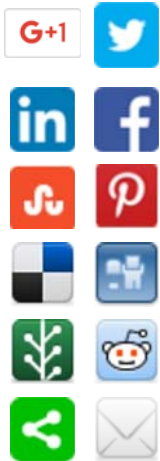
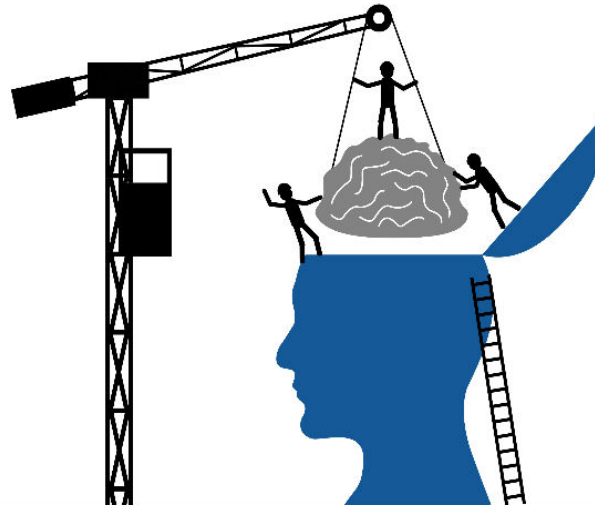


# Exciting Times for Construction, But Can We Build Smarter?

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**It's an exciting time for Australia's construction industry.**

There's renewed optimism for the future, encouraged by new Prime Minister Malcolm Turnbull's focus on cities and the built environment. The new Cities and Built Environment Portfolio and its Minister, Jamie Briggs, are evidence the Prime Minister recognises the importance of the construction sector to the economy.

**Turnbull** says his cabinet is a "21st century government" and that "liveable cities, efficient productive cities, the environment of cities, are economic assets." Of course, there would be no city assets without the construction sector. It's a significant industry for Australia, contributing more than

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\$200 billion to the economy, representing 7.5 per cent of GDP and providing work for more than one million people. There's no doubt the building industry is vital to Australia's future, but there still remain challenges in growing and remaining progressive.

Like many other industries, construction is a global business where new technologies and innovations are constantly evolving as companies aim to secure a competitive advantage. Continuous improvement and smarter building should become the key objectives.

It's widely acknowledged that the global **construction industry** has already started down the path on this journey. Analysis of increased use of off-site manufactured products in construction has identified significant positive impact including reduction in construction time, simplification of the construction process, higher quality and consistency in products, reduction in on-site risks and less waste both on and off-site. Traditional craft-based on-site fabrication is slowly shifting off-site, both here and overseas, and the precast concrete industry is a leader in this transformation. Here in Australia, Laing O'Rourke is just one example where innovation ranks high on the agenda, with its recognition that using more off-site manufactured products like precast will reap a plethora of rewards.

Concrete products that are manufactured

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off-site demonstrate enormous efficiencies and benefits for the entire industry. Precast concrete offers all of these benefits and more. It is the foundation for sustainable construction in Australia. Locally manufactured using local products, it utilises some of the industry's most ecological and economical practices. Precast incorporates recycled materials in production and the use of less raw materials results in a large reduction in construction wastage.

It's not just in the manufacturing process that precast is sustainable; the finished product is also environmentally friendly. When used in residential or commercial construction, precast concrete boasts an extremely high thermal mass. That translates to reduced [energy costs](#) for heating and cooling. As well, it is low maintenance, fire safe and extremely durable.

Precast concrete is also one of the most versatile specialisations in the construction industry. Its wide range of products is perfect for commercial, industrial, civil and residential projects. Its use enables speedier builds, which translates to cost savings.

As a leader in promoting the message of innovation and smarter building to the construction sector and committed to a transformation of our industry for the future, the National Precast Concrete Association (NPCA) shares the new Prime Minister's view on the importance of the sector. NPCA is excited about the industry's future, par-

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ticularly with companies like Lang O'Rourke embracing smarter building and moving away from conventional building methods in favour of more efficient methods.

While Lang O'Rourke and a handful of others lead the way, hopefully both the new Prime Minister and Minister Briggs will also be forward thinking and show leadership in developing a progressive 21st century construction industry to align it with its broader "21st century government" national priorities.

As Briggs develops his new Cities and Built Environment portfolio, he should recognise the benefits of off-site manufacturing and promote smarter 21st century methods of construction such as precast concrete. Surely, it's the where the future of the industry lies.

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Sarah has been in her current role of CEO of the National Precast Concrete Association for the last 11 years. Now running the Association's national office from Adelaide, she has spent 16 years in state and national association management roles and 10 in senior marketing/public affairs positions,...

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