



Voice of an Industry

Housing Industry Association is the peak national organisation giving a voice to Australia's residential building, renovation, and development industries.

Images courtesy of Housing Industry Association

The residential building and development industry is one of Australia's most dynamic, innovative, and efficient service industries and is a key driver of the Australian economy. At present, it is the primary engine room of Australian economic growth and our chief buffer against external economic shocks.

In a sector that contributes \$150 billion to the Australian economy and creates approximately 1,000,000 jobs, Housing Industry Association Limited (HIA) plays a crucial role within society. It is a national group for building professionals that is dedicated to representing the interests of all parties involved within the housing industry. Its extensive membership program supports residential builders, trade contractors, developers, designers, kitchen and bathroom specialists, manufacturers, and suppliers, and

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- Shane Goodwin

provides them with quality services at the lowest possible cost.

Managing Director Shane Goodwin has been with HIA for 20 years, spending the past six in the top job. He has an extensive background in commercial construction and is also an experienced lawyer. "Essentially, I came into the building industry because there are many disputes, both contractual and industrial, and that is why there are a lot of people like me who end up working in this field trying to assist the builders in their business operations. Builders can't foresee or manage every risk that can impact on a project when they are pricing a job, so they need good information and specialist professional advice. That's why you find engineers, lawyers, town planners, building professionals, economists, and other people like us having worthwhile careers in the building and construction industry."

The history of HIA extends back to more than 70 years ago when, in

Melbourne, two builders met by chance soon after the Second World War. It was a tough time for the construction industry, and the duo started to converse over the difficulties they were facing. This led to the birth of the Builders and Allied Trades Association (BATA), which instigated a political lobbying campaign to get rid of the oppressive post-war controls that were holding the industry back. Membership numbers quickly grew in Victoria, and it became clear there was a need for a national housing industry association rather than just a local body. As a result, BATA evolved into the national HIA, which was established in 1965 and became publicly listed in 1996, and is now the largest association in the building and construction industry and the only truly national organisation representing the residential building sector.

"The association tries to carry out two functions," Shane says. "The >



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first is to be the voice of the industry. It is an industry where we're subject to a lot of regulation, whether it is building codes or town-planning regulations, or consumer laws, or standards, so members look to us to be the voice of the industry, to do battle with the politicians and the regulators, and to try and get the best environment for them to carry out their business. We are heavily involved in the political process at all levels, including the media, and we lobby and advocate our members' interests with state, federal, and territory governments. It is very important that the industry has a voice at a political level. By that, I mean the whole industry—the builders, the manufacturers of building products, the suppliers, the contractors, and everybody else who is involved in some way. For every dollar generated in this industry, there is a significant value-add across a range of upstream and downstream sectors including retail, manufacturing, sales, and professional services.

“The other function is to be an indispensable business partner for our members. There is a lot to know in this industry about all of the different regulations, codes, and standards of practice as well as building skills, so members look to us to help them manage their risk. We help them with contract management, planning, technical, dispute resolution, safety, and environmental management. Consequently, we have standard industry building contracts, we train members, we offer building licensing training, we do safety training, and much more. We have business and financial services we use where we can aggregate the members' purchasing power and come back with an offer better than the market. HIA's membership base is large. It spans large organisations including volume builders and national manufacturers and suppliers, through to the smaller building enterprises that might work on a single house at a time, or renovations. It also looks after the companies that provide materials such as sinks, taps,



doors, steel, concrete, timber, and gyprock.”

Shane says HIA has had to evolve considerably over the past couple of decades to stay on top of a changing market and to continue to deliver the best service possible. “Ten years ago, it was very important that you had size and mass to be successful as an association,” he explains. “But these days, you need to be agile. There are so many competitors out there in the market who are specialists; they operate in a fast-paced digital environment, and they are extremely good at what they do. We have to be able to connect with our members today in a way that we've never had to before.

“We have invested heavily in our technology platforms. A good example of this is that over half the market now acquire their building contracts digitally through HIA's innovative Contracts Online product. In today's business environment, investment in new innovative systems and products never stops as we strive to ensure that our members have access to the latest tools.”

To successfully achieve these aims, HIA works closely with all its members and everyone involved

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in the sector. It tries to balance the views of the entire industry in order to make a difference. As a ground-up organisation, HIA has standing committees in the disciplines of legal, town planning, technical, and training where members can come and contribute to policy development at a national level and connect with builders, suppliers, contractors, and manufacturers.

“You have the likes of James Hardie, which participates at all phases throughout the policy development process, employs a large number of staff, and contributes to the delivery of a lot of housing within Australia. Then, of course, there are the smaller-sized members. Our model works very well because HIA is the glue, if you like. We are a general market for suppliers, and we provide the interface for the builders, for contractors, and for manufacturers.

“We have a range of media including national and state magazines, as well as digital offerings such as e-news and member alerts. We are continually informing members about what is going on. Our members have a tremendous appetite for information: they need to know economic conditions and >

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DR HARLEY DALE
ACI Chief Economist

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forecasts, the latest regulations, what the new and innovative building products are. And the manufacturers and suppliers want to be able to connect with the builders and contractors.”

For over 20 years, HIA has been the leading economic analyst and forecaster for the residential building industry, which has an unparalleled record for accuracy against its peers in the forecasting and research space. More recently, HIA has expanded its economic services to cover the whole of the building and construction industry, including commercial, civil, and residential, through its subsidiary Australian Construction Insights (ACI).

“The reality is that the nature of Australia’s construction industry is constantly evolving,” says Shane. “Without doubt, the number, location, and types of buildings being built will look very different in the years ahead than they do today.

“ACI’s premium products will provide a detailed and accurate insight into the state of the industry, so that industry, government, and other stakeholders can make successful strategic business and investment decisions.”

Shane says HIA recognises the importance of the housing industry within the broader Australian economy, and understands that good social outcomes are a positive outcome of appropriate housing. “I think one of my principal goals is for HIA to continue its policy leadership, advocacy, and its lobbying; I want it to always be the voice of the industry.

“Inherent in everything we do as an association, above all, is to work hard to ensure that all people living in Australia have access to affordable housing. It’s in our DNA and something that is a source of pride to our members. We see it in our research—and it’s clear from the media commentary—that we need to reduce the extraordinary

amount of tax on housing as well as remove the blockages to housing supply. It’s unfair that a small proportion of Australians who buy a house-and-land package are paying so much tax just to access shelter. It’s hard to believe that over 40 per cent of a house-and-land package in Sydney is just taxes, and it’s not much better for a new apartment. We must continue to try and get some of that tax off housing. Equally, we will continue to push for meaningful town planning and building approval reforms that are driving up the cost of housing, and lobby government to reduce red tape.

“Affordability is our objective, and it’s something that has been around since HIA started all those years ago. We can’t lose sight of that.” •

“Being a leading manufacturer, James Hardie Australia partners with the top construction industry associations. As a major supporter of HIA, James Hardie has opportunities to network with industry stakeholders, participate in regulatory reforms, have input into technical committees, and recognise member excellence.” - Steve Pisani, State Sales Manager—Queensland, James Hardie Australia

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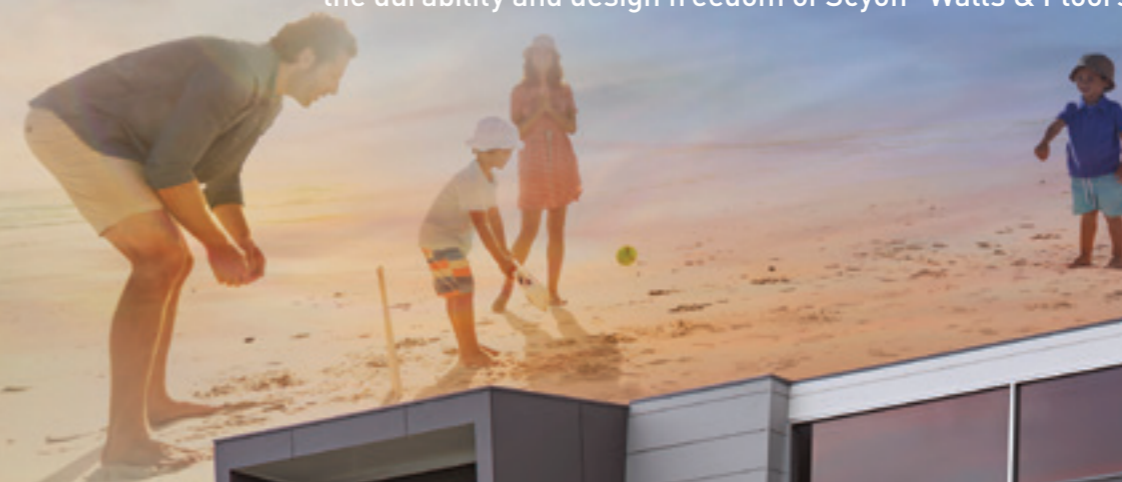
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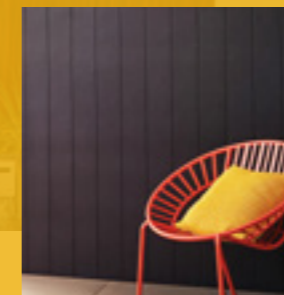


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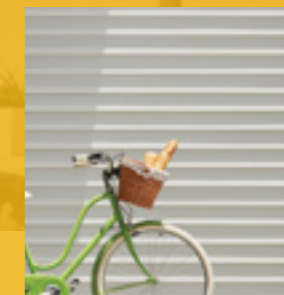
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