



SoCLA Conference 2027 Call for Papers

“Critical Times, Critical Minerals and Critical Projects: The Role of Construction Law in Enabling Australia’s Economic Transition”

9-11 June 2027, Perth

The Whadjuk people of the Noongar nation know the month of June as Makuru, a time to move inland from the coast. It was also the time at which the Noongar people knew the local fauna would find mates to prepare for the coming spring; it was the time of movement and preparation.

In 2027 we meet on the banks of the magnificent Derbarl Yerrigan in Boorloo to discuss the role of construction law in Australia’s economic transition.

As we do so, we acknowledge that we meet on the lands of the Whadjuk People of the Noongar nation and we acknowledge their continuing connection to country and pay our respects to their Elders past, present and emerging.

The SoCLA Conference Subcommittee is calling for papers for its 2027 National Conference, to be held in Perth on 9-11 June 2027.

Australia has always been a nation built on resources projects. From railways and ports to export wool in the early twentieth century to roads, rails, pipelines and power stations to leverage the nation’s abundant natural resources in the modern age.

Successive generations of Australians have transformed natural advantages into economic opportunity through the design, procurement and delivery of major infrastructure. Today, however, the challenge is different. The nation finds itself at a critical moment. Global competition for investment is intensifying. Geopolitical uncertainty is reshaping supply chains. Governments are pursuing ambitious decarbonisation objectives. At the same time, demand for housing, energy, transport and industrial infrastructure continues to grow. Against that backdrop, Australia’s reserves of critical minerals have become strategically important not only to our own prosperity, but to the economic and energy security of many nations around the world.

The challenge, of course, is that minerals in the ground do not create economic value; projects do. Mines, processing facilities, transmission networks, renewable energy developments, ports, rail links and industrial precincts must all be planned, financed, procured and delivered before Australia’s economic transition can become a reality. Can our existing contracting models meet that challenge? Is risk being allocated in a way that encourages investment and innovation? What role should construction law play in accelerating project delivery while maintaining public confidence, social licence and commercial certainty? These are just some of the questions the

SoCLA Conference Subcommittee hopes to explore through this year's theme: **Critical Times, Critical Minerals and Critical Projects: The Role of Construction Law in Enabling Australia's Economic Transition.**

We welcome submissions from practitioners, academics, clients, consultants and industry leaders that offer fresh perspectives, challenge orthodoxy, or illuminate emerging trends. Papers may be legal, technical, commercial or interdisciplinary in nature. Abstracts may be submitted for one of the following streams:

1. Dig Deep: Australia sits on some of the world's most sought-after deposits of lithium, rare earths and other critical minerals. Governments and investors see an opportunity for Australia to become a critical minerals superpower, but turning resources into productive assets requires projects, capital and social licence. Papers in this stream should examine what role construction law should play in helping Australia dig deeper, process more and capture a greater share of the economic value of the critical minerals boom.

2. Keeping the Lights On: The energy transition is no longer a future aspiration—it is a present necessity. Yet getting renewable generation, storage and transmission projects right has been a challenge for many. Papers in this stream should consider how construction law can assist in delivering the infrastructure required to maintain reliability, affordability and security while Australia transforms its energy system.

3. Moving Mountains: Australia's economic transition depends upon the successful delivery of nation-building projects that are larger, more complex and more interconnected than ever before. Whether transmission corridors, ports, processing plants, defence infrastructure or industrial precincts, the challenge is immense. Papers in this stream should address how procurement, contracting and dispute management can help move mountains rather than merely describe why they exist.

4. Mind the Gap: There is often a considerable gap between political ambition and project delivery. Labour constraints, community expectations, skills shortages, financing challenges and regulatory complexity all threaten to slow progress. Papers in this stream should explore the role construction law can play in bridging the gap between aspiration and execution and ensuring that critical projects are delivered when they are needed most.

The questions posed above only cover a small sample of the myriad issues the SoCLA Conference Subcommittee hopes to see addressed this year. However, all abstract submissions should carefully consider and focus on the role that construction law will (or should) play as we seek answers to these questions.

The SoCLA Conference Subcommittee is keen to offer legal practitioners the option to achieve a year's worth of CPD points at one conference, and therefore encourages the submission of abstracts that will meet not only the substantive law requirements of the various regulatory regimes but also the ethics, practice management and professional skills requirements.

While the preference is to have papers in the streams described above, the SoCLA Conference Subcommittee reserves the right to accept abstracts that fall within the general scope of the conference theme, even if they do not speak directly to one of the above streams.

Timeline for Submission of Abstracts and Papers

Key dates for the submission of abstracts and papers, notification of outcomes and presenter registration are published on the conference page of the SoCLA website at www.soclaconference.org.au

Submissions must be made by 5pm WST on the due date.

Abstracts and/or papers received after the advertised closing dates and times may not be accepted, at the SoCLA Conference Subcommittee's absolute discretion.

All abstracts submitted will be subject to a blind peer review process, which will guide the Conference Subcommittee in determining whether abstracts are accepted for presentation. Peer reviewers will assess abstracts against the following criteria:

- academic merit of the work;
- originality of the work;
- completeness of the information, including the description of results;
- relevance to the conference theme; and
- appropriateness for presentation (eg: not a company 'advertisement').



Rules for Abstracts and Papers

By submitting an abstract the submitter confirms his or her agreement to comply with these rules for Abstracts and Papers.

1. The abstract must be submitted online via the abstracts portal available at www.soclaconference.com.au in accordance with the timeline for submission of abstracts and papers published by SoCLA.
2. **The abstract must be uploaded to the online submission page in an anonymised form to enable the peer review process to be properly undertaken. There should be no way to identify the author from the abstract itself. The abstract will be separated from the details collected on the online submission page during the peer review process and the peer reviewers will only review anonymous abstracts.**
3. The paper in due course should be sent in native form (e.g. *.doc, *.docx) and should be between 3,500 and 5,500 words and comply with the formatting and citation requirements of the [Australian Guide to Legal Citation](#) (4th ed).
4. The title of the abstract and paper must clearly characterise the issue to be presented.
5. The paper should identify (and be relevant to) the theme of the conference and a stream of discussion identified above.
6. The paper must be an original work, not having been published elsewhere. Although the Subcommittee reserves the right to accept previously published work where it is relevant and of exceptional quality.
7. Where it is proposed to present the results of any empirical research the approach and the results must be clear from the paper. In any event the paper must draw a clear conclusion.
8. The paper must contain sufficient information so that if published it will be a complete report independent of the presentation to be given at the conference.
9. Papers containing brochures or advertising material will be rejected. However, authors may associate themselves with a firm / company / university or other brand in the paper and during the presentation.
10. The author(s) must disclose, at the time the paper is submitted, any use of generative artificial intelligence in the preparation of the abstract or paper, and the nature and extent of that use.
11. Where the abstract is accepted:
 - a. All of the author(s) who intend to present the paper at the conference must register (and pay) to attend the conference by the date stated in the call for abstract. Failure to register (and pay) to attend the conference may result in the acceptance being withdrawn and the presentation spot being offered to another author(s).

- b. The author(s) must submit a fully developed paper in accordance with these rules and any accompanying presentation to the conference Subcommittee by the date stated in the call for abstracts or such further date as may be agreed.
- c. The paper must be presented at the conference by the presenter authorised by the Subcommittee. Replacements or proxies are not permitted without the permission of the Subcommittee (which will not be unreasonably withheld where there are extenuating circumstances such as illness or other unforeseeable circumstances).
- d. The author(s) authorises the conference Subcommittee to publish the paper and any accompanying presentation to the conference attendees and on the www.scl.org.au website and/or on the conference USB and /or on via Conference App. Each author who will present the paper at the conference is required to agree to the SoCLA Speaker Terms and Conditions by the date notified by the Subcommittee, and in any event before presenting. The SoCLA Speaker Terms and Conditions govern the use by SoCLA of any presentation materials and any recording of the presentation. A copy is available on the conference website at www.soclaconference.com.au and on the SoCLA website at www.scl.org.au, and should be read before an abstract is submitted.
- e. Presenters will be responsible for their own accommodation, transportation and other fees or costs associated with attending the conference.
- f. The first author named in the abstract submission will be the point of contact with the Subcommittee.
- g. The Subcommittee will allocate the presentation time in the Subcommittee's absolute discretion.