

Gender Equity Policy

Context

The Australian Institute of Architects aims to continuously improve its operations and its approach to member engagement and guidance, based upon acknowledged best practice principles. By adopting a comprehensive and ethical approach, the Institute aims to ensure that it engages fairly and equitably with all its members, staff and other stakeholders, whether male or female, in a positive, respectful and constructive manner. Equally importantly, the Institute aims to assist the whole architectural profession to do the same.

There has been enormous change during the past century in the roles and status of women in society generally. Discrimination against a person on the basis of gender is illegal. However, legal constraints on gender-based discrimination have, for most practical purposes, been limited to instances of overt and intentional discrimination. Many systemic, often unintended and largely invisible effects continue to impact on the participation and progression of women within the Australian workforce, and specifically within the architecture profession.

The recent study *Equity and Diversity in the Australian Architecture Profession: Women, Work and Leadership* offers extensive evidence that, within the architecture profession, many women participants are being compelled or encouraged to leave the profession, or are discouraged from returning to it after a career break. The study confirms that the participation rate of women in the profession, particularly at mid-career and late-career points, is disproportionately low compared to the number of women graduates in architecture. It also identifies that the number of women owners/principals of architectural practices is disproportionately low when compared to the number of women architects in the profession.

This policy aims therefore to establish a set of policy principles to ensure the Institute and its members are aligned in valuing and exhibiting principles of fairness and equity, which lead to the provision of equal opportunities, rights and benefits to all men and women engaged within the architectural profession, and to eliminate gender-based impacts on the participation and progression of women within the profession.

Scope

This policy sets out principles designed to maximise fair and equitable access to opportunities for women relating to:

- **Ownership and leadership in the architecture profession** (including recognition of a wide range of contributions and achievements, new succession strategies, and new models for progression to partner/owner roles);
- **Participation as employees in the architecture profession** (including matters such as equal pay, equal responsibility, meaningful part-time work, more flexible career pathways, flexible working conditions and retention of women in the profession);
- **Representation and governance within the Institute** (including committees, National and Chapter Councils, juries and selection panels);
- **Institute programs, services and events** (including membership options, professional development, conferences and events, awards and prizes, products and services); and
- **Operational activities within the Institute** (including employment and recruitment practices, pay equity, leadership, management and succession).

Principles

Best practice principles adopted as the foundation for fair and equitable participation of women within the architecture profession are:

- 1. Acknowledge the profession's obligation to accommodate the diverse needs of the community:** It is fundamental that architects have the capacity to understand and respond to the diverse needs of clients and the broader community. This can best be achieved when all levels of the profession reflect the diversity of the community, and the Institute will develop and promote strategies to ensure this outcome.
- 2. Recognise and respond effectively to the diversity of members:** In all key decisions and activities, the Institute will account for the diverse interests and circumstances of all members, taking particular account of gender, career stage and access to services.
- 3. Incorporate provisions to ensure gender equitable outcomes in all new Institute initiatives.** In considering any new or significantly redeveloped programs, services and activities, the Institute will evaluate the program for its contribution to gender equity, as well as other parameters such as financial impact, risk, time and resource requirements.
- 4. Communicate the value of women in leadership roles:** The Institute will address the severe gender imbalance in leadership and ownership of architectural practices. It will advocate for the specific benefits of a more gender-balanced approach to design direction, project management and business management.
- 5. Promote equality of employment arrangements.** The Institute will adopt, and promote within the profession, employment and recruitment practices that ensure women are recruited, paid and selected for promotion on the same basis as men.
- 6. Support the development of alternative and flexible career pathways within the profession:** Understanding that women are less likely to follow traditional, linear career paths, the Institute will identify, validate and offer guidance on flexible approaches to recognition, reward and career progression for women in architecture.
- 7. Develop cross-gender mentorships and networks.** The Institute will facilitate and encourage informal access by women to the influence and experience of male leaders, networks and mentors in the profession, and by men to female leaders, networks and mentors.
- 8. Educate the profession about the impact of gender stereotypes.** Recognising that many contemporary workplaces retain vestiges of systems, processes and cultures that evolved when workplaces were primarily populated by men, the Institute will inform and educate members about the often invisible barriers to equality that result.
- 9. Actively seek input on the needs of women members:** The Institute will provide effective and readily accessible channels for members to provide feedback or unsolicited suggestions, ideas, concerns or complaints relating to gender equity.
- 10. Develop and coordinate specific programs to give effect to this Gender Equity policy.** The Institute will establish and maintain an effective forum to create, maintain, review and report on specific programs designed to implement the principles of this policy.

Review

This policy and the ideas embodied in it will be reviewed as required, but generally at not more than 3-yearly intervals.