



# FF25

FOUNDATIONS  
AND FRONTIERS

AUSTRALIA'S NATIONAL  
CONSTRUCTION FORUM

BRISBANE | 6 AUGUST 2025



# POST EVENT REPORT

PLAYING AS ONE TEAM  
#FROMMETOWE

SEPTEMBER 2025



#FROMMETOWE

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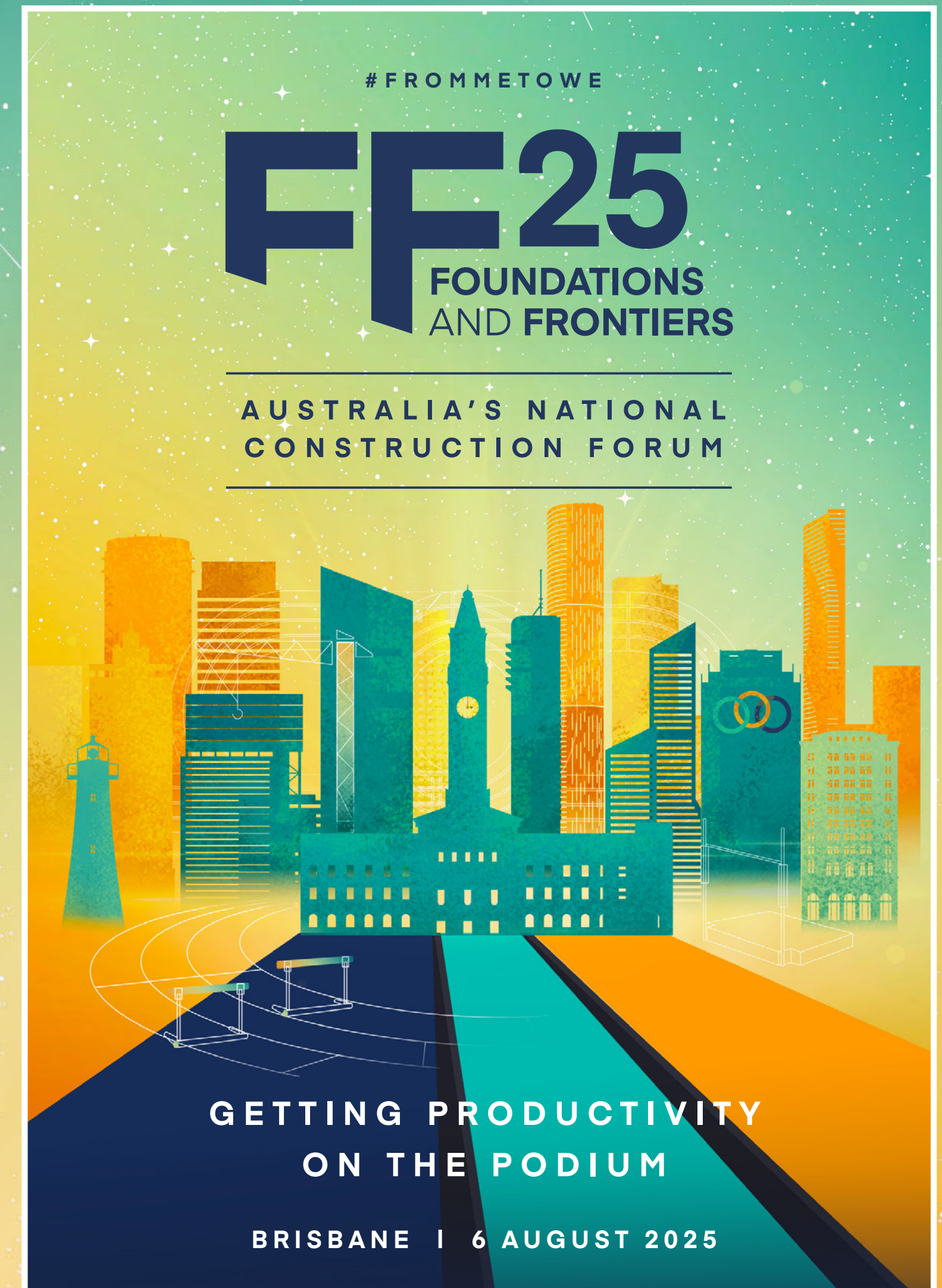
# PURPOSE.

On 6 August, more than 550 representatives from across the construction industry descended on Nissan Arena in Brisbane for the second Foundations and Frontiers forum (FF25), hosted by the Australian Constructors Association (ACA). In the home of the 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games, we came together to examine how construction can become a team sport and how we can move from an industry that is fractured to one with greater cooperation and focus on win-win outcomes.

This year's theme, **#FromMeToWe**, was firmly focused on productivity. With the financial stability of the construction industry approaching a crisis point and government budgets under pressure, we need to find ways to do more with the resources that we have.

The urgency for reform is underlined by the recent Queensland Productivity Commission inquiry, which found that productivity in construction has declined steadily over the past 30 years despite record levels of activity. Without reform, Australians face lower living standards and weaker economic growth. But Queensland, with its ambitious infrastructure pipeline for the 2032 Games, has a once-in-a-generation opportunity to show what's possible when government and industry align.

Importantly, FF25 discussions are not happening in isolation. They connect directly with the national economic roundtable held in the same month as FF25, ensuring construction's voice is firmly part of the wider debate on productivity and growth.





# WHAT WE HEARD.

## Progress since FF24

While many of the challenges identified at FF24 remain, FF25 highlighted that we cannot solve them in silos. Achieving a more productive and sustainable industry depends on every player stepping up as part of Team Construction.

Significant initiatives launched in the past 12 months include:

- Development of the Building and Construction Blueprint for the Future by the National Construction Industry Forum
- Launch of the Culture Standard by the Construction Industry Culture Taskforce
- Development of the National Construction Strategy by the Australian, NSW, Victorian and Queensland Governments together with the ACA.

These are important steps, but FF25 showed the job is far from done.

## Barriers holding back productivity

Familiar themes emerged across all the sessions.

- Inappropriate risk allocation
- Lengthy procurement processes purely focused on lowest cost.
- Non-standard contract forms
- Skills shortages.



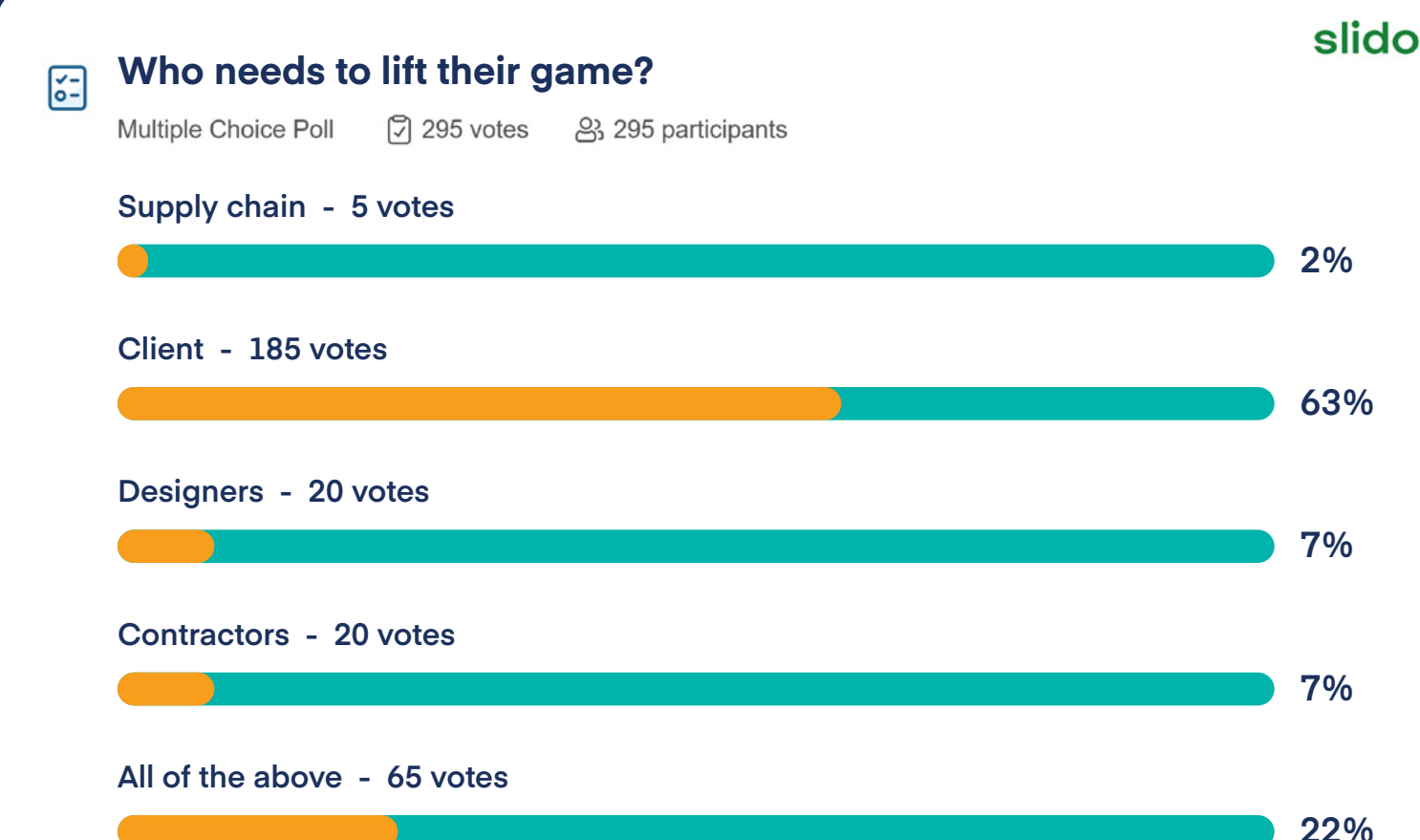


## Priorities for change

Participants repeatedly called out the need for:

- **Greater harmonisation and standardisation** - There was clear recognition of the growing regulatory and compliance burden, as well as the wide variation in requirements across jurisdictions and client organisations. To improve efficiency, productivity and reduce costs, we must move towards a common way of doing things, eliminate duplication and reduce the effort required from the full supply chain to comply with multiple, differing requirements.
- **Greater industry financial stability** - Industry must be able to make a reasonable return on its invested capital. Without this, there is little incentive to participate, innovate or invest in capability and capacity – and meaningful change becomes near impossible.
- **Earlier engagement and greater collaboration** - All parts of the supply chain need to work together at all stages of project delivery. Understanding each other's drivers and challenges helps align incentives and promotes a shared commitment to common goals. This requires open and honest communication, ideally starting as early as possible in the project lifecycle, with all players operating on the same set of rules.
- **Innovation** - The industry has repeatedly demonstrated its ability to innovate in times of crisis (such as during the COVID pandemic) or when under public scrutiny (e.g. the Olympics). Yet these innovations and improved behaviours often fail to become business as usual. Construction must hold onto these improvements, leveraging data and technology to deliver projects more efficiently and generate greater value.
- **Skills that match the pipeline** - A more wholistic approach is needed to understand and develop the skills needed to deliver the construction pipeline. There are no quick solutions; this is an area in which government, industry and unions must work together. Education and training must be viewed as an investment, as the cost of losing skilled labour far outweighs the expense of upskilling and deepening capability.
- **Bravery** - Above all, all players must be willing to take the risks required to change. It is accepted by all players that we cannot continue on the current path; we must trust each other and have the courage that is needed to try something new.

## FF25 AUDIENCE POLLS:





# LEADERS' EXCHANGE

FF25 opened with a Leader's Exchange the evening before the main event attended by more than 120 senior leaders from government, contractors, consultants, supply chain and clients. This high-level dialogue zeroed in on three opportunities to lift productivity:

- **Reducing the indirect cost of delivery**
- **Reducing the cost of bidding**
- **Greater flexibility in the operation of rostered days off (RDO)**

From the Leader's Exchange discussions, clear priority actions emerged.





# REDUCING INDIRECT DELIVERY COSTS:

- Streamline design and approval processes
- Standardise procurement models, contract forms, specifications and requirements, documentation and reporting.
- Adopt genuine collaborative contracting that includes earlier engagement between clients and industry
- Harmonise data, reporting and compliance processes.



## REDUCTION IN INDIRECT COSTS

Source: Oxford Economics



**VERTICAL CONSTRUCTION**  
(Non-residential building)

**25%**  
INDIRECT COSTS



**HORIZONTAL CONSTRUCTION**  
(Engineering construction)

**31%**  
INDIRECT COSTS



**-10%**

Could save the industry,  
in FY25, approximately

**\$6 BILLION**

with the majority of savings  
from horizontal construction



# REDUCING THE COSTS OF BIDDING:

- Better use of prequalification – with the ideal of a national prequalification scheme
- Clearly articulate value in tender documentation and publish selection criteria and weightings that align with achieving value
- Limit the number of proponents taken through to the tender phase – use early engagement to understand and test the market
- Simplify tender documentation and limit the documentation that is required to be provided as part of the tenderer's submission
- Do more work up front to understand risk and appropriate allocation
- Provide consistency and certainty of reliance information
- Take a programmatic approach to tendering.



Source: Oxford Economics

## HALVING OF TENDER-RELATED COSTS



**HORIZONTAL CONSTRUCTION**  
(Engineering construction including utilities)

**1%**

of major project costs equates to the tender process and is largely absorbed by industry

**4%**

assuming 4 x bidders per major project

Halving of tender costs could result in a direct economic impact of



**\$743 MILLION**

Broader economic benefit



**\$2.1 BILLION**

\*Applies to horizontal construction and utilities only (based on FY24)

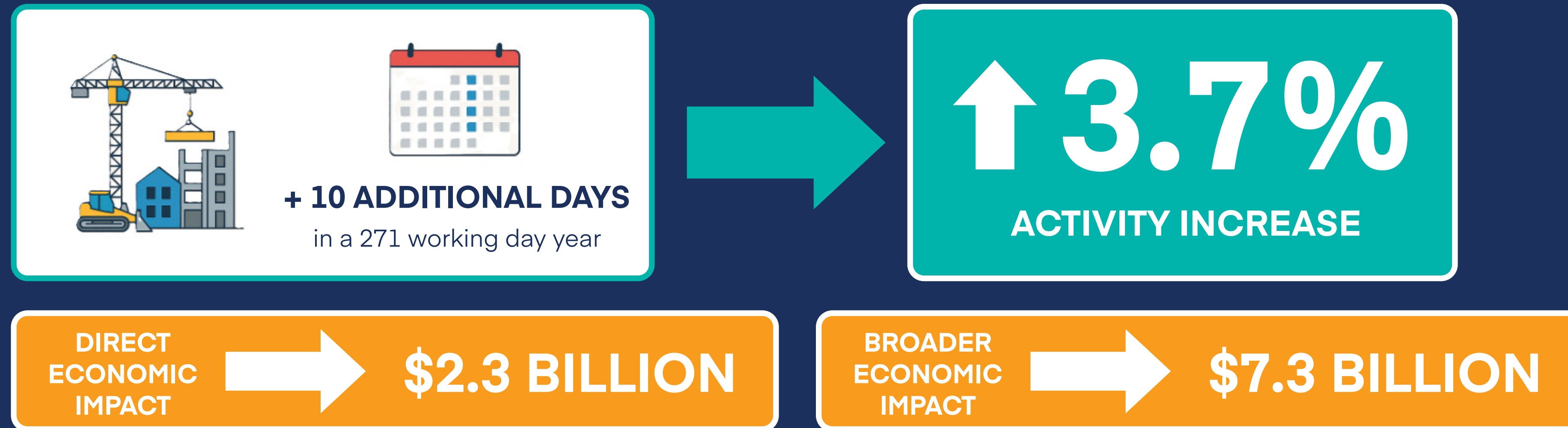


# GREATER FLEXIBILITY IN THE OPERATION OF ROSTERED DAYS OFF (RDO):

Data generated by Oxford Economics and Arcadis revealed an opportunity valued at over \$15 billion. Converting 10 fixed RDOs alone to flexible RDOs would have a broader economic impact of \$7.3 billion. Harmonise data, reporting and compliance processes.

Source: Oxford Economics

## MORE EFFICIENT ROSTERING OF RDOs



\*Applies to building projects only

Unsurprisingly, these solutions echoed throughout the following day during the wider FF25 sessions – it seems we know what needs to be done, now we need to do it!

Our leaders also discussed the roles and responsibilities of different stakeholder groups to turn these solutions into actions. And it was clear from this discussion that there is a role for everyone, but that most importantly, no one can make change without the cooperation of others.



# WHAT'S NEXT? TURNING TALK INTO ACTION

ACA's role as convenor of the Foundations and Frontiers forum is to ensure these discussions lead to real change. Coming out of FF25, our priorities are to:

- **Measure progress** - Work with initiatives like the National Construction Strategy to develop and track measures that are indicators of productivity like indirect cost percentage.
- **Drive national alignment** - Work with all levels of government and the broader construction industry to finalise and implement the National Construction Strategy.
- **Embed reform frameworks** – Champion adoption of the Construction and Building Blueprint for the Future and the Culture Standard.
- **Lead collaboration** - Work with initiatives like the Construction Industry Leadership Forum to convert FF25 and Leaders' Exchange solutions into tangible reforms.

Importantly, ACA will continue to hold the mirror up to industry and government, ensuring that when we gather at FF26 we can measure real progress - not just repeat the same conversations.





# FINAL WHISTLE ON FF25

FF25 proved that the appetite for change is strong and the solutions are known. The challenge is no longer about ideas, but about bravery and execution. As one participant put it:

***“We know the plays. Now it’s time to run them - together.”***

ACA will keep the momentum alive and ensure that construction steps up as a true team sport .







# THANK YOU

FF26 will return to Sydney in 2026.

