



Australian
Institute of
Architects



30 August 2021

Dear Chief Minister, Deputy Chief Minister, Ministers and Chief Health Officer

Sent Via Email

Small-Scale Construction Projects

We are writing to you about the continued lockdown of small-scale construction projects.

Our Associations collectively represent the local building and construction sector, including large and small builders and trade contractors, consultants such as architects, engineers, certifiers and designers, and the many associated businesses such as suppliers, product manufacturers, real estate, and professional service providers, that are all impacted by the longest lockdown of our industry in Australia.

We acknowledge the very difficult situation the ACT finds itself in, and the efforts the ACT Government is making to keep Canberrans safe.

We believe that any plan to reopen sectors of the economy should be made based on health evidence, safety protocols, and equity. Importantly, the social and economic impacts of restrictions should also be taken into account.

Friday's announcement to open ACT and Commonwealth Government construction projects, large scale construction and civil construction sites, without allowing small-scale construction, in particular residential building sites, does not meet these criteria.

We have always advocated for the entire building and construction industry to reopen together.

We would like to invite the Chief Minister, other Ministers, and ACT Health representatives to an industry forum so we can discuss the safety concerns referred to by the Chief Minister for small-scale construction, present the impacts of delaying the reopening of small-scale construction projects, identify safety protocols and solutions which will allow the sector to reopen, and discuss ways the Government can provide additional financial and other support to the sector while the industry remains in lockdown.

As a starting point for discussion, we note:

- The safety protocols developed by the ACT Government Construction Requirements (based on the Victorian Construction Guidelines) can be applied effectively across the entire industry so a uniform approach is taken on large and small-scale building sites.
- Because small-scale projects have less workers per site, with work conducted in unoccupied premises, and are often located in greenfield areas away from the general public, small-scale projects present an opportunity to work safely and in strict compliance with the ACT Government Construction Requirements.
- The cost to the ACT economy of a three-week lockdown of the construction industry will be around \$600m, and for every week the small-scale projects are prevented from restarting will cost the economy an additional \$105m, and
- The current \$10,000 business support is inadequate to save operators of small-scale construction businesses, subcontractors, professionals and suppliers from financial distress and possible insolvency.

The businesses involved in small-scale construction projects are equally committed to implementing the necessary COVID safety requirements as those involved in large scale projects. The industry supports practical and timely enforcement by WorkSafe ACT and the AFP to ensure there is compliance with the safety rules

To demonstrate how many Canberrans are affected by the delayed reopening of small-scale construction projects, we started a petition. In less than 2 days, our petition has received more than 5,000 signatures in support.

Your urgent attention to this matter is requested.

To arrange a suitable meeting time for the industry forum, please contact Michael Hopkins on 0418 984 594.

Yours sincerely,



Michael Hopkins
Chief Executive Officer
Master Builders ACT



Greg Weller
Executive Director
ACT & Southern NSW



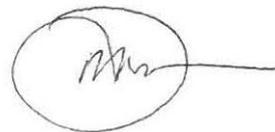
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Chief Executive Officer
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