

The DMN Roundup

DESIGN MATTERS
NATIONAL
12 June 2025



ESSENTIAL UPDATES

Following our coverage of Victoria's Building Legislation Amendment (Buyer Protections) Bill 2025 in Issue 15, the legislation has now passed the Victorian Legislative Council and is set to become law, providing greater protection for buyers from mid-2026. The federal government has escalated its housing crisis response, with Housing Minister Clare O'Neil declaring war on red tape and Assistant Minister Andrew Leigh targeting local councils as key barriers to housing delivery. As construction costs reach unprecedented levels—with land development costs soaring 75% in five years—new evidence emerges showing buyers are willing to pay premiums for energy-efficient homes, challenging calls to lower housing standards. South Australia continues its remarkable construction sector performance, while Western Australia grapples with a deepening affordability crisis. Advanced AI tools are transforming decision-making in the built environment, and innovative design approaches are cracking the code on affordable housing delivery.

Victorian building reforms now law: what happens next?

Building on our detailed coverage in Issue 15, the Building Legislation Amendment (Buyer Protections) Bill 2025 has now passed the Victorian Legislative Council, marking a significant milestone for consumer protection in Victoria's building sector.

Buyers of newly constructed homes and apartments throughout Victoria will enjoy greater protection from the middle of next year as these building industry reforms become law. The new Building and Plumbing Commission, which we detailed in our previous issue, will assume expanded powers for licensing, oversight, and enforcement across the sector.

For building designers who attended our recent webinar on 3 June with Steven Baxas from the VBA, this progression from consultation to legislation demonstrates the importance of staying ahead of regulatory changes. The implementation timeline means practices have approximately 12 months to prepare for the enhanced compliance requirements.

Next steps for building designers:

- Review current documentation and quality assurance processes
- Consider attending our upcoming Building Practitioner Pre-Registration Course (17 September)
- Implement the compliance frameworks discussed in our regulatory readiness pathway

Federal government declares war on housing red tape

The federal government has significantly escalated its response to the housing crisis, with multiple ministers targeting regulatory barriers across local, state, and federal levels.

Housing Minister Clare O'Neil has promised to slash red tape to kick-start home building and reverse a multi-decade collapse in the construction industry's productivity. O'Neil says the sector has turned a corner after tough years of rising costs and surging insolvencies, but admits meeting the target of 1.2 million new homes by decade's end is "going to be hard."

Assistant Minister for Productivity Andrew Leigh has taken particular aim at local councils, arguing that a "thicket of regulation" is holding back housing, infrastructure and research. This follows the Queensland Productivity Commission inquiry we covered in Issue 15, demonstrating coordinated pressure for regulatory reform across multiple jurisdictions.

O'Neil's fast-tracking approach includes Labour's \$10 billion election promise to build 100,000 homes specifically for first home buyers, designed to avoid the "quicksand of planning rules."

Industry response

Property Council Chief Executive Mike Zorbas welcomed the Prime Minister's announcement of an August productivity summit, noting "we must boost productivity across the construction sector to create the assets we need for world-class, liveable cities."

Construction costs crisis: record highs and 75% land cost surge

Building on Issue 15's coverage of record construction costs, new analysis reveals the extent of cost pressures across the housing sector.

The cost of building a house has never been higher, with experts warning that snowballing expenses could doom ambitious housing reform to failure.

Compounding this crisis, land development costs have skyrocketed by 75% over the past five years, with median development site costs rising from \$4.8 million in 2020 to \$8.5 million this year, according to Ray White analysis.

However, lenders are warming to residential projects as a boom looms, with pre-sale requirements being steadily reduced as financial institutions compete for opportunities in the anticipated housing boom.

“The cost of building a house has never been higher.”

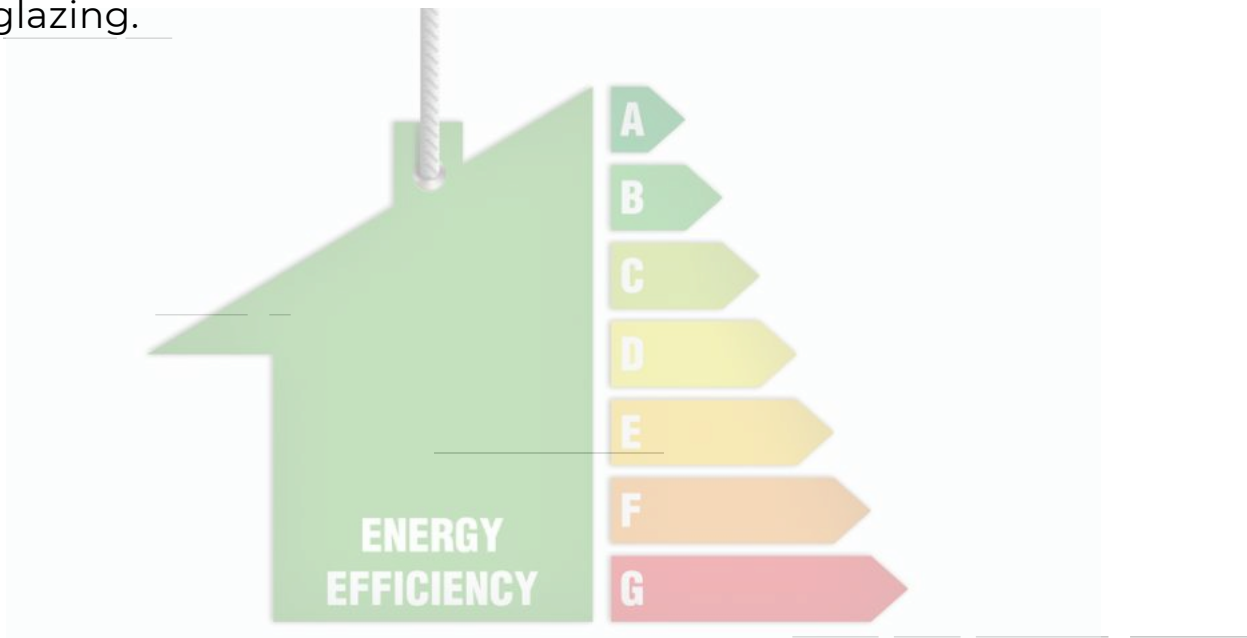
Market Bright Spot

Despite cost pressures, April building approvals data shows positive momentum, with 9,490 detached homes approved, up 3.3% compared to the previous month, according to HIA Senior Economist Maurice Tapang.

Energy Efficiency Standards Under Fire: Market Evidence Supports Higher Standards

A significant industry debate has emerged over housing standards, directly relevant to building designers working with energy efficiency requirements.

Opinion pieces are calling for lower housing standards to accelerate housing delivery, particularly targeting energy efficiency requirements. However, new evidence contradicts this approach: Domain research shows buyers are paying significant premiums for homes with solar, north orientation, and double glazing.



This market evidence suggests consumers value energy efficiency features, supporting the retention of current standards rather than reducing them. For building designers implementing NCC 2022 energy efficiency requirements, this validates the commercial value of compliance expertise.

Professional Development Opportunity

This debate underscores the importance of energy efficiency expertise. Our Upskill Now Masterclass (THERMAL) on 19 June and Upskill for Whole of Home Masterclass on 10 June provide essential technical knowledge for navigating these requirements efficiently.

South Australia Leads National Construction Performance

Continuing the positive trajectory we reported in Issue 15, South Australia has outperformed every state and territory for growth in the building and construction industry during the March quarter.

Infrastructure investment continues with the \$27.3 billion four-year budget allocation for priority projects, including the \$15.4 billion non-stop North-South Corridor.

Meanwhile, Adelaide's newest suburb "Southwark" has been officially confirmed in the inner west, including the site of the former West End brewery.

Key Performance Indicators:

- Total construction work reached \$4.59 billion, marking 7.7% year-on-year growth (national average: 3.5%)
- Quarter-on-quarter growth of 6.7% (national: 0.0%)
- Building work jumped 16.2% year-on-year (national: 2.6%)
- Residential building grew 22.9% compared to last year
- New detached houses up 22.6%, apartments/units up 27.9%



Contrast with Other States

While SA excels, Western Australia faces a worsening housing crisis, with more than 210,000 households now considering housing unaffordable—a 91% increase since 2022.

Innovation in Design and Construction: AI and Affordable Solutions

Building on Issue 15's coverage of AI adoption in construction, new developments show advanced AI transforming decision-making in the built environment. The property, construction and infrastructure sectors are leveraging AI to manage increasing complexity and rising data volumes.

Affordable Housing Breakthrough: Woods Bagot has cracked the housing cost code with their South Australian project coming in under \$3,000 per m² through simplified modular design and buyer research.

Sustainable decorative concrete is emerging as a sustainability ally, offering aesthetic appeal with minimal environmental footprint as the industry rethinks materials for climate change adaptation.

Builder Confidence Rising

Despite challenges, confidence in Australia's home building industry is on the rise, with build times improving despite remaining above pre-COVID levels.

Planning Reform and Urban Design Excellence

Victoria continues planning system reform beyond building regulations. A proposed rule change could shield suburbs from "boxy towers" across Melbourne's 60 new activity centres through floor area ratio controls—a planning tool successfully used in NSW that creates certainty for developers and communities while leading to better-designed buildings.

However, regulatory complexity persists. A Pakenham family's failed attempt to vary a 100-year-old covenant highlights historical impediments to new housing development in Melbourne..

EXCELLENCE RECOGNITION

The Planning Institute of Australia's national awards celebrated at the PIA Congress in Darwin showcased housing done well, while four architects were recognised in the 2025 King's Birthday Honours for "distinguished and conspicuous service."

URBAN DESIGN INNOVATION

Research into designing precincts that last reveals key factors for urban success, while Tasmania's public housing review finds reforms "not working as intended".

Construction Industry Supports Economic Recovery

Following our Issue 15 coverage of ACIF forecasts, new data confirms building and construction is keeping Australia out of recession. GDP growth slowed to just 0.2% in the March 2025 quarter—the weakest result in almost a year—but building and construction activity expanded by 2.2%, making it a standout performer.

Master Builders Australia Chief Economist Shane Garrett noted that without the construction industry's contribution, Australia's economy would have slipped into negative territory. Residential building achieved the strongest gain (+2.6%) during the quarter.

VBA Enforcement Action

Demonstrating the importance of proper registration, an unregistered Mornington Peninsula builder has been banned for life after the Victorian Building Authority successfully applied for a Supreme Court injunction.

“

Building and construction is keeping Australia out of recession.

”

Governance Reminder: DMN Constitution Available

As a member-driven organisation, Design Matters National operates under a comprehensive constitution that outlines our governance structure, member rights, and organisational procedures.

Access the DMN Constitution

Our constitution covers:

- Membership categories and rights
- Board structure and responsibilities
- Meeting procedures and voting rights
- Financial management and reporting
- Amendment processes

Understanding our governance framework helps members engage effectively with DMN and participate in our democratic processes. All members are encouraged to familiarise themselves with these important documents.

Design
Matters
National



Building
Design
Awards
2025

ENTRIES
CLOSE
20 JUNE

Designing Tomorrow.

maximising YOUR DMN MEMBERSHIP VALUE

Your membership delivers
more than you may know

Design Matters National provides
comprehensive support for building
design professionals across multiple
areas of practice and wellbeing.



Professional Resources & Support

NEW: Mental Health Resources Coming Soon

We're currently uploading expanded mental health and wellbeing resources to provide essential support for managing the pressures of professional practice. These will include counselling services, stress management techniques, and work-life balance strategies specifically designed for building design professionals.

Look out for these new resources under the Resources tab - coming very soon!

Community Connection

Private Members Facebook Group

Join over 1,000+ building design professionals in our exclusive member community. Share project opportunities, seek collaborations, get technical advice, and network with peers across Australia.

Join Our Private Facebook Group

Perfect for:

- Project referrals and collaborations
- Technical problem-solving
- Industry networking
- Job opportunities and announcements
- Professional development discussions

Technical Support & Training

TechLink for Energy Efficiency Assessors

Many EEAs don't know about this valuable and FREE resource especially for DMN accredited EEAs!

Access technical support, software guidance, troubleshooting assistance, and peer consultation for complex thermal performance assessments.

Submit your question to [DMN TechLink here](#), or email TPASupport@designmatters.org.au

Free Member Webinars & CPD Library

All DMN members enjoy complimentary access to select webinar content throughout the year. Regular technical updates, industry briefings, and professional development sessions at no additional cost. You can also access our extensive library of paid webinars, technical guides, practice notes and industry updates.

[Access all our webinars here.](#)

[Access all our member resources here.](#)

Career & Business Hub

Looking for work? Have projects to share?

Design Matters National provides multiple platforms to connect our professional community:

DMN Job Board - Post positions, search opportunities, and connect with employers

Private Members Facebook Group - Share project opportunities, seek collaborations, and network with peers

Whether you're seeking employment, have vacancies to fill, or need to refer projects to other members, our platforms ensure you're connected with the right professionals.

For Employers

Post detailed job descriptions, experience requirements, and contact information

For Job Seekers

Create comprehensive profiles showcasing your skills and experience

For Project Referrals

Connect with members who can take on work you can't accommodate

Join our thriving professional network and strengthen our industry connections.

ATO Masterclasses: Free Business Skills Training

The Australian Taxation Office has developed a comprehensive online learning platform designed specifically for small businesses: Essentials to strengthen your small business.

This platform provides free, professional courses to support small businesses in improving their tax, super, and business management knowledge—particularly valuable for building design practices.

Upcoming Masterclass Series:

- Claiming small business tax deductions - 17 July 2025
- Reporting payments made to contractors - 14 August 2025
- Hiring & paying workers - 18 September 2025
- Record keeping - 14 October 2025
- eInvoicing - 21 October 2025
- Fringe benefit tax - 18 November 2025

[Register for 'Claiming small business tax deductions' - 17 July, 12:00-1:00 PM AEST](#)

[View all upcoming sessions and register in advance](#)

The platform includes over 30 short, free courses covering record keeping, cash flow, deductions, GST, super, and more—essential knowledge for running a successful building design practice.

Strategic CPD Pathways: Addressing Current Industry Challenges

The regulatory changes and market pressures highlighted in this issue create clear professional development opportunities:

Post-Legislative Action Plan

With Victorian building reforms now law, prepare for mid-2026 implementation:

- [Building Practitioner Pre-Registration Course \(17 September\)](#) - Essential for VBA registration requirements
- [Contract Administration Workshop \(28 June\)](#) - Implement efficient systems under enhanced oversight
- ATO Tax Deductions Masterclass (17 July) - Optimise business finances during transition

Energy Efficiency Excellence Track

- [Upskill Now Masterclass \(THERMAL\) \(19 June\)](#) - Technical excellence pathway
- [FirstRate5 LIVE: Multi-Dwellings \(20 June\)](#) - Software proficiency for complex projects

Innovation and Affordability Focus

Address cost pressures through advanced techniques:

- [Hempcrete: Australian Construction \(2 July\)](#) - Alternative materials reducing costs
- [Protecting your bottom line: Debt recovery \(24 July\)](#) - Financial resilience during market volatility
- [Ask an Interior Designer: Early Planning \(21 August\)](#) - Advanced integration strategies

Business Resilience Shield

Protect your practice against the cost pressures and project delays highlighted throughout this issue:

Financial Security Series:

- [Protecting your bottom line: Debt recovery \(24 July\)](#) - Essential given construction cost pressures
- [Contract Administration Workshop \(28 June\)](#) - Efficient project management systems

Innovation Showcase Experiences

See solutions in action:

- [Catalina Sustainable Home Tour \(27 June, WA\)](#) - Witness 10-star construction efficiency
- [DMN Sundowner following the tour \(27 June\)](#) - Network with innovation leaders

Upcoming Events & CPD

JUNE

Building a Successful Career: Winning Work & Keeping Clients

_Date: Jun 18
Time: 06:00PM AEST
Location: Online
Presenter: Britta Siggelkow

Upskill Now Masterclass (THERMAL)

Date: Jun 19
Time: 04:00PM AEST
Location: Online
Presenter: Matthew Graham

FirstRate5 LIVE: Model Class 2 Multi-Dwellings (v3.2)

Date: Jun 20
Time: 12:00 PM
Location: Online (AEST)

The Power of 10-Star Living: Tour Catalina sustainable home!

Date: 27 June
Time: 3:00 PM
Location: Clarkson WA
Exclusive guided tour of a 10-Star NatHERS-rated, 105% net zero sustainable home

DMN Sundowner at Indian Ocean Brewery

_Date: 27 June
Time: 4:30 PM
Location: Indian Ocean Brewery, 33 Ocean Falls Boulevard, Mindarie

Contract Administration Workshop

_Date: Jun 28
Time: 8:30 AM
Location: Online (AEST)
Presenter: Geoff Hoare

JULY

Hempcrete: Major inroads in the Australian hemp construction industry

Date: Jul 02

Time: 12:00PM AEST

Location: Online

Presenter: Klara Marosszeky

DMN Men's Boardroom Lunch

Date: 04 July

Time: 12:30PM-2:30PM

Location: MATTHEW FLINDERS HOTEL

667 Warrigal Rd, Chadstone

Pricing for Profit (WA Members only) - Presented by the SBDC

Date: 10 July

Time: 9:30AM (AWST)

Location: ONLINE

Presenters: Small Business Development Corporation

James Hardie Modern Homes Forecast 2025

Date: 17 July

Time: 2:00PM (AEST)

Location: ONLINE

Presenters: Kikitas Smirnios, VIC Business Development Manager

Protecting your bottom line: Debt recover strategies for design professionals

Date: 24 July

Time: 4:00PM (AEST)

Location: ONLINE

Presenters: Drew Laing and Caitlyn Hoey

AUGUST

Ask an Interior Designer: Designing from the inside out - The power of early interior planning

Date: 28 August

Time: 6:30PM

Location: Saigon Secret Carlton North

Women of DMN Dinner- Northside at Saigon Secret

Date: 21 August

Time: 2Pm-3PM

Location: ONLINE

Presenter: Dominique Hunter

SEPTEMBER

DMN Member Dinner - Hobart

Date: 3 Sep

Time: 5:30PM

Location: 140 Cascade Rd, South Hobart

Tassie Member Breakfast - Hobart

Date: 4 Sep

Time: 8:00AM

Location: Brickworks Hobart Design Studio

Presenter: Wayne Gorman

DMN Member Dinner - Launceston

Date: Sep 4

Time: 6:00 PM

Location: 140 Cascade Rd, Hobart

Tassie Member Breakfast - Launceston

Date: 5 Sep

Time: 8:00 AM

Location: Design Centre 81

Brisbane St, Launceston

Presenter: Wayne Gorman

Women of DMN Southside Catch Up

Date: 12 Sep

Time: 12:30PM

Location: St Martin's Cafe
116 Martin St, BrightonVIC

Contract Administration Workshop

Date: Sep 27

Time: 8:30 AM

Location: Online (AEST)

Presenter: Geoff Hoare

Building Practitioner Pre-Registration Course for VBA

Date: Sep 17

Time: 6:00 PM

Location: Online (AEST)

Presenter: Geoff Hoare

SOURCES REFERENCED IN THIS ISSUE

- [Sourceable](#) - Victoria building reform is set to become law
- [The Age](#) - Federal government slams local councils over housing shortfall
- [Australian Financial Review](#) - O'Neil declares war on red tape to fix housing crisis
- [The Sydney Morning Herald](#) - O'Neil's housing shortage plan
- [The Sydney Morning Herald](#) - Why the cost of building a house has never been higher
- [The Age](#) - Housing cost surge of 75 percent in five years
- [Australian Financial Review](#) - Lenders warm to residential projects as boom looms
- [The Fifth Estate](#) - Opinion on growing call to drop housing standards
- [Adelaide Now](#) - Adelaide's newest suburb revealed
- [WA Today](#) - WA housing crisis worsening
- [Sourceable](#) - Embracing advanced AI for better decision-making
- [The Urban Developer](#) - Woods Bagot cracks housing cost code
- [Architecture & Design](#) - Sustainable decorative concrete
- [Sourceable](#) - Australia's home builders becoming more confident
- [The Age](#) - Rule change to shield suburbs from boxy towers
- [The Age](#) - 100-year-old planning law impediment
- [NT News](#) - Planning awards showcase housing done well
- [Architecture AU](#) - Architects recognised in 2025 King's Birthday Honours
- [Architecture & Design](#) - Designing precincts that last
- [The Mercury](#) - Tasmania housing reforms not working
- [The Urban Developer](#) - Unregistered Mornington builder banned
- [The Australian](#) - Labor to slash housing red tape

Stay connected with Design Matters National – visit our [Events Calendar](#) for all upcoming events, explore our [CPD Resources](#) for on-demand training, and check out the [Design Matters National website](#) for the latest news and member information.

Thank you for reading!
