

# Australian Architects Declare Climate and Biodiversity Emergency

As signatories to Australian Architects Declare, we have committed to seek to:

- **Raise awareness** of the climate and biodiversity emergencies and the urgent need for action amongst our clients and supply chains.
- **Advocate** for faster change in our industry towards regenerative design\* practices and a higher Governmental funding priority to support this.
- **Establish** climate and biodiversity **mitigation principles** as the key measure of our industry's success: demonstrated through awards, prizes and listings.
- **Share** knowledge and research to that end on an open source basis.
- **Evaluate** all new projects against the aspiration to contribute positively to **mitigating climate breakdown**, and encourage our clients to adopt this approach.
- **Upgrade** existing buildings for extended use as a more carbon efficient alternative to demolition and new build whenever there is a viable choice.
- **Include** life cycle costing, whole life carbon modelling and post occupancy evaluation as part of our basic scope of work, to reduce both embodied and operational resource use.
- **Adopt more regenerative design principles\*** in our studios, with the aim of designing architecture and urbanism that goes beyond the standard of net zero carbon in use.
- **Collaborate** with engineers, contractors and clients to further reduce construction waste.
- **Accelerate the shift** to low embodied carbon materials in all our work.
- **Minimise** wasteful use of resources in architecture and urban planning, both in quantum and in detail.

In Australia, we as architects are aware that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples have long espoused the cultural, social, economic and environmental benefits embedded in the holistic relationship of Caring for Country.



## Sustainability Action Plans

Creating a Sustainability Action Plan (SAP) is a positive step that architects can take to set their business on an explicit footing towards a more sustainable model of architecture. This is a precursor for a Regenerative Action Plan (RegAP), that will more holistically encapsulate the regenerative aspects of the commitments noted above.

As a signatory to Architects Declare all companies must aim to have a SAP completed and available on their website by the end of 2021. At its core, a SAP is a statement of a firm's approach to sustainable design and its own business operations. It provides an opportunity to think through—strategically and methodically—how to start translating the 11 principles of the architects declare declaration into a comprehensive approach for transforming your firm's practice and portfolio. It will include timing for implementation of all parts, and each firm will report on progress against this each year.

Specifically, the SAP serves as:

1. An actionable, firm-wide strategy for developing:
  1. Business operational best practices
  2. Sustainable design best practices.
2. A measurement framework with a continual focus on evaluation, adaptation, and improvement.
3. A long-term planning tool to ensure ongoing alignment of values, goals, and practice.
4. An information-sharing platform that enables communicating firm values to clients and peers.

It will also start to prepare the business for moving into more regenerative ways of thinking, being and doing, training your team to be ready for the next step – a Regeneration Action Plan (RegAP).



# Process

After reviewing [examples](#) of SAP documents from other firms, consider the following process and recommended framework in developing a SAP:

## 1. Engage the Firm

Review your starting point and desired outcomes holistically covering the following;

### Best Practices Review

- What are our peers and competitors doing, both here and overseas, that we can emulate or improve upon?

### Firm Values and Goals

- How do we understand sustainability and our firm's areas of impact?
- How does our practice/firm mission relate to the architects declare statement?
- Review your firm's Vision to ensure it supports this approach.
- How do we operate our practice in a way that embodies and reinforces our commitment to the declaration?

### Design Process

- What is our current process?
- What do we want our process to be?
- How do we adopt more integrative and systems thinking approaches?

### Design Standards

- What do we want our buildings to be/do?
- What are the principles and frameworks we will judge our success against?
- How will we stay ahead of what is required, and help our clients lead?

### Structure

- How is sustainability currently approached/structured in our firm?
- How will this adapt to facilitate implementation of this SAP?

### Challenges

- What challenges do we face in implementing goals/actions?
- How do we currently respond? How might we best respond in the future?



## 2. Create the Sustainability Action Plan

### Recommended Framework

1. **Firm Commitment** (summary of firm philosophy as it relates to Architects Declare principles and sustainability objectives)
  - Identify how the Architects Declare principles been integrated across the firm.
  - How does or will sustainability relate to your overall firm goals?
  - How will your firm Raise awareness of the climate and biodiversity emergencies? (your message/your promotional strategy/your sustainability culture)
  - How are you / will you advocate with your clients for urgent action on climate and biodiversity loss?
  - What is your pathway to develop understanding of and adopt more regenerative design principles in your studio ? \*
  - What are the firm's biggest successes? What's working?
  - How is success measured in your firm and how does this compare to Net Zero timelines?
  - The following five topics should each include discussion of current practice, areas for action, and 1-5 year goals.
  
2. **Design & Approach**, this includes design-phase analysis, Clients Project Requirements /goal-setting
  - Identify how the Architects Declare principles are informing the project from brief development throughout all stages.
  - Identify the Aboriginal Country your projects are located in and engage with aboriginal culture and heritage in the making of the project.
  - Identify how you will bring life cycle costing, whole life carbon modelling post occupancy evaluation and energy modelling to be integrated into and influence your design process.
  - Nominate which green certifications are and will become common practice in your firm, and how certified projects contribute to Sustainability goals and Architects Declare principles (Nabers, Basix, Living Building Challenge, Green Star, Well rating, Passive House, others).
  - Define your regenerative design principles, with the aim of designing architecture and urbanism that goes beyond the standard of net zero carbon in use.
  - Define your collaborative approach with engineers, contractors and clients to;
    - Reduce waste through design.
    - Further reduce construction waste.
    - Accelerate the shift to low embodied carbon materials in your work.
    - Minimise wasteful use of resources both in quantum and in detail.



3. **Evaluation & Reporting** (this includes total energy reporting, utility data collection and post-occupancy evaluations)
  - What is your current live portfolio's total energy performance target and how does it compare to a zero carbon 2030 timeline as identified by AIA and Australian Architects Declare?
  - What are the firm's goals/targets for improvement towards uptake of regenerative design?
  - How is project evaluation and reporting handled? How will you encourage your clients to adopt this approach?
  - What approaches are used to reach energy targets?
  - How do you share the findings of energy and post-occupancy evaluations with the firm, and use them to improve your processes?
  
4. **Outreach & Advocacy** (this is "external" knowledge sharing)
  - How are you talking with your clients about the Architects Declare principles?
  - How are your strategies communicated to clients?
  - How does the firm contribute to the sustainable design community?
  - How will you share knowledge and research to that end on an open source basis?
  - Publish your SAP and update annually
  
5. **Training & Education** (...and "internal" knowledge sharing)
  - How does the firm support staff growth in sustainable design disciplines?
  
6. **Operations & Outlook**
  - Evaluate the firm's carbon footprint from operating your business.
  - Identify ways to reduce the firm's footprint and increase its handprint
  - Publish the data set from your audit and your pathway to carbon neutrality as a business to help Accelerate the shift to low a low carbon society.

### 3. Framework for progress

The framework for the Architects Declare Sustainability Action Plans has been inspired by the great work done by Reconciliation Australia on the Framework for Reconciliation Action Plans (RAP's) which provides organisations with a structured approach to advance their work. Like the RAP's there are 4 levels of SAP defined by an organisations current level of engagement with Sustainability and the Architects Declare Principles.

Firms can develop their action plan from **Review, Extend, Amplify** and **Shine** starting points, each defining a level of progress towards a future where we have addressed the fundamental concerns of the Architects Declare Movement and in so doing shifted society.

Firms ideally will progress from one level to the next through a process of formalised annual reviews.



### **Review SAP**

A firm who have signed on to the architects Declare pledge but whose work or practices are not consistently meeting the goals of the movement. Your SAP should clearly articulate how you will begin to change your office culture to better align all work and business operations with the Architects Declare Principles.

### **Extend SAP**

A firm who whose business operations and projects consistently align with the majority of the architects declare principles but who do not have a formalised process of engagement or consistent approach that captures all aspects of the business. Your SAP should celebrate your successes but define a clear path to holistic action across the business including your vision of sustainability and how it aligns with the Architects Declare Principles.

### **Amplify SAP**

A firm well versed in sustainability and a leader in the field in terms of projects and advocacy. Your SAP should be about innovation and the how your actions can be amplified further to influence others and grow the community.

### **Regenerate SAP**

A firm that has been a recognised leader in advocacy and action on Architects Declare principles and sustainability more broadly. Your SAP will take your thought leadership beyond the profession and your clients, how will your work impact beyond just the built realm? Your SAP should seek to create connections beyond client and other practitioners into collaborators and government. It should aim at being a truly regenerative practice. You will be looking to develop your SAP into a RegAP (Regeneration Action Plan) and take the next steps forward!

