

14 June 2012



**Australian Institute of Architects**

Ms Wendy Craik  
Presiding Commissioner  
Barriers to Effective Climate Change Adaptation Inquiry  
Productivity Commission  
LB2 Collins Street East  
Melbourne VIC 8003

Dear Commissioner

***Barriers to Effective Climate Change Adaptation- Draft Report***

The Australian Institute of Architects (the Institute) welcomes the opportunity to make this submission to the Productivity Commission's draft report.

The Institute is an independent, national member organisation with over 10,000 members across Australia and overseas. The Institute exists to: advance the interests of members, their professional standards and contemporary practice; and expand and advocate the value of architects and architecture to the sustainable growth of our community, economy and culture. The Institute actively works to maintain and improve the quality of our built environment by promoting better, responsible and environmental design.

I have separately made a submission to the Productivity Commission's inquiry in my role as Chair of the ASBEC Climate Change Task group. The Institute supports the Built Environment Adaptation Framework which has been developed by the ASBEC Climate Change Task group.

The Institute wishes to make a number of comments in relation to adaptation as it relates to the built environment.

It is our experience that the Australian Government and industry's focus in relation to climate change over recent years has been predominately focused on climate change mitigation. While important, and recognising that a number of important steps have been taken, particularly in relation to the focus on energy efficiency in the built environment, this focus has been at the expense of addressing climate change adaptation. We acknowledge that there has been some adaptation activity take place and there was the Australian Government's five year adaptation funding program which ceases this month however we do not believe that adaption has received the same level of attention or resources that has been expended on carbon reduction, nor has adaptation been undertaken in an equally coordinated, strategic manner.

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*"The built environment plays a fundamental economic, cultural and social role in our lives. Our residential, commercial and public buildings provide shelter and security. They affect our productivity, our health and our general well being and amenity. buildings are also relatively long-lived assets"<sup>1</sup>*

Given the impact that the built environment has on our lives, and its size and value, with estimates of a \$5.4 trillion replacement value according to GeoScience Australia, it is critical that measures to enhance the built environment's resilience to climate change be developed and implemented in a coordinated, strategic manner. Due to the diversity of ownership and nature of the built environment, between private, public, residential, commercial and industrial assets and the geographic spread of the built environment across different climate zones, we believe it is essential that climate change adaptation for the built environment be undertaken in a collaborative manner between all levels of government, the industry and community representatives. Otherwise a nationally fragmented approach to climate change adaptation in the built environment risks duplication, wasted resources and increases cost of doing business for organisations operating across borders. It also risks adaptation measures not being implemented.

We have found recently that industry efforts to address adaptation are hampered by a few key factors; a lack of accessible information and tools to assist decision making, a lack of incentives, and regulatory systems not adequately addressing climate change adaptation.

Currently building designers are not able to readily access climate change impact data and other relevant resources to assist decision making on designing buildings for future climate change. We acknowledge that a significant amount of research is currently being undertaken which will assist, however we are yet to see the outcomes of that research and we would caution that unless the research outcomes are freely accessible and facilitated by a 'one stop shop' approach, the research effort may not be fully utilised. There is also a need to facilitate industry input to research needs on this issue.

Regulation for the built environment needs to more fully encompass and address adaptation issues to adequately prepare and retrofit our buildings for future climate years. Reducing regulatory barriers may require changes to the resourcing of the Australian Building Codes Board and Standards Australia to facilitate timely change as, and when new data on climate change and its impacts becomes known. Resourcing should also be such that regulatory documents are available free of charge.

Although enhanced regulation will help achieve resilience for buildings constructed in the future, we have a legacy of past planning decisions in high risk areas and existing building stock which will last over coming decades and has not been specifically designed to withstand future climate change risks. Regulation will not address this legacy of existing stock. Incentives and other measures will be required to encourage action to enhance the resilience of existing buildings and urban areas, and to complement regulatory changes.

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<sup>1</sup> Maddocks Report to the Department of Climate Change and Energy Efficiency 'The Role of Regulation in facilitating or constraining adaptation to climate change for Australian infrastructure' 2011, p 57

We believe that the Australian Government has a leading role to play to facilitate and guide adaptation activity in the built environment. We are disappointed that with the Australian Government's five year climate change adaption funding of \$126M concluding this month, only \$3M has been allocated for the 2012/13 year with no further commitments to this important area until the Productivity Commission has reported on its inquiry. This reduction in funding does not seem consistent with the Minister for Climate Change's statement at the time of announcing the Commission's inquiry, "*We cannot afford to delay action on adaptation because decisions we are making today will affect our vulnerability to climate change in the future*"<sup>2</sup>.

As a start, the Institute recommends the Australian Government undertake the following actions in relation to climate change adaptation for the built environment;

- make the built environment a priority area of need in relation to climate change adaptation
- continue to facilitate research to inform the issues and appropriate responses
- communicate adaptation issues with industry and the community to raise awareness and facilitate action
- address regulatory and other barriers preventing adaptation activity in the built environment
- demonstrate leadership in how it addresses adaptation of its own built environment assets

I would be happy to answer any queries you may have in relation to this submission.

Yours sincerely,



David Parken, LFRAIA  
Chief Executive Officer

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<sup>2</sup> Minister for Climate Change and Energy Efficiency Press Release "Climate Change Adaptation Inquiry" 20 September 2011