



Association of Consulting Architects

Australia

# National Communique

## October 2013

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### VALE ROSS LANGDON

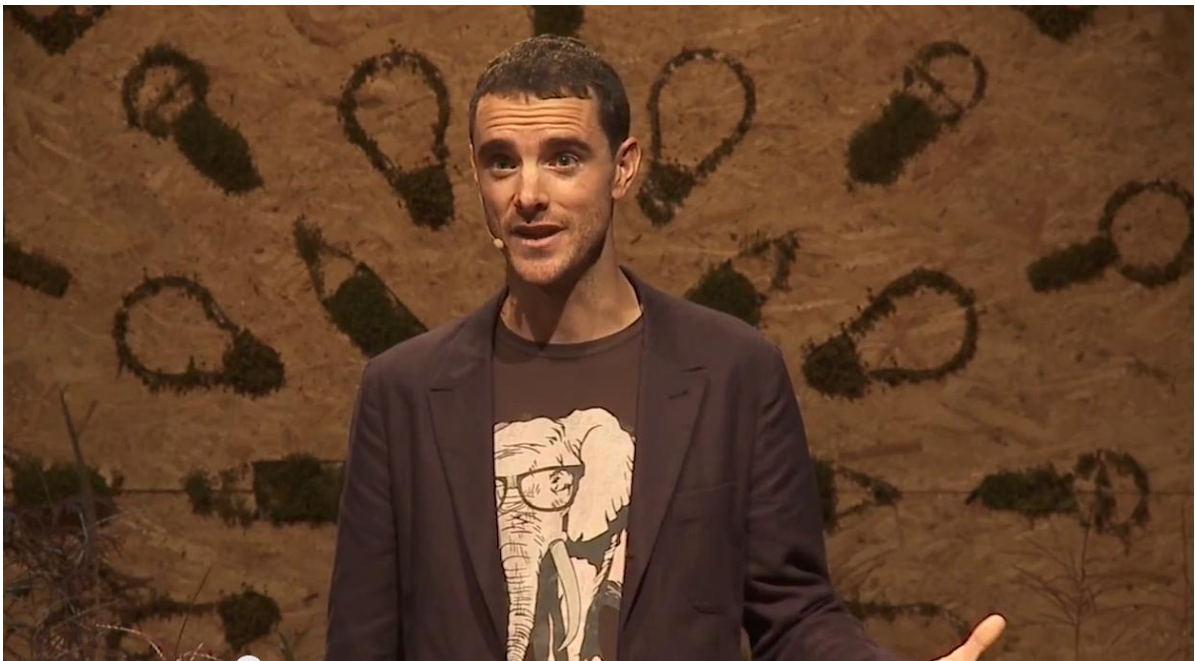
*Jack Birrell pays tribute to Ross Langdon on behalf of the ACA.*

The Association of Consulting Architects and the broad family of architectural firms across Australia feel the immeasurable loss of Tasmanian architect Ross Langdon and his pregnant partner Elif Yavuz in the attacks within the shopping mall in Nairobi.

Ross was a selfless, dedicated young architect who gave the world – in particular those in need – the basics of shelter wrapped in inspiring buildings. He sensed that every building is a world of its own, and he shows us that a building must first serve others before it serves you.

On behalf of all in the collegiate of architecture the ACA sends condolences to Ross's family and friends.

He shall be missed yet his inspiration shall live with us all.



Ross recently gave a TedX talk in Krakow, Poland, which provides a very evocative self portrait. You can watch this [here](#).

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**NOTE:** The information contained in The National Communique is for general information and is not offered as legal or financial advice. You are advised to seek your own counsel and confirmation prior to acting on anything contained in this document. The ACA would like to acknowledge the support of CBUS in preparing the Communique.

## FEES – GETTING PAID: SECURITY OF PAYMENT

*Being paid for services provided is fundamental to any business, architectural practice included. Yet for many it can be a continual struggle. In the second of three articles on fees, Peter Sarlos – architect, lawyer and chartered surveyor – outlines the Security of Payment Act and how architects can use it.*

The building industry is notorious for principals (clients, project managers, builders, etcetera) not paying or short paying their bills. The reasons usually given all have similar undertones – they include lack of funds; the service provided was not what was specified, scoped, or to standard; and “get it from the purchaser”. This is true as much for architects as it is for other service providers in the industry.

Not getting paid or having to provide a service uneconomically impacts directly on the ability of the architect to practice architecture.

Architects facing such a situation should be aware of the [Building and Construction Industry Security of Payment Act](#), which was introduced as a result of the impact of the failure of principals in the building industry. The NSW Act dates from 1999, with similar acts following in other states, most of them modelled on NSW. Architects should know their way around these Acts and how to use them. The following provides a short guide.

The Act is designed to protect the right of a building contractor or a person providing *related goods and services* with the right to be paid. It achieves this objective by effectively modifying the terms and conditions of contract. Such statutory provisions include:

- A prohibition of actual or implied clauses seeking to restrict an obligation to pay until the principal receives payment or funds (for example, pay when paid);
- The voiding of any contractual provision to the extent that a term of contract – whether actual or implied – seeks to exclude, modify or limit a right to payment under the Act;
- A right to suspend work without penalty until payment is received where such a suspension is made in accordance with the Act;
- A right to be paid within a time stated under the contract provided that such a time is reasonable or within the time stated in the Act (10 business days).

The Act includes special provisions that include architects (the design consultants) in provisions identified as related goods and services. The states that rely on the NSW Act as a model (all except Victoria) have extended the right to be paid under the Act to architects, engineers and other design professionals in fees disputes with homeowners. Such provisions are not stated in the Act but arise because other legislation has the effect of protecting designers from exclusion of liability of homeowners under the Act.

Over the past year architects have recovered outstanding fees between \$500K and \$1M from residential (domestic) clients, including solicitor clients, in Queensland and NSW.

The words and meanings of the Act are continuously reevaluated and redefined by decisions of the Supreme Courts that deal with it in the various Australian jurisdictions. In some cases, decisions are made in relation to other legislation or disputes unrelated to the Act. This can have a profound effect on the interpretation of the meaning of the Act. Two decisions of the NSW Court of Appeal – one in 2012 and another in 2005 – when read together imply that:

- The provisions of the legislation should be interpreted broadly, and
- A person providing building related goods and services can include persons providing advice of a legal nature.

The last 12 months have seen a number of successful claims made by architects where the fees arising from the services of an adjudication consultant have been partly and openly recovered.

The Act imposes strict timetables and procedures that *must* be followed by you (the architect), your client and the adjudicator. If they are not followed, a claim and a response under the Act can be found to be defective in some way, as can an adjudicator’s decision. If the procedures *are* followed then it is possible to obtain a debt certificate from an appropriate court within about six weeks (where time is under the Act) and within what might be called a reasonable time under a contract.

Once you have been issued with a judgement order (over the counter) you have a number of options of recovering the money including through the Sheriff, the service of a garnishee order, etcetera.

It is important to bear in mind that the use of the legislation is not risk free. However, the limited statistics available show that over 90% of the matters that are sent to adjudication are resolved either by the process or by the discussions arising as a result of process. Less than 5% of all adjudication decisions are overturned or voided.

In measuring that risk you need to consider the risk to your practice, your family and to you!

*Peter's previous article (in the September Communique) looked at the broad issues around fees. His next will cover professional indemnity insurance.*

## **KNOW YOUR AWARD – FAIR WORK INFORMATION STATEMENT**

*Do you give all new employees a Fair Work Information Statement? If not, you need to – it is one of your responsibilities under the National Employment Standards.*

The provision of a Fair Work Information Statement to all new employees is required as one of the ten [National Employment Standards](#), which provide minimum conditions for all employees. You can incur hefty penalties for not supplying one – up to \$10,200 for an individual and \$51,000 for a corporation.

This is easy and simple to do – download the Fair Work Information Statement [here](#) and ensure that you give it to new employees before they start work (or as soon as practicable after they start.)

The statement includes information on the following:

- The National Employment Standards
- How a transfer of business affects entitlements
- Modern awards
- Agreements under the *Fair Work Act 2009*
- Individual flexibility arrangements
- Freedom of association
- Termination of employment
- Right of entry (including privacy laws to protect personal information)
- The Fair Work Ombudsman and the Fair Work Commission.

The Fair Work Ombudsman also provides a fact sheet on Fair Work Information Statements, which can be downloaded [here](#).

## **KNOW YOUR AWARD – CHANGING EMPLOYEES HOURS OF WORK**

*Reducing employees' hours is one way of keeping your teams together in difficult economic circumstances. How do you manage this to ensure minimum stress and maximum benefit for all?*

As architectural practices continue to face uncertain economic times, some are reducing employee hours in an effort to keep all their staff on while also addressing straightened business circumstances. This can be a good way to keep valued staff in the practice and teams together while the practice works to return to a stronger economic footing.

However, employers do need to ensure that proper processes are followed and that changes are agreed to and documented. Effective communication is also vital, as in so many other business and workplace situations. When staff understand the context in which their hours – and therefore income – are reduced, they are more likely to pull together and work with you to improve the business's situation.

Your formal obligations depend on the conditions under which your staff are employed. Where a staff member is employed as a casual, hours can be readily changed in response to changing business needs. In contrast, reducing the hours of a full-time employee to that of a part-time position comprises a change to their contract.

Michael Corrigan of [Platinum Employee Relations](#) advises that when a full-time employee's hours are reduced to part-time due to down turn in business the employee must be given two choices:

1. Accept the part-time role and stay on with the company. In this context, they must be given the appropriate notice as per the award and the national employment standards.
2. If the employee does not wish to go part-time then they need to be paid redundancy payments.

Employers should provide a written description of the proposed changes and if the employee agrees they need to accept this in writing. As an employer you cannot simply amend the contract without your employee's consent – to do so is to risk of a breach of contract claim. If the employee agrees to the changes, the revised arrangement should be properly documented and signed by both employer and employee. In a [short article](#) on the topic, Tress Cox Lawyers advise that "Care should also be taken in ensuring that the employee agrees that no redundancy entitlements arise from the variation in their employment."

This is a potentially sensitive situation, and needs to be handled carefully to ensure that staff morale is not damaged, as this could easily generate further negative impact on your business. Tress Cox highlights the importance of communication:

"In our experience, a strategy of open communication, including clearly explaining the reasons for the requested reduction in hours to employees and outlining the benefits of reduced hours (such as a greater work-life balance), can lead to a "win-win" situation for both parties. It is important though that employers do not direct their employees to reduce their hours."

As you prepare to talk to your staff, consider what the advantages could be for them. Reducing to a four-day week, for example, could be a chance for some to explore opportunities that are more difficult in a busy work environment – for example, it could provide a window for some to take on sessional teaching, or other 'extra-curricular' activities within the profession. Are there ways that you can help them access such opportunities?

It is also helpful to give staff a clear understanding of the context in which an employee's hours would increase or return to full time, and even what role they could play in assisting the business with this.

You need to use similar processes of documentation, communication and agreement when returning employees to increased hours. When planning to increase hours again you should also be mindful that employees might need to negotiate new circumstances. For example, if an employee has taken on other commitments or has reduced childcare arrangements in response to reduced hours, they may not be able to drop everything and return to longer hours immediately.

You also need to be aware of your obligations should employees elect to take redundancy rather than agreeing to reduced hours. Redundancy was discussed in the [September 2012 Communique](#).

Have you reduced employee's hours as part of a strategy to respond to reduced business workloads? We would be interested to hear about this. What is effective? How did you manage the discussion? What was the response of your employees?

## **FURTHER RESOURCES**

There is not a great deal of information on this topic readily available. Two useful resources are:

### **[Alternatives to Redundancy](#)**

This article from Tress Cox Lawyers includes a short, straightforward account of how to manage a reduction in hours both formally and in terms of good communication.

### **[Being asked to reduce your pay or your hours of work](#)**

Citizen's Information provides some good advice for employees faced with a decision about whether to accept reduced hours. Note: this is an Irish site, and therefore the advice refers to a different legislative context. Nonetheless, it provides a useful outline of the issues and would be useful to read as an employer, as well as being a resource to direct staff to.

## **ACA NEWS, ACTIVITIES AND ACTIONS**

### **ACA ON TWITTER**

Have you followed the ACA on twitter yet? Twitter is easy to join and easy to use. You can check out our twitter feed here: <https://twitter.com/AssoConsultArch> Many of the links to news and items of interest elsewhere, that you will see in the last section of the Communique are also sent out via the ACA twitter account.

Follow us! @AssoConsultArch.

### **ACA ON LINKEDIN**

The ACA now also has a LinkedIn 'company page', which will also be used to send out updates. You can find and follow us here: <http://www.linkedin.com/company/association-of-consulting-architects>

### **ACA WEBSITE**

The redevelopment of the ACA website is proceeding well. A reminder that we are keen to include opinion pieces and analysis from a range of writers on topics relevant to the business of architecture – if you are interested in contributing please do get in touch by emailing [editor@aca.org.au](mailto:editor@aca.org.au).

### **REVIEW OF AS4000–1997 AND GENERAL CONDITIONS OF CONTRACT**

*An update and call for feedback from David Slinn, ACA Representative for the Australian Standards General Conditions of Contract Review.*

On Thursday 26 September 2013 I attended a stakeholder initiation meeting in Sydney with Standards Australia and other industry and government representatives to commence a process by Standards Australia to:

1. Revise and publish a revised standardisation document for AS 4000-1997 (within 13 months)
2. Review the entire General Conditions of Contract suite; and
3. Consider incorporating Building Information Modelling (BIM) legal instruments into the General Conditions of Contract Suite.

This initial meeting was very much about process for the review of AS4000-1997 and it was noted that the timetable proposed was very ambitious. A drafting committee will be established this month to undertake the detailed task of reviewing each clause and each proposed change. If the timetable is maintained there will be public consultation period in April–May 2014 once initial proposals and changes are developed.

Overall up to 29 Australian standards may be impacted by the review of the entire General Conditions of Contract suite.

Australian Standards has somewhat changed their processes for reviewing standards in order to achieve quicker outcomes and in this regard have already issued a scoping document. This can be found at the end of this Communique. The purpose of the scoping document is to try to identify upfront those areas to be reviewed and seek industry consensus early in the process around issues where possible. In this regard it is important that issues for review or requests for changes are identified early in the process.

Another aspect discussed was product delivery by Australian Standards and SAI Global. It was recognised that for the Standard to be effective it needed to be used as drafted and avoid heavy modification by users. Also under consideration are web-based delivery models such as completing contracts online as a more comprehensive service. At this stage these aspects will require much more detailed consideration.

If members of the ACA have feedback about the use or drafting of AS 4000-1997 then it is important they pass on this feedback as early as possible. It is best to email me at [david.slinn@dem.com.au](mailto:david.slinn@dem.com.au). I will collate specific responses or items for review. If you would like to discuss the process further I can also be contacted on 0411 474 901.

## AUSTRALIAN CONSTRUCTION INDUSTRY FORUM UPDATE

*John Held, ACA – SA President, provides an update on recent ACIF activities.*

ACA is a member of this forum, a peak body of most of the organisations involved in the Construction Industry. John Held and Simon Hangar represented ACA at the recent Melbourne meeting, which was followed by a joint meeting with the Australian Procurement and Construction Council, the peak government procurement body.

Points of interest include:

- Further upgrading of the Construction Industry Forecasts and its website.
- More involvement in BIM policy coordination
- Discussions on the advantages which could flow from having the National Construction Code freely available; and rationalising of the building approval process
- Two guides are set to be released soon – The Case for Project Team Integration, and the Project Team Integration Workbook. These resources will help to promote collaborative processes and team culture, the keys to minimising wasted effort, reducing disputes, and creating excellent project outcomes.
- A presentation from New Zealand Government on the opportunities available for Australian firms in the NZ market, particularly with the scale of the Canterbury rebuild.

For further information refer to <http://www.acif.com.au/acif-news>

## ACIF BREFINGS

[ACIF November Briefings](#) are now open for registration.

These bi-annual events for [Brisbane](#), [Sydney](#) and [Melbourne](#) release the national outlook along with upcoming business for local regions. State/capital outlooks will be explored to a new depth in the November release of the [Construction Market Reports](#), and delegates to the [ACIF Briefings](#) will receive a complimentary copy.



## **ACA BRANCH UPDATES**

### **ACA QUEENSLAND**

#### **New Committee Members**



ACA Queensland welcomes new Committee members Bruce Forrester (left) and Robert Wesener (right).

**Bruce Forrester** is a Design Architect and Director of Bickerton Masters Architecture with over 27 years experience in Architecture. Graduating from Queensland Institute of Technology and becoming a registered architect in 1986, Bruce has worked with Bickerton Masters for 15 years, helping to ensure a better community by specialising in facilities for aged care, hospitals and schools.

As director, Bruce is responsible for leading a design team through master planning and conceptual design solutions, along with providing input and support throughout the documentation and construction process. Bruce looks forward to his active role on the ACA Queensland Committee.

**Robert Wesener** has been a partner and director of Fulton Trotter Architects since 1995. Robert has experience in a wide range of projects including health, aged care, education and cultural and commercial architecture. His most recent project has been as part of the team responsible for the \$100m Azure Blue Kawana aged care development for Blue Care.

Recently Robert assumed the role of managing director of Fulton Trotter Architects and has taken on responsibility for managing the project support group. This group consists of the administration, interior design and quality architecture teams, which provide project support across all eight project teams within the practice in both Brisbane and Sydney. He is also responsible for the coordination of all management and Board of Directors activities.

*ACA Queensland thanks outgoing Committee members, Andrew McMaster and Caroline Treacy for their contributions to the activities of the Branch while serving on the Committee.*

#### **Site visit – UQ's Advanced Engineering Building, a living laboratory**

On 18 September 2013 Richard Kirk, of Richard Kirk Architects and Mark Craig, of Hassell, together with Watpac Construction representatives David McIlwraith (Project Manager), Ben Lawrence (Contract Administrator), Mark Spry (State Manager Qld) and Ross Jarden (BDM) – led ACA Queensland members and guests on a tour of the University of Queensland's new Advanced Engineering Building (AEB).

The AEB contains active learning laboratories, student spaces, contemporary research facilities that support global engineering research centres and a state-of-the-art, 500-seat auditorium, which is supported by large-span timber trusses from mixed hardwoods grown in the Maryborough region. The facility include a number of interesting sustainability initiatives – it is designed to interact with the natural environment, dramatically reduce energy consumption and to create an interactive learning environment for students. Real-time monitoring will allow students to interact with and experiment on the building.

#### **ACA Qld Corporate Partners 2013**

ACA Queensland is pleased to acknowledge its Corporate Partners for 2013 – GWA Bathrooms and Kitchens, Kennedy's Classic Aged Timbers, Grace Construction Products, Enware Australia, James Hardie and Stokes Wheeler.

## SOUTH AUSTRALIA

### **50 years of the ACA in South Australia**

The ACA – SA is celebrating 50 years since its inauguration on 8 July 1963, as the South Australian Practising Architects Association. David Hassell has written a history of the ACA from its inception to the present. This will be available shortly on the ACA website.

### **Safe Design**

ACA – SA has adapted the ACA Safe Design document (developed by ACA Victoria) to South Australian conditions. This includes additional templates for risk registers based on the local regulations. We have also ensured that SafeWork SA and the Department of Planning, Transport and Infrastructure have been involved in the development of templates so that, as far as possible, there is a uniform approach to the provisions.

The new documents formed the basis for a seminar on 27 September on the Safe Design provisions of the SA Work Health & Safety Act 2012, which is based on the national Model Code. This was presented jointly with the Australian Institute of Architects.

We believe clear and uniform guidelines and procedures are an advantage for architects in clearly defining our role in the safe design process, involving our clients and clarifying the responsibilities of builders, owners and operators of buildings. We hope to further develop the templates with feedback from users for more general release in the near future.

ACA Safe Design documents assist architects to meet their obligations under the work health and safety acts – as outlined by Anna Piatkowska in the [June Communique](#).

ACA Safe Design documents are only available to ACA members and can be downloaded from the website.

## NEW SOUTH WALES

### **Safe Design Webinar**

New South Wales members also discussed Safe Design this month. The venue was the NSW/ACT Branch's first roundtable event, held on 8 September. This lunchtime discussion was based around a webinar conducted by Sophie Barrett, a Safety in Design expert, and was held concurrently in five offices in different parts Sydney and the ACT. It was something of an experiment to see if the idea of holding an event simultaneously in several locations could work effectively as a way of delivering value to members throughout the Branch.

The consensus was that the event was very successful and that this was an effective way of providing members with an opportunity to discuss business in a focused, small group forum and to easily access formal CPD.

We are planning the next event for November and will be expanding the number of venues to ensure all members have access to the Webinar.

We will also organise a follow up Webinar in early 2014 those members who missed out on the Safe Design event.



## **OF INTEREST ELSEWHERE**

### **THE NEW GOVERNMENT — WHAT DOES IT MEAN FOR BUSINESS?**

It is not yet clear what the Coalition will mean for the business of architecture. There have been a number of brief roundups about potential impacts for business in general, which point out some things to keep an eye on. These include:

#### **“The Changes Coming: A post-election business policy review”**

In his piece for *Business Review Weekly*, Andrew Stewart points out that given that the election debated in through generalities, “businesses will need to be more attentive to the fine detail as policy changes are rolled out”. He considers the effects on business under the headings of industrial relations, Federal-state confusion, competition, trade access, foreign investment, banking, infrastructure and tax.

#### **“Complete policy guide: What a Coalition government means for small business”**

An article by Patrick Stafford and Gavin Lower on Smart Company briefly outlines impacts under the headings tax, red tape, parental leave, government representation, skills and education, manufacturing and broadband.

#### **“What changes should business expect to the Fair Work Act post election?”**

This blog post from ADP, a “business outsourcing company” provides a more detailed account of what the Coalition’s proposed review of the Fairwork Act might mean for business.

### **MAJOR CITIES UNIT TO BE DISMANTLED**

One of the first actions on the part of the new Government will have serious effects on the built environment, with flow-on effects to the business of architecture, not to mention broader economic impacts. This is the reported scrapping of the Major Cities Unit, which has been met by consternation across the built environment professions and industries. A summary of comment to date follows:

#### **“Stuck in Traffic: How to Get our Cities and Economy Moving”**

Writing on *The Conversation*, Jane-Francis Kelly and Paul Donergan of the Grattan Institute argue that “the strength of the country’s economy depends on how well our cities are functioning”. They are concerned that the dismantling of the Major Cities Unit suggests that the new government doesn’t understand this, or the serious changes that are required.

#### **“Should Tony Abbott have a policy on cities?”**

Over on Crikey Alan Davies clearly articulates the value and importance of good urban policy advice.

#### **“Axing of Major Cities Unit widely condemned”**

An overview of responses from *The Fifth Estate*.

#### **Planners Call for Clarity on Vision for Major Cities**

Statement from Planning Institute of Australia.

### **BRANDING AND ARCHITECTURE**

Michael Bleby, architecture writer for *Business Review Weekly* interviews Andrew Nimmo of Lahz Nimmo, Andrea Nixon of Nixon Consult and Ed Billson of MAP on [branding and architectural practice](#). The piece is subscriber-only, but you can obtain access by signing up for a free trial.

### **MANAGING PART-TIME ARCHITECTS**

Meaningful part-time work in architecture is a key issue for many, but not all practices know how to manage this effectively for both the business and the employee. Misty Waters, associate director and practice manager at Bates Smart, Sydney, has written a series of [tips for employers](#) and for those [returning to work](#), available on [Parlour](#).

## ARCHITECTS AND SOCIAL MEDIA

There is an increasing amount of material out there about how architects can use social media effectively for business, professional development and to engage. Recent items include:

### **How Architects Use the Internet.**

Su Butcher's blog Just Practising includes a number of pieces on architects and social media. These include: "[How do Architects Use the Internet](#)" and "[How Architects use the Internet – Some Research Results](#)", which discusses a recent UK research report on how the construction industry uses different communication channels. A follow up piece "[Controlling Employees use of Social Media](#)" provides a helpful guide to managing employees' use of online media in a business context. In "[LinkedIn Training What I've Learnt](#)" Su reflects on how architectural practices are using LinkedIn and how they might improve this. (It is well worth exploring the Just Practising blog more widely – it covers many business issues in architecture. Some of these are specific to the UK, but many are applicable to Australia too.)

### **Social Primer for Practice and Projects**

An article by Lira Luis for Metropolis magazine canvases the impact social media is having on the dissemination and discussion of architectural ideas, while pointing out that many practices are still to "justify the return-on-investment of time". She then discusses a new platform, KINetic, created specifically for architects and design professionals.

### **The Architects' Guide to Pinterest**

This short overview from Anna Winston on BDOonline outlines what Pinterest might mean for architectural practices and how you can use it to generate business leads, as well as to keep track of visual resources.

### **Are you LinkedIn? Using LinkedIn to find Clients, Colleagues, and Consultants**

Over at the American Institute of Architects, Jason Wagner of Oculus provides a straightforward guide to using LinkedIn effectively.

### **Hi, I'm Bob ... and I am an Architect Blogger**

Bob Borson, author of the very popular American blog 'Life of an Architect' talks casually about why he blogs and the opportunities and challenges that blogging present. The related post "[Responsibility: Don't Be a Dunce](#)" continues the theme.

### **Why Professionals Should Blog**

This short overview from George Beaton at BRW is not specific to architecture, but many of the tips for professional service firms are relevant.

## EQUAL PAY DAY

This year's Equal Pay Day, on 3 September, once again drew attention to the pay disparity between men and women. The [statistics in architecture](#) don't provide a clear picture, but both anecdote and research suggests that the issues in architecture are similar to those in other industries, and affect practices of all sizes and types.

So what can you do? The following links provide tips and suggestions on how to identify any issues within your own business and what might be done to begin to address them.

### **"The cost of being female? 64 extra days at work"**

This useful article on Women's Agenda outlines what the pay gap is and why it matters. A series of helpful tips and links on what employers can do about the gap is included at the end of the article.

### **WGEA Fact Sheet**

An overview of issues from the Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA), which outlines four steps: understand the issues, conduct a gender pay gap analysis, improve accountability, and review human resources policies and procedure. The [WGEA](#) has a range of excellent resources, including a [payroll analysis tool](#), which can be used by businesses and organisations of all sizes.

### **Fair Work Ombudsman Best Practice Guide – Gender Pay Equity**

This outlines the issues, employer's obligations and best practice initiatives and strategies.

The Fair Work Commission has also recently established a [Pay Equity Unit](#) and is currently undertaking research into the gap.

## ACA CONSULT AUSTRALIA – WORKFORCE DIVERSITY INDUSTRY SNAPSHOT

Consult Australia has released its [2013 Workforce Diversity Industry Snapshot](#), which surveyed member consulting firms working in the built environment including: design; architecture; technology; engineering; surveying; legal; and management solutions. An overview of the report can be found on [The Fifth Estate](#).

The report describes the “headline” results as follows:

- The consulting industry workforce is 27% women, well below the national workforce average of 47.7% for all companies with 100 or more employees.
- Over 15% of board positions are filled by women, 24.3% of professional services staff are women, and 57.7% of corporate and support services staff.
- Most people work full time, but the great majority of part time workers are women, with men more likely to work as casual or contract staff.
- There is a very clear gender pay gap in almost all career streams and levels, especially for those working in corporate and support services roles. Average turnover rates are usually higher for women. This is despite the average ages of staff, and years in their current company, being quite similar for men and women.
- Parental leave offerings are becoming more generous, though this is yet to be reflected in improvements to return-to-work statistics and suggests that more attention needs to be paid to what happens in the months after primary carers return to work.
- In good news for employers, average retirement ages are above the national average and it appears that most companies will have about 10 years for succession planning with senior staff. Furthermore, at each stage of the talent pipeline – from executives right down to graduates – there is a smooth average age difference of four to six years between each level.
- Overall, although it is not especially surprising that positive changes to the survey data are small. The continued existence of a gender pay gap, low numbers of – and high turnover in – women, is proof positive of a systemic problem that demands even more efforts to overcome.

The report makes ten recommendations to “provide industry leaders with a basis for, and framework to take, action”. These include: looking at pay disparity and challenging clichés about why it occurs (for example, the comparative value of roles or the value of traditional working arrangements); identifying and promoting talented women to leadership positions; using flexible working arrangements more effectively; understanding what employees who are parents of young children need from employers to enable them to be productive workers; using data on the average ages of employees to aid succession planning; and using survey data for benchmarking a practice’s performance. Full recommendations can be found in the report.

Consult Australia has also established a Champions of Change program, chaired by Greg Steele, Managing Director of Hyder Consulting. Champions sign the [Charter of the Consult Australia Champions of Change](#) and work to “actively advance equality across their businesses and to act as advocates for the consulting industry.”

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