

# SETTING THE STANDARD

AFTER THE RECENT CHANGES TO AUSTRALIAN STANDARD AS3850 – PREFABRICATED CONCRETE ELEMENTS, THE QUESTION IS BEING ASKED: HOW DO THE CHANGES AFFECT CIVIL PRECAST CONSTRUCTION?

**F**ollowing the tragic death of a worker on a civil construction site in Western Australia in 2011, extensive review was undertaken of Australian Standard AS3850 – Tilt-up Concrete Construction.

A committee of industry representatives – BD-066 – conducted the review. The new standard, AS3850 – Prefabricated Concrete Elements, was published in two parts in September last year, updating the standard to current practice.

Sarah Bachmann, Chief Executive Officer National Precast Concrete Association Australia, talks to *Roads & Civil Works Magazine* about the changes to Australian Standard AS3850 – Prefabricated Concrete Elements and the implications it is likely to have for Australian civil precasters.

“AS3850 was developed largely with tilt-up wall construction in mind – walls that are poured on site and then tilted and lifted into position. The industry has come a long way since the standard was developed in 2003 and the use of a broad range of factory-made precast elements are now used right across the industry. In addition to walls, flooring, beams, columns, stairs and lift shafts are commonplace, and the old standard didn’t address that,” says Ms. Bachmann.

Safety and design were two of the most significant factors taken into account and updated in the new standard.

“Part one, General Requirements details the requirements for materials, components and equipment used during the on and off site casting of elements.

“Part two, Building Construction – as its name implies – covers the construction design, manufacture, transport and erection

of all on and off site cast elements in the construction of buildings. It aims to improve safety and quality and gives best practice guidance on design and documentation, casting, transportation, craneage and erection, temporary supports and incorporation of elements into the final structure,” she says.

While the new standard applies to the construction of buildings it doesn’t apply to small precast elements such as blocks and pavers. Nor does it apply to precast that is used on civil projects.

“That isn’t likely to be the case for long,” says Ms. Bachmann.

“The death in WA has prompted a coronial inquest and off the back of that investigation the revised AS3850 is being reviewed as to whether it might have potential application to the civil sector.”

The WA Coroner approached industry bodies, including National Precast, seeking input on whether a third part of AS3850, relevant to the use of prefabricated elements used in civil construction, should be developed.

While AS3850 doesn’t currently apply to civil construction, there are a lot of



## Attention precasters, builders, architects and engineers... Celebrate precast at National Precast’s 25th birthday

2016 marks the 25th year of National Precast, the peak body of the precast industry. To commemorate the occasion, the industry will be celebrating its achievements at a formal dinner on Thursday 10 November at the Opera House.

“Whether you’re a precast manufacturer, architect, engineer or builder... you’re an integral part of the precast community and we’d love you to help us celebrate. It’ll be the who’s who of the industry, so make sure you are there,” says Sarah Bachmann, CEO of National Precast.

**When:** 6.45pm, Thurs 10 Nov, 2016

**Where:** Opera Point Marquee, Sydney Opera House

**Dress:** Black tie/Formal

**Tickets:** \$200 National Precast members; \$250 Others (ex GST)

**Register at:** [www.nationalprecast.com.au/resources/industry-events/](http://www.nationalprecast.com.au/resources/industry-events/)

Food by Matt Moran’s Aria Catering  
Entertainment by Darryl Lovegrove

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other standards that do but they are more product-based standards.

The precast industry responded favourably to the Coroner.

"We didn't even think twice about the decision. Anything our members can do to improve safety on sites that use prefabricated elements is a good thing. In fact, many are already adopting the relevant provisions in the standard for civil construction," Ms. Bachmann says.

"It just seems that this is one of those situations where there's a gap in the standards for prefabricated elements in civil construction," she adds. "Having this new part will also give more assurance to contractors who are engaging with precasters and our members."

Ms. Bachmann asserts that it is "highly likely" a third part of AS3850, specific to civil construction, will be introduced.

She says the Coroner's office will be conducting the inquest in December this year as to whether or not AS3850 should be extended to civil construction.

In the meantime, National Precast is urging

those in the civil construction industry to make themselves aware of and adopt the revised AS3850 where it does apply to civil construction, even though technically it doesn't immediately affect them right now.

"AS3850 is highly likely to be brought into play in a judicial environment following an incident or accident on a civil construction sites that is using prefabricated concrete elements," states Ms. Bachmann. "We're calling on all civil construction stakeholders to familiarise themselves with AS3850 because the move to extend the standard into the civil space is impending and likely."

"The standard is not just a recommendation for civil precasters but a recommendation for everyone else involved in the process." Any changes will not only impact precasters, but engineers, contractors and all other stakeholders."

National Precast and the Concrete Institute of Australia held a series of jointly organised seminars at the beginning of August to highlight the changes to the standard and what it means for the industry. The Association's engagement with industry

stakeholders on the topic is ongoing, with a webinar of the seminars to soon be available.

National Precast will be initiating the drafting of an AS3850 part three and Ms. Bachmann strongly urges anyone who wants to be involved in the process, or have their say, to come on board as a National Precast member.

The Association offers meetings, presentations, discussions, documents, newsletters and open communication about what's happening in the industry, such as the changes to AS3850.

"Our membership knows about this coronial inquest. They are up to speed with any developments and get to have their say. That's one of the real opportunities of being a member and AS3850 is a perfect example." ■

To find out more about National Precast Concrete Association Australia, go to [www.nationalprecast.com.au](http://www.nationalprecast.com.au) or contact Sarah Bachmann, CEO on (08) 8294 0833.

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