

Planning
Institute
Australia



PLANNING
CONGRESS
2026

CANBERRA 20 – 22 MAY

CELEBRATING 75 YEARS

CALL FOR
ABSTRACTS

PROUD PLATINUM SPONSOR

Objective

PIA PLANNING CONGRESS 2026

Over three days, planners and industry leaders from across Australia will come together to learn, connect and collaborate. Together we will explore how planning will continue to shape the cities and communities of tomorrow.

The Congress will tackle the defining issues of our time: housing, infrastructure and population pressures; embedding planning with Country; building resilience and climate action into every system and strengthening the skills, technology and leadership that will guide the profession into the future.

We'll begin by **turning plans into places**, celebrating the milestones that have defined Australia's cities and regions. From the vision that built Canberra to the transformative policies and projects that turned ideas into reality, we will reflect on the practical achievements that brought our planning ambitions to life. By understanding where we have come from, we can better inform the choices that shape what comes next.

As we look ahead, **planning for a changing nation** invites us to confront the structural challenges shaping Australia's future. From housing affordability and infrastructure delivery to population growth and demographic shifts. With fresh ambition and renewed confidence, planners are leading the conversation on how we adapt our systems and reimagine our communities for what lies ahead.

Grounded in respect for Country, **climate and resilience** remain at the heart of the discussion. Together, we will explore how First Nations knowledge can guide us towards truly sustainable and inclusive outcomes. Our profession has a vital role to play in driving climate action, strengthening community preparedness and shaping systems that can adapt and thrive in an uncertain world.

Finally, the future of the profession turns our focus to the next generation. The planners, innovators and leaders who will shape Australia's next chapter. As digital technology transforms how we work and live, our planning systems must evolve too. We will consider the skills, innovation and leadership required to ensure planning remains fit for purpose and ready to respond to the opportunities ahead.

ACKNOWLEDGMENT TO COUNTRY

PIA acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and their connections to land, sea and community. We pay our respect to Elders past and present.

CELEBRATING 75 YEARS

Since 1951, the Planning Institute of Australia has championed the value of good planning - creating better, fairer, and more sustainable communities across the nation.

In 2026, we celebrate 75 years of that legacy, a milestone that honours the people, ideas and innovations that have shaped our profession. This special anniversary Congress in Canberra, where it all began, will be more than just a gathering of planners; it will be a celebration of vision, progress, and the shared commitment that defines our field.

For partners and sponsors, this is a rare opportunity to be part of a landmark moment in Australia's planning history - one that will attract strong national attention, deepen connections across the profession and reinforce your organisation's alignment with the future of planning.



ABOUT PIA

Our Objective

The Planning Institute of Australia (PIA) is the peak national body representing the urban and regional planning profession.

Through education, communication and professional development, PIA is the pivotal organisation serving and guiding thousands of planning professionals in their role of creating better communities.

PIA's mission is to lead effective planning for people and places to ultimately deliver good planning outcomes for our communities. We do this by advocating for better planning, developing high quality planners, and supporting the profession.



Congress at a Glance

Wednesday 20th May

Study Tours
Bump in Exhibition
National Awards for Planning Excellence
Congress Welcome Function

Thursday 21st May

Full Day Congress | Planners Take Over Verity Lane

Friday 22nd May

Full Day Congress | Gala Dinner

Congress Details

Congress dates

Wednesday 20th - Friday 22nd May 2026

Congress Venue

National Canberra Convention Centre

Congress website

www.piacongress26.com.au

Congress hashtag

#PIACongress26

PROGRAM STREAMS

Turning Plans into Places

This theme explores the practical milestones and achievements that have shaped Australian cities and regions, from the work of our first planners to the bold vision of Canberra.

It celebrates the nuts and bolts of planning in action: the decisions, policies, and projects that turned big ideas into reality.

By reflecting on these successes and lessons from the past, we can better inform the choices shaping the cities of tomorrow.

Planning for a Changing Nation

This theme is focused on the big structural challenges Australia faces today and into the future, including housing needs, infrastructure delivery, population growth, and demographic change.

It explores how our profession must now tackle these challenges with renewed ambition and confidence.

Country, Climate, and Resilience

This theme highlights planning's central role in embedding First Nations knowledge, addressing climate change, and shaping truly resilient communities.

It emphasises the need to prepare our systems, practice and frameworks to meet the critical challenges and opportunities of the decades ahead.

The Future of the Profession: Skills, Technology and Leadership

The next generation of planners will need new skills, digital innovation and adaptive leadership.

This theme examines how professional planners can be best ready to lead Australia's next chapter, to ensure fit for purpose statutory and strategic planning systems.

SUBMISSION FORMATS

Two formats are open for abstract submissions this year:

CONCURRENT SESSIONS

20 minute presentation slots to give you ample time to inspire your peers and showcase your project, work or concept. Explain its impact and what the profession needs to adapt, learn &/or change.

All delivered with pizzazz to keep your audience engaged. Please note, Congress presentations are to be delivered in person.

WORKSHOP

These workshops are outcome focused and must have a strong learning objective. If you can help planners learn a valuable skill crucial to a trend impacting on the profession, we want to hear from you.

Workshops are typically limited to 80 people (*if accepted, PIA will work with you on how many participants you are willing to allow*) and run for 1.5 hours.

We will supply a room in any configuration you need, and work with you on any other materials needed for your facilitation.

Please note, Congress workshops are to be delivered in person and places are very limited.

KEY DATES FOR SUBMISSION



Call for Abstracts open:
Tuesday 18th November



Call for Abstracts closes:
Monday 8th December



Abstract Review process:
December



Author notification/Program Release:
Expected December/ January

GUIDELINES FOR SUBMISSIONS

All submissions must be submitted in English. Please ensure you thoroughly check your submission for spelling and grammatical errors as accepted abstracts will be printed as per your submission.

- Abstracts are to be no more than 300 words.
- References, author and affiliation information and abstract titles are not included in the word count.
- Abstracts must not contain bulletpoints, pictures, charts, diagrams or tables. Please ensure any acronyms are spelt out in the first instance.
- Ensure that all author information (names, affiliations and presenting author biography) is included and entered correctly.

GET PREPARED FOR YOUR SUBMISSION

You will need the following information ready for your submission:

- **CONTACT DETAILS:** Name, position, organisation, address and email address needed for the main presenter
- **CO-PRESENTER INFORMATION:** Name, position, organisation needed for your co-presenters
- **YOUR HEADSHOT:** Head and shoulders photograph
- **YOUR BIOGRAPHY:** Maximum 50-100 words
- **PRESENTATION TYPE:** Select which presentation type you prefer to submit your abstract for
- **SUB-THEME:** Which conference sub-theme you would like to submit for
- **ABSTRACT:** Copy and paste your abstract into the portal field (Max 300 words)
- **A VIDEO LINK:** To continue to provide a high quality and engaging program for attendees, we require all authors to submit a video to showcase their presentation ability. Ideally this video should be of you presenting at another conference, and/or you talking about your submission and what you plan to present. As video files cannot be submitted due to size, you will need to submit a link to the video hosted on a file sharing platform, e.g. YouTube, Dropbox etc.

ADDITIONAL CRITERIA

Below criteria will be taken into consideration when reviewing the abstracts:

- Case studies of projects, policy and development in practice, including the lessons learned, both good and bad
- New information, evidence and tools to support better planning
- Innovative approaches that generate new ways of thinking and challenge to the status quo
- Perspectives and experiences from the end users and stakeholders of planning
- The inclusion of credible demonstration of the importance of the subject matter to the preferred sub-theme
- The introduction of new and innovative concepts not previously canvassed or fully explored
- The inclusion of intercultural, cross-cultural and/ or multicultural considerations
- The potential appeal of the proposal to a broad spectrum of delegates; the proposal should include appropriate comments if it would appeal to the career stage (e.g. Young Planners or DA Planners)
- The demonstrated capacity of the proposal to allocate appropriate time for coverage of the topic, and, if for a panel, to include all presenters
- The title of the proposal conveying to delegates what they can expect from the session

ABSTRACT SUBMISSION PORTAL

- Go to the congress website [here](#)
- Click the "**CALL FOR ABSTRACTS**" tab on the top menu
- Click the "**SUBMIT YOUR ABSTRACT HERE**" button to open the portal
- If you are a new user, "**CREATE A NEW ACCOUNT**" to allow you to return to portal to edit your draft, or to submit more
- If you are an existing user, sign into the portal using your email and password
- Go to "**CONTACT INFORMATION**" tab and update your details and photo
- Go to "**SUBMIT AN ABSTRACT**" tab to start your submission
- Follow the **MENU** on the left hand side for each process (*title and presentation type, Sub-Theme - Select which sub-theme you would like to submit for, Authors and affiliations, Abstract, Review your abstract*)
- You can **SAVE YOUR DRAFT** and come back to your submission
- When ready, press the **SUBMIT** button
- If you have any questions or need help, please email congress@planning.org.au

REVIEW PROCESS

The pinnacle event of the year for PIA, **Planning Congress** is a two-day event and, as such, we are *limited* in the amount of concurrent session and workshop spaces we can offer within the program. Congress is an opportunity for the profession to come together nationally, to look over the horizon at changes in society, the profession, and the individual.

The Program Committee will be responsible for reviewing abstracts for both events and will determine a recommendation for what abstracts are accepted and not accepted. To continue to provide a high quality and engaging program, all abstracts will be reviewed by at least two reviewers against a set of review criteria before being accepted or not accepted.

Abstracts will be reviewed according to review criteria including: Quality and alignment with the theme and sub-themes, Potential appeal of the abstract to a broad spectrum of delegates, Author demonstrates the capacity of the abstract to cover the topic within the time-frame, and, Abstract introduces new and innovative concepts & projects, solutions to problems facing the profession and showcases technology and digital initiatives relevant to the profession.

Abstract acceptance, or otherwise, is at the discretion of PIA and the Program Committee. To ensure a varied and balanced program, PIA and the Program Committee additionally reserves the right to limit acceptance for presentations to one abstract per presenting author.

TERMS AND CONDITIONS

- If the abstract is accepted, presenters must register for the conference to attend to present. By submitting your abstract, you acknowledge that you understand all presenters must register and pay to attend. All accepted presenters and co-presenters will be entitled to a discounted speaker registration fee by PIA; presenters acknowledge this discount and accept that PIA is unable to provide presenters with free passes.
- To ensure the integrity of the program, and to guarantee the program will be as advertised once released, we will require all presenters to register and commit to attend the congress. Any presenters not registered by the deadline will not have their abstracted included in the program.
- If abstract is accepted, speakers will be accepting that the abstract will be published online and in the Congress app by the Planning Congress 2026.
- Only abstracts from authors/presenters who will be attending the congress will be published.
- If an abstract is successful, you are providing consent for presentation slides and photos taken during your presentation to be used and published by PIA, including being provided to delegates of the congress.
- Presentations may be recorded during the congress which may be published online post congress.

During submission you will be required to agree and accept the above conditions.

NEED HELP?

CONTACT US
CONGRESS@PLANNING.ORG.AU



PLANNING
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2026

NATIONAL OFFICE

Unit 16, Level 3 Engineering House
11 National Circuit, BARTON ACT 2600

ABN: 34 151 601 937