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Consult Aust

*Promoting the Business of
Consulting Companies*

Consult Australia is the industry association for consulting firms in the built environment sector. It represents project managers, planners, engineers, architects and interior designers among others. It represents the interests of its member firms in Australia and overseas. It promotes the benefits of consulting as their business interests and the benefits to the community, industry and the environment.



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History of the association

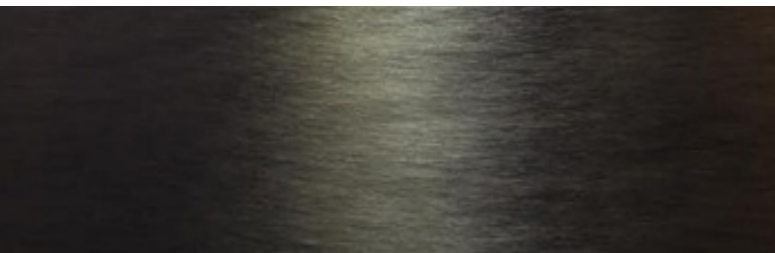
Consult Australia started as the Association of Consulting Engineers of Australia in 1952. In the 1980's and 1990's the government started diverting work from the public works department to the private sector. This resulted in Australian firms acquiring a national footprint and soon after that, in many cases, global operations. The nature of the firms also changed and they started engaging in multiple activities to cater to the government requirements.

Megan Motto, Chief Executive Officer of Consult Australia describes the changing role of the association and how it achieved its current form after the gov-

*Industry association for consulting companies
sector, including engineers, architects, proj-
environmental scientists and quantity survey-
presents an industry comprising about 48,000
t Australia's members enjoy immense ben-
erests are very competently represented at
and government levels by the association.*

ernment starting diverting infrastruc-
ture projects to the private sector, "So
as a result of that change our member-
ship and the compa-
nies in the private
sector changed con-

siderably and that was really
the starting point for us having
a conversation about what we
were as an organisation. Were





Megan Motto
Chief Executive

we a society of engineers or were we an association that represented the business interests of the companies?

So the Board of the day decided firmly in favour of the latter and we started with a constitutional change to take us from individual to corporate membership and the changed program rode through the organisation and truly culminated with a change of name of the organisation to Consult Australia, which obviously represents a broader membership than just engineers, because currently only half our members are in engineering and the other half are in a range of other multidisciplinary activities and many of them may be in pure architecture or environmental science or quantity surveying.

So we recognise that we need to improve the business interests of the built environment in the private sector and not necessarily the technical disciplines contained therein. We have a strong memorandum of understanding with the various professional institutes in the states where we concen-

trate on the business issues.”

Benefits that Consult Australia members enjoy

Consult Australia lobbies with the government at all levels to further the interests of its members. Specific areas in the legislative and regulatory environments are identified and the views of members presented to the concerned politicians or government departments. The association could take up the issue of tax on small businesses, environmental clearances, land release issues or planning regulations on behalf of its members and ensure that governmental authorities understand the impact of their actions and take corrective steps so as to prevent a negative fall-out for the association's members.

Employees of Consult Australia also make submissions to the government on a range of issues to present the views of the members of the association. Meetings are organised with officials and member firms are given the opportunity to interact directly with bureaucrats and other officials by organising var-

ious functions for the purpose.

Members of Consult Australia also receive the benefits of a host of facilities to help them conduct their businesses in a professional and profitable manner. Megan Motto gives the details of these services, “So we know that in our membership we have got engineers or architects or planners or quantity surveyors coming through the ranks and deciding to make a go of it and run their business. However, they are often not well versed in the variety of business issues adjunct to their professional and technical expertise.

So we hope to provide supplementary services in HR, marketing, contracts, risk, compliance, workplace health and safety and in a range of areas such as these to help our members professionalise their businesses and hopefully make better profit margins as a result of that.”

The association has a program of supporting members in their efforts to enter the international market. Consult Australia is one of more than 100 organisations that is part of the body, the International Federation of Consulting

Engineers. Consult Australia facilitates its members usage of this body to connect in the market where they would like to operate.

Initiatives for encouraging government investment in infrastructure

The association plays a pivotal role in facilitating governmental decisions and approvals for infrastructure projects. For example, the slackness in the commodities market has resulted in a slowdown in investments in the mining sector in Western Australia and Queensland. The government has tried to take up this slack by stepping up its capital investment program. Consult Australia acts as a catalyst in such situations and helps in overcoming regulatory and procedural hurdles so that projects are sanctioned and implemented quickly.

Megan Motto explains the role of the association, “We negotiate directly with government, but the best thing that we can do in terms of infrastructure investment is to make a close relationship with government and oppositions around the country,



both state and federal. So we would be liaising with the government on a regular basis in terms of assisting them get projects to market in sensible ways, but more importantly we do a lot of work with governments with regard to the overall framework of decision making and with regard to public infrastructure.

The two key elements are governance – the governance around the decision making in that which projects get built, which projects pack up in a cost benefit analysis approach and how to look at a broader cost benefit analysis process, so we help governments to implement the right decision. We maintain pressure on governments to have good governance procedures so that we are not serving just political cherry picking of projects, but we are seeing projects which are well thought out, well designed, well implemented and in the interest of the Australian economy and community.

So that is the governance side of things and the second part of course is the elephant in the room. With the best interest in the world we cannot build anything

if we do not have the money to pay for it. So we do a lot of lobbying with governments in terms of the range of project financing and funding measures that they need to consider to engage the private

CONSULT

sector a lot more in infrastructure financing and we suggest a range of ways of getting better funding and the financing mechanism for that, so that we can build what we need to have – a productive economy.”

The future

Consult Australia is providing services to its members to enable them to conduct their business in a professional and profitable manner. The association has been highly successful in improving the business environment for its



AUSTRALIA



considered a large firm even five years ago is now a medium sized player. We have got a lot of globalisation of firms and a huge amount of consolidation in the market through mergers and acquisition activity.

A lot of new international players have entered the market

so we are trying to

consolidate our

membership

and build

upon it,

deepen our

penetration

and engagement and

provide an ever wider range

of services at all levels within

those organisations to help them

run successful businesses.

On the influence front we like to look at Australia's place in the region, so in the future we will have

a greater regional focus because

our member firms have a regional

focus, certainly our large firms

have a very strong regional focus.

We recognise it as a great area of opportunity for our members and it is particularly the Asian region which is growing in its economic development

very quickly and the services

of our members will be in very high

demand and we will help them take

advantage of this opportunity."

members by lobbying with the government and bureaucracy and by providing and facilitating direct interaction between them. The success of Consult Australia is based on its constant focus in identifying and exploiting opportunities for the benefit of the functioning of its members.

Megan Motto outlines the future plans of the association, "What was

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