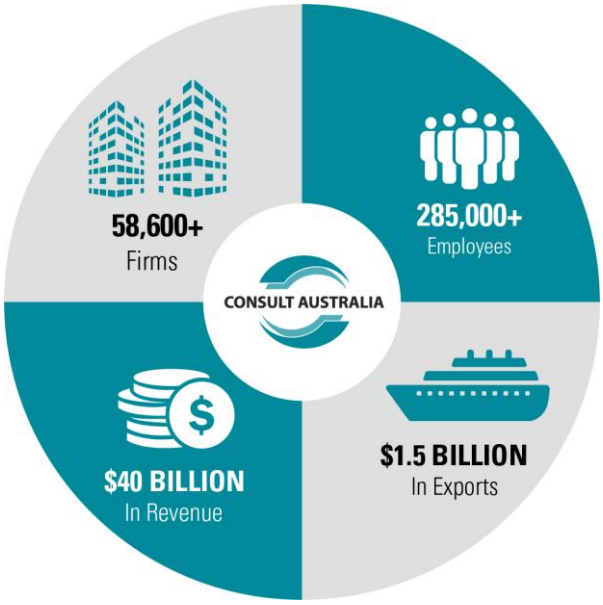
SA Election 2026

CONSULT AUSTRALIA'S POLICY PRIORITIES

Consult Australia

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About us

Consult Australia is the industry association representing consulting businesses in design, advisory and engineering, an industry comprised of over 58,600 businesses across Australia. This includes some of Australia's top 500 companies and many small businesses (97%). Our members provide solutions for individual consumers through to major companies in the private sector and across all tiers of government. Our industry directly employs over 285,000 people in architectural, engineering and technical services and many more in advisory and business support. It is also a job creator for the Australian economy; the services we provide unlock many more jobs across the construction industry and the broader community.

Our members include:

AECOM, ARCADIS, ARUP, AtkinsRéalis, aurecon, Beca, BG&E, Douglas Partners, GHD, HDR, Jacobs, KBR, Northrop, Orion, pitt&sherry, SLR, smec an ACM company, Stantec, Steensen Varming, TTW, tonkin, turnbull, umwelt, WSP

A full membership list is available on our website.

Executive summary

Consult Australia advocates for a healthy and sustainable ecosystem of productive businesses to maximise the record infrastructure investment in South Australia and further improve the state's economic future.

Consultants design the future. With every design, advisory and engineering service provided by our membership, there is a positive impact on job growth, community connectivity, and economic productivity.

South Australia's continued growth relies on delivering investment in infrastructure. To achieve this, we need a strong, productive businesses, ready to collaborate and take the lead on innovation. Consult Australia member businesses are critical to the delivery of the state's investment in infrastructure and construction.

We call on the next South Australian Government to be a part of this future by adopting our key policy recommendations, set out below.



Provide confidence for the future infrastructure pipeline
The South Australian Governmnet should ensure the infrastructure pipeline is coordinated and planned with certainty over the long-term to ensure businesses can have confidence to invest and build capacity.

Become a Model Client and unravel risk on projects
The South Australian Government has a role to play in overseeing the projects it governs and as a principal, setting the tone for the rest of the supply chain. Therefore it should exemplify Model Client behaviours and unravel risk on projects.

Enable digital by default
The South Australian Government should enable digital by default by ensuring coordinated leadership so that good digital practices are only relaised on select project silos.

Provide national leadership on key regulatory issues
The South Australian Government should continue to lead the conversation of harmonised national registration of professional engineers. It should also pause the SA review of labbour hire laws and instead push for progress on the agreed national scheme.

Provide confidence for the future infrastructure pipeline

Pipeline uncertainty leads to a lack of industry confidence and an inability for businesses to invest in capacity. Although there is a record infrastructure spend in South Australia, the design and engineering work on some of the mega projects will be on the decline around 2027.

Consult Australia's recent market conditions report[1] highlighted that escalating business costs and a lack of pipeline certainty are the top two business challenges.

To ensure a highly skilled workforce is present and engaged in important infrastructure work in South Australia, the future infrastructure pipeline needs to progress from a planning phase to commitment and funding to provide certainty over the long term to ensure planning is undertaken in a timely manner and give businesses confidence to maintain capacity.

Although the unique and significant transport infrastructure projects in the metropolitan area such as Torrens to Darlington, and tram grade separations are the current focus and transport and social infrastructure new housing developments in the outer metropolitan areas are being considered, major transport and freight routes in regional South Australia require commitment to improve productivity and safety. The South Australian Government's Freight and Transport Strategy is a positive step forward but new investment and funding is now required.

In relation to the Government's Housing Road Map, we commend the approach to co-ordinate planning and investment in necessary infrastructure. Our members and industry looks forward to being informed of, and involved in, the engineering and design of the future infrastructure investment required, especially in relation to water and transport infrastructure.

With SA Water's significant capital works program, it will be important they regularly engage with engineering panel providers and industry to ensure the design and delivery is as successful and effective as possible.

Our industry recognises the importance and broader economic benefits of the proposed Northern Water project in the context of the state's Copper Province and market opportunities. We look forward to a positive final investment decision and further work being undertaken in late 2026.

Becoming a model client and unravel risk on projects

Leaders across government and the construction and infrastructure industry want a productive industry underpinned by a collaborative culture where model client behaviours are the norm.

The model client is one who;

1. understands the commercial risks, market conditions and different roles of the industry suppliers, using that knowledge to balance the risk exposure of all parties

2. has clear, consistent and transparent tender processes, evaluation criteria and provides quality documentation including well-structured and accurate briefs, providing reasonable review and response times (the key benefit flowing from this is reduced cost of bidding)

3. always considers business and industry sustainability, by avoiding unnecessary pressure on parties.

4. undertakes appropriate risk identification, assessment, mitigation, and management including by understanding the particular project risks

[1] 2025-market-conditions-report.pdf

With projects growing more complex over time, the issue of risk has become more important, but with no improvement in the management of risk. This is seen most starkly in design and construct contracting, which often results in a design, construct and litigate cycle. Consult Australia proposes reform threads all underpinned by collaboration and transparency in the Unravelling Risk report and include;

- Scoping for success
- Valuing variations
- Transparent timing
- Resolution of disputation

Government contracts that present these issues styme business participation. We appreciate the existing relationships with procuring agencies that allow frank industry advice. However, some of the current settings need change and more understanding of market conditions and pragmatic solutions.

The Department for Transport and Infrastructure's (DIT) recent changes to AS4122-2010 special conditions for building projects has raised concerns for Consult Australia members as well as others in the industry. Consult Australia's proposed changes are with DIT for consideration. At a high level they are:

- Novation and subcontracting
- Liability and insurance

We are seeking several amendments to ensure that there is risk-sharing rather than just risk pass through. Under tender conditions, lead Professional Services Contractors are expected to engage subconsultants on 'like terms.' Many amendments do not translate effectively in this cascading environment, creating liability and insurance mismatches. We hold that there is a need for a more balanced approach.

We understand that some suggested amendments put forward by Consult Australia have been favourably considered by DIT and the SA Government but other issues remain outstanding.

We look forward to a reasonable consultation and positive response from DIT and the SA Government to work through industry concerns and issues.

Enable digital by default

Consult Australia advocates for coordinated leadership to realise data and digital productivity. Through our Digital by Default work, we have seen that good digital practices often happen in silos – whether that be project silos, sectoral or jurisdictional. Without integration and coordination there is no capability building or consistent digital delivery.

We see this in South Australia, where there has been significant investment in digital as part of the Torrens to Darlington (T2D) project and the new Women's and Children's Hospital project, but there is little clarity on how these digital practices and any insights will apply to future infrastructure projects.

With respect to the T2D, our members note that a comprehensive suite of digital engineering standards was developed setting clear expectations for how digital models, data, and asset information should be managed throughout the project lifecycle. The standards align with ISO 19650 and ensure consistency in how information is exchanged, verified, and handed over. Our members have commented that for smaller projects, the same principles can be scaled down—using simplified BIM requirements and tailored Exchange Information Requirements. The tiered

approach used by DIT helps match digital expectations to project size and complexity, making it easier for smaller teams to participate without being overwhelmed.

The Department of Infrastructure and Transport (DIT) has also invested time in developing, with industry input, refreshed and pragmatic BIM requirements that should provide a good foundation for all projects.

As recommended in our Digital by Default White Paper, the South Australian Government should:

- invest in digital technology
- harmonise standards and guidance for data and information management
- embed requirements through procurement with an outcome-led approach
- embed 'digital by default' requirements through greater consideration of Collaborative Contract
- build capability and skills.

We urge the South Australian Government to consider how other jurisdictions, such as NSW are enabling digital by default. For example, Infrastructure NSW recently launched its Infrastructure Digitalisation and Data Policy which covers:

- committing to digitalisation across government departments and agencies.
- establishing information requirements and data standards for a unified approach.
- reflecting the information requirements and data standards in procurement and contracts.
- building the capability to advance infrastructure digitalisation.

Providing national leadership or regulatory issues

Professional engineering registration

In our submissions to the South Australian Government on the professional registration of engineers, we outlined our support for mutual recognition of engineers across state and territories and national harmonisation of registration. We commend the South Australian Government in acknowledging the merits of this initiative and moreover, leading in pursuing it with other relevant state and federal ministers. We will continue to support the government and look forward to progressing national harmonisation.

In Consult Australia's recent market conditions report[2], 68% report rising business compliance costs, including professional registration, licensing and insurance. If mutual recognition and national harmonisation can be achieved, this will go some way to alleviating the increasing business costs that are ultimately passed through to clients who are in many areas, government departments and agencies. Mutual recognition will also have productivity benefits.

The cost and productivity benefits incurred by industry due to the lack of a driver's licence type scheme for professional engineers are significant and outlined in pages 5-6 in our submission to the Productivity Commission [3]. Consult Australia has calculated over $54 million in costs to businesses for registration of engineers already registered in another jurisdiction could be saved if occupational mobility were realised for existing registered engineers.

[2] 2025-market-conditions-report.pdf

[3] 202506---final-submission-to-productivity-commission-ncp-analysis.pdf

Labour hire licensing laws

In our submission[4] on labour hire licensing laws, we recommended that the SA government retain specific and well targeted regulation over broad regulation that could capture sectors that do not need regulatory intervention. The original policy intent of the law was to protect vulnerable workers – and any reform should ensure that is the case and not burden other businesses with regulation that does not provide a community benefit.

The fact that labour hire licensing schemes can capture design, advisory and engineering consultancy firms is outside the original intent of the legislation and disproportionately burdens these businesses.

We believe the SA exclusion for businesses where labour hire is not a core function still met the policy intent, as did the 2020 reforms explicitly listing the industries of concern. Consult Australia does not believe that the current legislation in SA leaves workers in our industry without important protections.

[4] 2025-aug---submission-to-labour-hire-licensing-reforms-(1).pdf

Contact

We would welcome any opportunity to further discuss the issues raised in this submission. Should you wish to meet with Consult Australia and our South Australian members to discuss our policy priorities, please contact Matt Williams, SA State Manager, matthew@consultaustralia.com.au

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Thanks to our Industry Champions

For their outstanding leadership and engagement on behalf of the industry.

