

| FEDERAL ELECTION 2025

Policy pointers for a healthy, sustainable, and productive Australia





Our policy priorities

1. Occupant wellbeing

Our indoor spaces should be safe, healthy and promote productivity. AIRAH's policy priorities will help ensure the people in our homes, offices, schools, hospitals and other buildings have conditions that allow them to thrive.

2. Sustainable buildings

Australia's buildings offer a huge opportunity to meet our emissions reduction commitments with technology that is already established and available. AIRAH's policy priorities will help deliver buildings that are energy efficient, all electric, smart, grid interactive, and low in embodied carbon using refrigerants that have minimal environmental impact.

3. Capable workforce

To deliver the indoor spaces that all Australians deserve in a way that doesn't cost the earth, we need a workforce that is skilled and plentiful. AIRAH's policy priorities will strengthen the sector to handle the significant pipeline of work ahead.



1. Occupant wellbeing

In Australia, we spend 90% of our time indoors. HVAC&R and building services are vital for ensuring we are healthy and productive.

Heating and cooling systems protect building occupants from extreme heat and cold, while ventilation systems maintain the quality of the air we breathe.

Despite this, Australia still lacks standards for ensuring that indoor air is of adequate quality, and we need better systems to protect building occupants from our changing climate.





AIRAH recommends

- » The establishment of an inter-disciplinary taskforce to support the development and implementation of a national strategy for improving indoor air quality, including an Australian Standard for indoor air quality.
- » A national campaign to raise awareness about the importance of indoor air quality and guidance on how to improve it.
- » Investment in a NABERS indoor air quality rating system for measuring and comparing indoor air quality in buildings.
- » Government leadership in measuring and reporting on indoor air quality in government buildings.
- » Complete the development and roll-out of a national disclosure system for homes. This includes funding to update the climate data used by NatHERS to ensure that thermal performance of homes matches their ratings.
- » Funding to update information and correct issues with CSIRO climate files used for modelling of office buildings.



2. Sustainable buildings

Australia has committed to reduce greenhouse gas emissions by 43 per cent below 2005 levels by 2030, and to achieve net zero emissions by 2050.

The built environment has the technology to decarbonise now, but we must do this at speed and scale to smooth the way for other hard-to-abate sectors and meet our emissions reduction commitments.

In the journey towards net zero, three aspects of the built environment require special attention: transitioning to refrigerants with minimal environmental impact; making buildings more sustainable; and maintenance and tuning of HVAC&R systems.





AIRAH recommends

- » The development of a long-term vision for refrigerants that supports Australia's goal of achieving net zero by 2050 and contemplates the health risks associated with emerging synthetic refrigerants, and the need for investment in training to equip our workforce with the skills to manage and handle alternative refrigerants.
- » A national approach to tracking refrigerant use and reducing Scope 1 emissions via mandatory leak detection strategies and reporting.
- » Adjustments to the HFC phase-down program to address the ongoing use of high-GWP refrigerants such as R404A, for example, through limiting the import of specific types of equipment.
- » Incentives and communications activities to raise awareness about the HFC phase-down among owners of HVAC&R equipment and encourage them to transition to low-GWP refrigerants.
- » Strengthening of the national ARctick licensing scheme for refrigerants to allow for more effective compliance activities and better analysis of data on licence holders and refrigerant usage.
- » Strong continued funding and support for the Australian Building Codes Board and the three-yearly review cycle of the National Construction Code.
- » Continued expansion of the National Australian Built Environment Energy Ratings System (NABERS), including the development of an Indoor Air Quality rating system that can be linked to the existing ratings system for energy efficiency.
- » Expansion of the Compulsory Building Disclosure (CBD) Program, based on feedback from industry consultation in 2024.
- » Finalisation of the Sectoral Net Zero plan for the built environment, and an updated Trajectory for Low Energy Buildings.
- » Continued support to establish minimum energy performance standards for hot water heat pumps and other cooling and heating appliances.
- » Coordinated programs between states and territories to accelerate action, and to motivate and support higher performance, including incentives and the use of government market power.
- » Incentives for solutions in thermal storage that offer demand flexibility, increasing the resilience of the electricity grid.



3. Capable workforce

The overarching goals of occupant wellbeing and sustainable buildings can only be achieved with capable workers.

The HVAC&R building services industry is experiencing challenges in attracting engineers and technicians. This is partly due to a lack of visibility, and partly due to shortages affecting all parts of the building and construction sector.

The building and construction workforce continues to be predominantly male. AIRAH and many other industry bodies are working towards making the sector more diverse and inclusive.

We also need effective registration and licensing regimes in place to support this workforce.





AIRAH recommends

- » Harmonisation of state and territory registration and licensing regimes through mutual recognition to reduce barriers and expenses for practitioners working across jurisdictions.
- » Strengthening of the national ARCTick licensing scheme for refrigerants to allow for more effective compliance activities and better analysis of data on licence holders.
- » Investment in VET infrastructure to support the additional places provided by government and lift completion rates. Specific funding is needed to ensure that RTOs have the skills and equipment to teach students about handling flammable refrigerants.
- » Investment in updating the training package for refrigeration and air conditioning trades to reflect the latest technologies and industry practices.
- » Strengthening of the national ARCTick licensing scheme for refrigerants to introduce compulsory CPD, particularly for handling flammable refrigerants.
- » Continued investment in promoting STEM in schools and making it accessible for all students.
- » Promoting VET and running a campaign to change the perception of it as a poor cousin to university education.

**Would you like to know more
about the HVAC&R building
services industry and the work
AIRAH does?**

Visit airah.org.au

**For more detail on AIRAH's policy
positions and the issues we are
addressing, read our 2025
pre-Budget submission.**

View submission