Australian economy and its productivity and success is critical to the growth and success of the Australian economy.

ACIF has the following policy priorities for 2016:

- Re-establishment of the Australian Building and Construction Commission with its former powers.
- The implementation of an effective regime to minimise the use of non-conforming building products.
- Re-start the process for the national harmonisation of licensing and registration of all trades and professions in the construction industry.
- Establishment of an Australian Centre for Procurement Excellence.
ONE Re-establishment of the Australian Building and Construction Commission with its former powers

ACIF calls for the reintroduction of the ABCC and all of the industry-specific laws previously administered by the ABCC. The application of these laws will ensure an upsurge in labour productivity in the sector which must be an essential part of the effort to ensure an industry level productivity boost. ACIF also calls on Federal and State Governments to align their procurement policies so far as these regulate workplace relations. From 1 October 2005, following the passage of the Building and Construction Industry Improvement Act 2005 (Cth) (BCII Act), which created the Australian Building and Construction Commission (ABCC), the building and construction industry enjoyed a period of significantly improved industrial relations and increased productivity in which industrial relations was not the predominant and negative influence that it had been in the past. That change benefited all parties in the industry, including workers. Equally importantly, it benefited the Australian economy and the community. This regime should be re-installed because since June 2012 a weaker agency administering the Fair Work Act has been in place and the powers of that agency as well as the flaws in the Fair Work Act have seen an upsurge in industrial activity and the partial return of the climate of fear and intimidation that has regrettably dogged the industry for decades.

ACIF also calls on Federal and State Governments to align their procurement policies so far as these regulate workplace relations. At present, there are conflicting regimes of government procurement policies which contain potentially conflicting provisions. The greater disciplines imposed by, for example, the Victorian Code of Practice for the Building and Construction Industry and the related Implementation Guidelines should be consistently applied in all jurisdictions. This step would assist the task of building and construction industry workplace reform, as the ABCC would oversee the application of the disciplines imposed.

TWO The implementation of an effective regime to be established to minimise the use of non-conforming building products

On this issue, ACIF supports the approach of the Construction Product Alliance (CPA). In August 2015, the CPA provided a paper to the Building Ministers’ Forum setting out an eight point Action Plan containing key activities designed to support a holistic approach to the issues. The recommendations in the Action Plan were as follows:

1. Establish a taskforce comprised of key industry stakeholders and state and federal government agencies with a charter to develop a strategic plan which incorporates short, medium and long term responses to the issue of non-conforming products (NCP).

2. Request the Australian Building Codes Board (ABCB) to:

   - Undertake a review of the current evidence of suitability criteria in the National Construction Code (NCC); and
   - Develop and publish guidance material in the form of a handbook regarding the use of risk-based assessments to determine the appropriate evidence of suitability under the NCC.

3. Establish a national portal to increase public and industry awareness of available information on NCP.

4. Increase stakeholder awareness of third party certification schemes as a tool for achieving product compliance.

5. Develop and operate a pilot to determine the feasibility of establishing a single building products register for compliant product based on industry and government certification schemes.

6. Evaluate the feasibility of building product legislation being enforced at point of sale.

7. State building authorities to review surveillance and audit activities and implement stronger penalty regimes to improve effectiveness in achieving compliance with the National Construction Code (NCC).

8. Assess the feasibility of establishing a confidential reporting system to facilitate the reporting of industry concerns around NCP.
THREE Restart the Process of National Harmonisation of Licensing and Registration

ACIF believes that a genuinely national market for like contractors, professions, trades and disciplines working in the industry would make for a more efficient market, responsive to varying needs for particular skills in different jurisdictions. This requires consistent capability and licensing and recognition standards across all jurisdictions.

It is for the representatives of those professions, trades and disciplines to agree on the appropriate skills requirements, and the requirements for continuing professional development of organisations and individuals.

With nationally consistent frameworks of licensing or regulation there should be one arbiter of change rather than allowing multiple agencies to introduce additional or varied requirements or, worse, introducing minimal or lowest common denominator standards.

The Commonwealth Government agency working on national occupational licensing needs to ensure that licensing requirements include elements for maintaining appropriate commercial skills for individuals who are responsible for payments from customers and to staff, contractors and service providers.

Individual ACIF Members’ areas of influence include needs for greater efficiency in occupational licensing or registration. They each point to benefits in terms of quality outcomes. They include:

- National registration for architects rather than state and territory registration;
- Consistent national registration for engineers;
- National accreditation for all protection sectors; and
- The alignment of registration and certification qualifications standards for building surveyors across all jurisdictions.

FOUR Establish an Independent Australian Centre for Procurement Excellence

With large amounts of public funds being spent on infrastructure, it is incumbent on governments to ensure they get maximum value for money through the procurement process. To buy wisely you need wise buyers: there are substantial opportunities for governments and business to share expertise, and identify and deliver solutions that improve productivity and value for money across the procurement process.

To overcome persistent deficiencies in procurement skills and practices, we recommend a whole of government approach supporting the establishment of an Australian Centre for Procurement Excellence, building on the work of the Australasian Procurement and Construction Council (APCC).

The Procurement Centre of Excellence will expand the APCC’s role and remit, broadening government engagement and building on work across jurisdictions considering efficiencies in procurement. The Centre would be tasked with building a stronger relationship between government and business and supporting best practice procurement in Australia at all levels of government. The Centre should:

- Be established as independent of government;
- Build stronger linkages between government and with industry sectors;
- Provide transparent expert advice to all levels of government;
- Develop guidelines, build capability and improve standards; and
- Work with Infrastructure Australia and other government agencies to develop long term visionary thinking and planning for investment in economic and social infrastructure.

The Board of the Centre for Procurement Excellence should include equal levels of representation from industry and government.