
THE
PROJECTS AND
CONSTRUCTION
REVIEW

SIXTH EDITION

EDITOR
JÚLIO CÉSAR BUENO

LAW BUSINESS RESEARCH

THE PROJECTS AND CONSTRUCTION REVIEW

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This article was first published in The Projects and Construction Review, 6th edition
(published in July 2016 – editor Julio César Bueno).

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THE PROJECTS AND CONSTRUCTION REVIEW

Sixth Edition

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Published in the United Kingdom
by Law Business Research Ltd, London
87 Lancaster Road, London, W11 1QQ, UK
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www.TheLawReviews.co.uk

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Enquiries concerning reproduction should be sent to Law Business Research, at the address above. Enquiries concerning editorial content should be directed to the Publisher – gideon.roberton@lbresearch.com

ISBN 978-1-910813-13-3

Printed in Great Britain by
Encompass Print Solutions, Derbyshire
Tel: 0844 2480 112

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The publisher acknowledges and thanks the following law firms for their learned assistance throughout the preparation of this book:

39 ESSEX CHAMBERS

ANDERSON MÖRI & TOMOTSUNE

ARAQUEREYNA

BANWO & IGHODALO

BRIGARD & URRUTIA

CLAYTON UTZ

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EDITOR'S PREFACE

La meilleure façon d'être actuel, disait mon frère Daniel Villey, est de résister et de réagir contre les vices de son époque. Michel Villey, *Critique de la pensée juridique modern* (Daloz (Paris), 1976).

This book has been structured following years of debates and lectures promoted by the International Construction Law Committee of the International Bar Association (ICP), the International Academy of Construction Lawyers (IACL), the Royal Institution of Chartered Surveyors (RICS), the Chartered Institute of Arbitrators (CIArb), the Society of Construction Law (SCL), the Dispute Resolution Board Foundation (DRBF), the American Bar Association's Forum on the Construction Industry (ABA), the American College of Construction Lawyers (ACCL), the Canadian College of Construction Lawyers (CCL) and the International Construction Lawyers Association (ICLA). All of these institutions and associations have dedicated themselves to promoting an in-depth analysis of the most important issues related to projects and construction law practice and I thank their leaders and members for their important support in the preparation of this book.

Project financing and construction law are highly specialised areas of legal practice. They are intrinsically functional and pragmatic and require the combination of a multitasking group of professionals – owners, contractors, bankers, insurers, brokers, architects, engineers, geologists, surveyors, public authorities and lawyers – each bringing their own knowledge and perspective to the table.

I am glad to say that we have contributions from four new jurisdictions in this year's edition: India, Portugal, Saudi Arabia and Thailand. Although there is an increased perception that project financing and construction law are global issues, the local flavour offered by leading experts in 26 countries has shown us that to understand the world we must first make sense of what happens locally; to further advance our understanding of the law we must resist the modern view (and vice?) that all that matters is global and what is regional is of no importance. Many thanks to all the authors and their law firms who graciously agreed to participate.

Finally, I dedicate this sixth edition of *The Projects and Construction Review* to the International Society of Construction Law, a worldwide federation or alliance of national or

regional Society of Construction Law (SCL) organisations that aim to foster the academic and practical legal aspects of the construction industry. We now celebrate the hosting of the International SCL's Biennial Conference for the first time in Latin America (13 to 15 September 2016, in São Paulo, Brazil). I thank the leaders of SCL International for all their support in the organisation of this event.

Júlio César Bueno

Pinheiro Neto Advogados

São Paulo

July 2016

Chapter 7

AUSTRALIA

*Matt Bradbury, David Gilham, Kristen Podagiel, Jennifer Turner, Adam Wallwork,
Liam Davis and James Arklay¹*

I INTRODUCTION

Australia is a dynamic and commodity-rich nation, whose wealth of natural resources has historically created the opportunity for domestic and international corporations to embark upon major infrastructure and construction projects. For the past decade, the country's approach to infrastructure development has been centred on access to commodities for export. However, Australia's economy is one that is in transition; as a number of the major project works relating to mining and gas developments achieve completion, commercial construction and significant federal, state and local government urban transport projects in the metropolitan centres are coming online.

This rebalancing brings opportunities for the construction sector to shift its focus towards infrastructure such as road, rail and telecommunications projects, which, in recent years, have not attracted the investment required to cater for increased population growth. By 2031, more than 30 million people will call Australia home. All levels of government are therefore playing catch-up and across the country, a number of multi-billion-dollar nation shaping projects are currently being undertaken, predominantly relating to urban congestion and national and regional connectivity. These include large metro and light rail projects in the capital cities, the rollout of the National Broadband Network and improved airport and port access, including for new freight links.

Australia has a sophisticated legal and regulatory framework in place to govern such projects and their proponents. It remains a jurisdiction in which projects can be completed with minimal sovereign risk and is therefore an attractive destination for foreign investment.

Any discussion about Australia's legal and regulatory landscape must be prefaced with an explanation of its status as a federation. Australia consists of six states (Queensland,

1 At the time of writing, Matt Bradbury, David Gilham, Kristen Podagiel, Jennifer Turner and Adam Wallwork are partners, and Liam Davis and James Arklay are senior associates at McCullough Robertson.

New South Wales, Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia and Tasmania) and two self-governing territories (the Australian Capital Territory and the Northern Territory). Each state and territory has its own legislative, judicial and executive arms of government. There are three levels of government present in Australia: federal, state and local.

The federal government's legislative powers are constrained by the Australian Constitution and include subjects as diverse as corporations, defence, taxation, telecommunications, immigration, foreign affairs and trade. The state governments have unfettered legislative jurisdiction, subject to the qualification that federal legislation will prevail over state legislation to the extent of any inconsistencies. Local governments are primarily responsible for planning and development and the provision of local services to communities.

Australia has a common law system, which it inherited from the United Kingdom. Each Australian state and territory has its own courts, appeals from which may be heard in the High Court of Australia. In addition, Australia has federal courts that hear matters arising under federal laws.

II THE YEAR IN REVIEW

The past year saw the completion of a number of significant resources developments, particularly several of the larger liquefied natural gas (LNG) projects, which were under construction for the past five years and are now commencing operation. While this has challenged the infrastructure sector, the industry has responded well with significant government and private funding being invested into social and transport projects.

Light rail (trams), which was once Australia's most popular form of public transport until the car, is now back in vogue as the Australian and various state governments try to move personal vehicles off roads in the central business districts (CBDs) and people onto efficient public transport. Projects currently under construction include the major extension of the A\$2 billion Sydney network through the CBD and to the Eastern suburbs, the A\$700 million Canberra Capital Metro and the extension of the Gold Coast Rapid Transit system to Helensvale (A\$420 million). Brisbane City Council also has recently committed to a metro line linking various commercial hubs around the CBD.

Rail construction as a whole has seen a revival this year, with significant projects aimed at creating increased connectivity between capital cities and outer suburbs such as the 12.6km Moreton Bay Rail Link in Queensland and, of course, Australia's largest public transport project – the A\$8.3 billion Sydney Metro, which involves the underground construction of rail line spanning 75km. Later this year, construction will start on the A\$2 billion Forrestfield to Perth rail link, which will connect Forrestfield to the city, opening up Perth's eastern suburbs to the rail network for the first time. The federal government also committed A\$893 million to develop a new key piece of national freight infrastructure – the Melbourne to Brisbane Inland Railway via central-west New South Wales and Toowoomba.

With this focus on rail, it is easy to forget that Australia's road network has at the same time received significant funding to deal with increased traffic congestion. WestConnex in Sydney involves widening and extending the M4 Western Motorway, a new section for the M5 South Western Motorway and a new bypass of the Sydney CBD connecting the M4 and M5. These projects will build or upgrade some 33km of the Sydney motorway network with an estimated value of A\$15 billion. There are also major upgrades of the Pacific Highway between Sydney and Brisbane taking place.

While interest in public-private partnerships (PPP), particularly in the roads sector, is not what it was five to 10 years ago at the height of the country's toll road construction in Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane, there is still appetite for private investment in government backed projects. A good example of this is the Australian Capital Territory Courts PPP Project, which is the Territory's first PPP project and requires the staged redevelopment of the Territory's court facilities while the courts remain in operation. The sponsors will be responsible for designing, constructing, financing and maintaining the facility for the next 25 years. Other recent PPP projects include Sydney's Northern Beaches Hospital, Victoria's Ravenhall Prison and Queensland's Toowoomba Second Range Crossing.

This theme of connectivity through social infrastructure is one helping to shape the Australian construction sector. Telecommunications provides an obvious example of this as the rollout of the National Broadband Network (NBN) continues across the country with more than one million premises now able to order NBN services. This A\$30 billion project is delivering Australia's first national wholesale-only, open-access broadband network to all Australians.

Outside of government-funded programmes, residential building projects have also increased, with especially strong growth in multi-unit dwelling construction. This has resulted in a shift in the location of construction work from the former mining boom regions of Western Australia and Central Queensland to the metro centres of New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland. Sydney also has two major urban renewal projects, which are comparable to some of the largest in the world: Barangaroo, which will be a mix of commercial, residential and park land extending from the CBD; and The Bays, which sits just 2km west of the city and consists of 95 hectares of largely government-owned land, being transformed into a technology hub and other uses.

Particular mention should be made of Western Sydney, which is a major growth area. The Australian and New South Wales governments are funding a 10-year, A\$3.6 billion road investment programme for Western Sydney. The Western Sydney Infrastructure Plan will deliver major road infrastructure upgrades to support an integrated transport solution for the region and capitalise on the economic benefits from developing the proposed Western Sydney airport at Badgerys Creek. Western Sydney also has the A\$2 billion Parramatta Square Redevelopment.

Another major geographical growth area has been and will continue to be the Northern Territory. Current major projects include the Darwin Luxury Hotel Development, the Darwin Port lease, Darwin Rectangular Sporting Facility, Mount Isa to Tennant Creek Railway project, Northern Gas Pipeline, Palmerston Regional Hospital project and Royal Darwin Hospital Expansion project. The federal government's A\$5 billion loan programme to support infrastructure projects in Northern Australia combined with the recently released Northern Territory White Paper, which sets out a policy platform for realising the full economic potential of the north, also promises to create exciting opportunities for economic development in the Territory. The Northern Territory strategically benefits from physically neighbouring the Asian economies and is well positioned as a transport and logistics hub for business and tourism.

With the lower Australian dollar and Queensland's second largest city, the Gold Coast, preparing to host the 2018 Commonwealth Games, there has been a revival in the hotel and cultural sectors across Australia. It is therefore no surprise that Chinese investment in this area has led the way. The most impressive examples of this are Dalian Wanda's redevelopment of Gold Fields House, Fairfax House and the Rugby Club at Circular Quay

in Sydney into a five-star hotel tower and mixed-use residential tower and Wanda Ridong's Jewel, which will comprise three towers including a five-star hotel with 170 rooms, more than 500 residential apartments and high-end retail spaces. Jewel is the first beachfront residential resort to be constructed on the Gold Coast in more than 30 years. In Melbourne, which is regarded as the sporting and cultural capital of Australia, we have seen a number of major stadium expansions and venue developments, including the Melbourne Park Redevelopment and the refurbishment of Rod Laver Arena. In Perth, the construction of Perth Stadium and sports precinct continues. Cranes from large building projects are casting shadows across the skylines of Australia's capital cities: from the almost completed A\$1.2 billion Perth New Children's Hospital to the A\$1.5 billion Sydney International Convention, Exhibition and Entertainment Precinct.

This is not to say that resources projects have completely dried up. In fact, some of the largest mining projects in the world are under construction or about to start development in Australia. For example, Adani's Carmichael Coal project is being constructed as a 60 million tonne (product) per annum coal mine, including both underground and open-cut mining. Coal will be transported to port facilities via a privately owned rail line which is connected to the existing rail infrastructure.

While the appetite for coal projects has declined, metals and other minerals remain strong performers. Despite the decline in resources infrastructure development, it is important to remember that this was based on never before seen investment in the sector and with A\$200 billion of committed projects in the pipeline, there is still significant infrastructure development ahead.

The conclusion of the Paris Agreement at the 21st United Nations Climate Conference continues to drive global momentum to decarbonise energy systems. While the Australian appetite for renewable energy projects has stalled owing to domestic policy uncertainty, the Australian government's Renewable Energy Target requires that by 2020 at least 23 per cent of Australia's electricity be generated by renewable sources.² The world's first commercial-scale wave energy array (which converts kinetic energy from ocean swell into electricity while also desalinating sea water), Carnegie Wave Energy's A\$32 million Perth Wave Energy Project, has hit 12 months of operation with approved funding for further arrays. AGL Energy Limited and First Solar successfully completed Australia's largest solar photovoltaic plants at Nyngan and Broken Hill in New South Wales, a A\$439 million project with potential to power 50,000 homes. The Australian Renewable Energy Agency recently approved preliminary funding for a proposed A\$800 million renewable biofuel production facility in Queensland. The South Australian government is actively exploring the potential for nuclear power generation, as South Australia is the nation's largest producer of uranium, with four operational uranium mines.

It is clear that during the past year Australia's infrastructure sector has become more balanced, with a much greater range of projects across roads, rail, health, resources and commercial and residential building.

2 Australia's Intended Nationally Determined Contribution to a new Climate Change Agreement (August 2015).

III DOCUMENTS AND TRANSACTIONAL STRUCTURES

i Transactional structures

Corporations undertaking projects physically located in Australia would normally utilise one or more Australian resident companies as the primary participants in the structure, particularly for the owners and operators of assets, but also for major contractors involved in construction.

Where there is a sole project owner, separate Australian subsidiary companies may be utilised by the project owner to conduct different aspects of the project. For example, separate subsidiaries may own the project assets, act as a financing vehicle to hold internal or external debt to fund the project and employ labour. Similarly, in certain projects it is common to have a separate operator that outsources some or all of the day-to-day operations to third-party service providers.

The use of separate corporate entities in an onshore Australia group structure may facilitate the limitation of liability, ring-fence specific risks, simplify project financing and meet other commercial objectives.

Joint venture structures

Where a project has multiple equity investors, the structure may commercially be referred to as a 'joint venture'. A joint venture can encompass a wide range of legal structures.

Joint venture structures can take the form of an incorporated joint venture, which involves one or more special purpose project companies, the shares in each of which are owned by multiple equity investors in the same proportions. In such cases, relations between the shareholders and their conduct would be governed by a contractual shareholders' agreement.

Under the Australian taxation system, an incorporated joint venture company or corporate group cannot be treated as a pass-through entity. As a result, the losses and depreciation of an incorporated joint venture or structure are trapped within the entity or structure. While a number of Australian states allow for the formation of limited partnerships, they are taxed at the same rate as corporations (currently 30 per cent).

Unincorporated joint ventures

Where there is a desire for a flow-through of gains, losses and depreciation to underlying owners, an unincorporated joint venture structure is most often utilised. This is of particular importance where an investor has other Australian interests and there is a desire to offset taxable profit, losses and deductions from different projects in which the investor has an interest.

Unincorporated joint ventures are particularly common in the mining and oil and gas industries. The unincorporated joint venture is a commonly understood structure and is familiar to investors, local advisers and regulatory authorities, as well as to banks and project financiers.

In mining joint venture structures, each unrelated participant will undertake to contribute, by way of cash calls, its proportion of the relevant costs of developing and operating a mine. A separate corporate manager (that is often owned by the participants in the same proportions as their interest in the joint venture) would normally be appointed to undertake the day-to-day activities of the project as agent for the participants. Each participant then takes their share of the output from the mine and, depending on the contractual terms, may have an ability to deal with it separately. In some cases, though, each participant will appoint

the same sales agent (also often a corporate vehicle owned by the participants in the same proportions as their interest in the joint venture) to sell their share of the product to third parties.

Under this incorporated joint venture structure, each participant includes in its own tax calculations its share of the costs and depreciation deductions of the project and separately accounts for its own proceeds from the sale of the product.

In cases where it is not feasible to take a separate share of the output of the relevant project (such as projects for the construction of an infrastructure asset where there is a single revenue stream), an unincorporated joint venture will be considered to be a partnership for tax purposes and a separate return is required to be lodged on behalf of the joint venture. However, there is a flow-through of the income or loss from the project if this is the case.

Infrastructure trusts

Another structure commonly used where there are multiple investors in an infrastructure asset with a positive cash flow and income stream is a fixed unit trust. These trusts facilitate the distribution of free cash in excess of the taxable income of the project, without immediate tax consequences for investors where, for example, the tax income is partially sheltered by depreciation or capital works deductions for infrastructure.

ii Bespoke and standard form contracts

Traditionally, projects within Australia have been undertaken pursuant to standard form contracts published by Standards Australia. These standard form documents have over time been heavily amended to reflect the decisions that have been handed down by the courts.

While Australian Standard contracts remain the most commonly utilised agreements for large commercial projects within Australia, as a result of the increasing involvement of international engineering-procurement-construction-management (EPCM) contractors on Australian major projects, the contractual landscape has been modified. There has been an increased importation of bespoke contracts that reflect the contractual environment of the EPCM contractors' home jurisdictions.

International Federation of Consulting Engineers (FIDIC) contracts

Despite a high degree of enthusiasm within the legal profession and industry bodies, the FIDIC suite of standard form contracts is yet to be fully embraced in Australia. Instead, FIDIC contracts tend to be utilised by foreign companies engaging in business in Australia and by Australian domiciled companies who have had exposure to the contracts as a result of their involvement in projects overseas. FIDIC contracts are commonly utilised on projects being undertaken in South East Asia.

IV RISK ALLOCATION AND MANAGEMENT

i Limitation of liability

Limitation of liability clauses are commonly incorporated into contracts as a method of managing risk.

Contractors will generally seek to limit their liability by including 'caps' in their contracts both on aggregate liability and on the amount of liquidated damages that may be levied against them in the event of late completion (the liquidated damages cap being generally between 5 and 10 per cent of the overall adjusted contract sum).

It is also common for parties to limit their liability in respect of ‘consequential loss’ to avoid becoming exposed to claims for losses such as loss of profits, loss of use, loss of production and loss of revenue that may flow from the way in which they conduct or administer a project. In the Australian context it is very important to identify the types of losses that are being excluded rather than use the term ‘consequential loss’ as the legal meaning of that term is far from settled in the various Australian jurisdictions and does not correspond to the equivalent meaning under English law. Such provisions are particularly important in the mining and resources sector, because of the extent of the losses that can be caused by the shutdown of a mine, processing facility or associated rail infrastructure and the associated loss of production.

V SECURITY AND COLLATERAL

Secured transactions are primarily governed by federal law in Australia; however, for transactions involving certain rights and industries (for instance, those involving mining rights) transactions are additionally regulated by state legislation. Legislation between each state differs, but there are often substantial similarities between each state’s legislation.

i Personal property securities regime

A number of years ago, Australia introduced a personal property securities regime similar to that already in place in Canada, New Zealand and some parts of the United States. The regime allows for and in some instances requires, the registration of security interests in personal property. The definition of ‘personal property’ extends essentially to any property other than land, with some limited exceptions.

The legislation relies on the concepts of attachment and perfection in determining whether a security interest has been created. For a security interest to be enforceable against the grantor, the security interest must attach to the personal property being offered as collateral. Attachment occurs where the secured party is given value, the grantor has a transferable interest in the collateral and the grantor and secured party enter into a security agreement or the secured party has possession of the collateral. The interest must ordinarily then be perfected to allow the secured party to obtain priority against third parties. Perfection can occur by registration (the most usual method), possession or control (with the concept of control only being relevant to certain limited assets, such as shares).

Unsurprisingly, the regime impacts on the structuring of financing arrangements and investments and the operations of contractors (foreign and national alike) in Australia. A lender taking security over Australian shares and assets (including income or contracts) will need to consider this regime carefully when structuring their lending arrangements in Australia. However, a wide range of standard contractual arrangements, outside the finance arena, is also potentially affected by the legislation.

Contracts under which rights to obtain property arise on default (e.g., step-in rights), supply contracts with retention of title clauses, deferred payment arrangements, subcontracting arrangements, equipment hire and leasing arrangements and joint ventures and shareholder agreements all potentially involve the granting of security interests, which may necessitate the registration of that interest for it to be enforceable against third parties. The regime also affects the holder of the legal title to the relevant assets where the holder has

parted with possession of the relevant asset: the owner's title to that asset can be defeated by others, for example, by creditors on insolvency, third parties with a registered security interest in the property and third parties taking free of the owner's interest.

The personal property securities regime is a relatively new area of law and there is ongoing debate in Australia as to whether certain interests will (or will not) amount to 'security interests' for the purposes of this regime. This will only be resolved by court consideration and legislative clarification over time. Until this doubt is resolved, there is an inherent risk that secured parties who do not adequately protect their security interest under the personal properties securities regime may lose their interest in the relevant goods to others who have adequately protected their interest under the regime.

VI BONDS AND INSURANCE

In the Australian construction industry, security is generally given by contractors and subcontractors to parties above them in the contractual hierarchy. The Australian Standard suite of contracts contains provisions that allow for the bilateral granting of security, but this is rarely seen in practice.

Typically, bank guarantees and, on large-scale projects, performance bonds are given by contractors and subcontractors to secure the performance of their contractual obligations (including the rectification of any defective work for an agreed term following the completion of the project, referred to as the 'defects liability period' or 'maintenance period').

Such instruments are irrevocable and commonly provided on an unconditional basis (although they can also be provided with attached conditions), meaning that they are effectively as good as cash in the hands of the beneficiary and can simply be presented at the issuing financial institution and converted without first obtaining the consent of the party who provided them.

While courts are generally hesitant to restrain a party from having recourse to the security that they hold, they are prepared to grant injunctions in certain, limited circumstances (such as fraud, or where an unconscionable attempt is made to have recourse to security that would cause damage to the reputation of the party who provided it). There have been a number of recent court decisions considering the issue of security for performance and by extension, the notion that security requested under a construction contract is regarded as a form of risk mitigation in the event that there is a dispute at the conclusion of a project. With this line of reasoning being led by the Court of Appeal in Victoria³ and more recently a number of decisions in the Supreme Court of Western Australia⁴ with respect to the Roy Hill project, it will be interesting to see whether such a position is adopted more broadly in the global construction industry.

Although some construction contracts provide for cash retentions to be deducted from progress payments that are made to contractors and subcontractors, such arrangements are uncommon on large-scale projects because of the impact that they may have on the contractor's cash flow.

3 *Sugar Australia Pty Ltd v. Lend Lease Services Pty Ltd* [2015] VSCA 98.

4 *Laing O'Rourke Australia Construction Pty Ltd v Samsung C&T Corporation* [2016] WASC 49;
Duro Felguera Australia Pty Ltd v Samsung C&T Corporation [2016] WASC 119.

In some Australian jurisdictions, legislative provisions have been enacted to restrict the amount of security that a party to a construction contract may lawfully require another to provide, as well as the circumstances in which recourse may be had to the security that is withheld. In NSW, head contractors on projects where the value of which exceeds A\$20 million are required to establish trust accounts into which retention monies that are withheld from subcontractors must be deposited.

Under most contracts, a proportion of the withheld retention or security will become due for release upon the works reaching completion, with the balance becoming due following the expiry of the defects liability period (assuming that it has not been called upon prior to this date).

VII SOCIO-ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES

Australia enjoys a stable commercial climate with few significant social issues that are likely to impact on project development. As is the case in many jurisdictions, a greater focus on environmental responsibilities together with an increased intensity of large projects has driven some recent developments in environmental controls.

This section will detail what businesses involved in projects and construction may expect at the state and national levels of Australian government, as well as international standards relevant to project finance that are commonly recognised.

i Business expectations from state-level government

In efforts welcomed by industry, governments at state and federal levels continue to take steps towards streamlining the processes needed to establish a new project. These processes are generally managed by the state government, but may also satisfy the federal government's assessment requirements under bilateral agreements in place between the various state and federal governments. The overarching objective is to progress towards a 'one-stop shop' for environmental assessments and remove potential duplication of the state and federal assessment processes.

As part of a routine environmental impact assessment process for a significant project, independent environmental state government agencies are responsible for environmental management and third-party stakeholders are invited to give comment on the impacts.

In Australia, the states have historically led the way on emissions and renewable energy policy, influencing national action. States and territories continue to have an opportunity to provide stable investment environments for renewable energy and boost energy efficiency initiatives. Since 2003, there has been A\$5.5 billion invested in renewable energy in South Australia, almost half of which has been injected into regional areas of the state. The Australian Capital Territory has also implemented effective emissions reduction targets and stands by its target of 90 per cent renewable energy by 2020. In Queensland, we are seeing a positive increase in support for renewable energy projects with recent examples of the exercise of ministerial powers to call in the assessment of renewable energy projects such as the Clare Solar Farm and the Mount Emerald Wind Farm as matters of state economic and environmental significance.

ii Existing framework and new developments at the national level

The federal government has continued to target economic growth programmes particularly in light of the shifting economy. In doing so, it has identified reducing the regulatory burden

on industry as a key mechanism. Often referred to as a policy of ‘green-tape reduction’, at a federal level there are significant developments under way whereby the government is aiming to repeal or amend regulation that might be viewed as stifling these economic growth objectives. This has been demonstrated most notably through the repeal of the carbon trading scheme. This has been replaced by a programme of direct action, aimed at enabling individual companies to apply for grants to implement carbon efficiency programmes. Mirroring support at the state and territory level, the new federal renewable energy target for large-scale generation of 33,000GWh in 2020 will double the amount of large-scale renewable energy being delivered by the scheme compared with current levels and will result in about 23.5 per cent of Australia’s electricity generation in 2020 being sourced from renewable energy projects.

To complement the focus on strengthening social infrastructure projects across the nation, the Australian government has developed national guidelines for the delivery of infrastructure projects to promote cross-government consistency and the use of best practice approaches. Additionally, the Australian government is seeking to attract further private investment in public sector infrastructure projects to meet increased demand for infrastructure over the next decade, with opportunities for both domestic and international companies to invest.

Australia’s unique history and the continued connection of indigenous communities with parts of the country have led to an important cooperative process whereby traditional indigenous owner groups may be afforded a right to negotiate regarding the development of projects. A mining applicant, for example, is often required to address ‘native title rights and interests’ in the land before proceeding to production.

iii International standards – Equator Principles

Australia also recognises certain international standards. For example, the Equator Principles are an internationally recognised standard for managing social and environmental risk management within financial institutions involved in project finance. Similar to the United States, while there is no legal requirement to adopt this measure, some financial institutions have voluntarily implemented the principles in their internal operations. These include the Australian Export Finance and Insurance Corporation and Australia’s four largest banks.

Collectively the laws and standards contribute to a balanced framework that protects the social and environmental aspects of commercial life in Australia.

VIII PPP FUNDING METHODS

The Council of Australian governments endorsed a National PPP Policy and Guidelines in 2008 which apply to all Australian government agencies. In line with this framework the Australian governments will consider a PPP for any project with a capital cost in excess of A\$50 million. This policy framework has been supplemented by individual governments including Victoria’s Partnerships Victoria, New South Wales’ New South Wales PPP Guidelines and Queensland’s Project Assessment Framework. Despite the policies, there remains concern regarding the level of risk transfer to the private sector, the costs incurred in bidding for PPP projects and the decision of the current Victorian government to cancel the A\$5.3 billion East West Link PPP project several months after the PPP contract had been signed by the previous Victorian government. On the other hand, in recent years there have been many international contractors participating in bidding consortia for the major road and rail infrastructure PPP projects.

Recent positive developments in the funding of PPP projects include the establishment by the federal government of the Northern Australia Infrastructure Facility to offer up to A\$5 billion in concessional finance to encourage and complement private sector investment in economic infrastructure for the Northern Territory that otherwise would not be built or would not be built for some time and the provision by the federal government of a A\$2 billion concessional bridging loan to the New South Wales government to enable it to accelerate the WestConnex project.

IX FOREIGN INVESTMENT AND CROSS-BORDER ISSUES

i Foreign investment

As a large, resource-rich country with relatively high demand for capital, Australia relies heavily on foreign investment to fund significant projects. Foreign investment in Australia is regulated by the Foreign Acquisitions and Takeovers Act 1975 (Cth) (FATA), its Regulations and the Foreign Investment Policy. The Australian Federal Treasurer, through the Foreign Investment Review Board (FIRB) administers the FATA, its Regulations and the Foreign Investment Policy. The Treasurer is responsible for determining whether or not to allow certain foreign acquisitions of interests in Australian land, companies (including offshore companies with Australian assets), trusts, assets or businesses. As a general rule, FIRB must be notified of all proposed foreign investment activity unless it is below the notification threshold or a specific exemption applies.

FIRB has the power to prosecute non-compliance and to unwind acquisitions deemed not to be in the national interest. Where the relevant regulatory process has not been followed, penalties and even imprisonment may be imposed. In practice, however, this occurs very rarely and a more likely consequence, where the acquisition is found to be contrary to the national interest, is a forced divestiture of the assets or restrictive conditions imposed on the ownership of those assets.

Applications for approval are required to address the national interest considerations, including national security, competition, Australian government policies (including tax), the impact on Australian economy and community and the character of the investor. Foreign government investors (including companies in that foreign governments have an aggregate interest of 15 per cent or more) face more strenuous FIRB notification and approval requirements. Foreign investments in certain sensitive sectors (for instance, civil aviation, banking, shipping, telecommunications and media) also have additional approval requirements. The FIRB requirements will obviously be relevant for financiers seeking to take a security interest or enforce their security as the step in by the financier can amount to an acquisition of an interest requiring prior FIRB approval, unless specifically excluded by the Policy or the FATA (for example, taking or enforcing a security interest is specifically exempt from the requirement of obtaining FIRB approval in the context of certain genuine money-lending arrangements).

More lenient screening thresholds apply for certain investors, including investors from the United States and New Zealand. The declaration of intent between Australia and China dated 15 January 2015 sets out similarly relaxed thresholds. Higher monetary thresholds have been included in the recently agreed free trade agreement with South Korea and Japan. However, lower monetary thresholds will still apply in prescribed 'sensitive sectors' of Australian industry such as media, telecommunications, military-type goods and services, transport and the extraction of uranium.

Historically, the vast majority of foreign acquisitions have received approval, which in most cases is obtained within 40 days. However, recent announcements by the federal government indicate that the foreign investment rules will be tightened in Australia, particularly in the residential and agricultural sector. The federal government has confirmed that from 1 December 2015 it will increase existing criminal penalties, supplement divestiture orders with civil penalties and prosecute third-party advisers such as lawyers or real estate agents who assist in a breach of the foreign investment rules. It has also been confirmed that fees for foreign investment applications will apply from 1 December 2015 and that these fees will generally range from A\$5,000 to A\$100,000 with uncapped fees of effectively 1 per cent of the purchase price being imposed on residential land acquisitions.

Approvals involving foreign government investors (including state-owned enterprises) are also under increased scrutiny, as are transactions involving agricultural land and water. Approval time frames in such cases can be significantly longer. Although only a small number of foreign investment approval requests have been denied in the past, in some cases, conditions (sometimes onerous) have been attached to approvals to ensure that the investment is not contrary to the national interest.

ii Foreign workers

In general, an employer may apply to sponsor temporary foreign workers to work in Australia for up to four years. The employer may be a business that operates in Australia, or a business that does not formally operate in Australia but is seeking to establish a business operation in Australia or fulfil obligations for a contract or other business activity in Australia. The employer must also demonstrate a commitment to employing and training locals. A foreign worker must be employed in an approved occupation and have the skills necessary to perform that occupation. In most cases, there is also an obligation on the employer to ensure equivalent terms and conditions of employment, which means that market salary rates must be paid to foreign workers.

iii Taxation issues

While there are various taxes and charges at each of Australia's three levels of government, the most substantive tax for Australian projects is income tax (including capital gains), which is levied by the federal government.

Australia-resident companies are subject to a tax rate of 30 per cent of taxable profits. Similarly, branches or permanent establishments of non-resident companies are taxed at the same rate.

Where a company pays dividends to a non-resident shareholder from profits that have been subject to Australian tax, no withholding tax applies. However, if Australian tax does not apply at the Australian company level, distributions of the profit will be subject to withholding tax at rates up to 30 per cent but this is normally reduced to 15 per cent or in some cases 5 per cent or zero under double taxation agreements.

Interest expenses are normally deductible against Australian income, though thin capitalisation limits apply. Under safe harbour rules, interest bearing debt to equity can broadly be in the ratio of up to three to one without denial of interest under the thin capitalisation rules.

Interest withholding tax normally applies under a rate of 10 per cent, but in some limited cases this can be reduced to nil for payments to financial institutions in certain countries under double tax agreements and also for certain offshore debt raisings by Australian companies.

Australia has a broad-based capital gains tax that applies to the disposal of assets and entities. In the case of non-residents however, Australian capital gains tax only applies to the sales of assets such as Australian permanent establishment business assets, land and mining tenements and interests in companies where the non-resident and associates have a greater than 10 per cent interest and the majority underlying value is in Australian land, leases and mining rights.

Accordingly, non-resident shareholders may generally dispose of interests in Australian resident companies without Australian capital gains tax where the company is not Australian 'land rich' or where the interest in the Australian entity is less than 10 per cent.

Other taxes

Various state-based mineral royalties apply to the production and sale of minerals extracted in relevant state jurisdictions. It has also extended the application of the Petroleum Resource Rent Tax to onshore oil and gas projects.

Australia has a goods and services tax (GST), which is a broad-based consumption tax applying at a rate of 10 per cent to most goods, services and supplies. GST does not normally apply to exported goods. GST is typically passed on and is normally creditable in business-to-business transactions.

iv Licensing requirements

Within some Australian states and territories, contractors who intend to undertake building and construction work and engineers who are supervising projects or undertaking design work are required to be licensed.

The consequences for carrying out unlicensed work can be severe and affect the contractor's entitlement to recover payment as well as rendering them liable to prosecution. Accordingly, any foreign entrant to the Australian construction market should fully investigate whether such licensing and pre-qualification requirements must be met before embarking on a project.

Queensland, which has one of the most stringent licensing regimes in Australia, has recently amended its licensing legislation in a manner that may reduce the regulatory burden upon certain contractors.

X DISPUTE RESOLUTION

i Overview

It is a universal maxim that where there are construction projects, disputes will follow. The Australian construction industry is no exception, given the scale of commercial activity occurring within the industry at any given time and the innovation that is involved on the projects under construction. Construction disputes are inherently complex and often turn on highly technical questions of fact and law. As a result, they are especially prone to being protracted and costly for the parties involved.

There are a number of forums in which Australian construction, engineering and infrastructure disputes may be heard and resolved, either finally or on an interim basis. The

primary methods utilised by disputants within the construction industry remain arbitration, adjudication and litigation. Other forms of alternative dispute resolution are, however, also available, including expert determination and mediation.

For the moment at least, the focus in Australia remains on dispute resolution, rather than dispute avoidance. Australia has not followed the global trend of embracing dispute avoidance mechanisms, such as dispute review boards (DRBs), given the perception that they are not cost effective on projects under a certain monetary value. Nevertheless, DRBs have enjoyed some support, mainly on large-scale government projects. The proposed new AS11000:2015 General Conditions of Contract (which are intended to replace AS2124:1992 and AS4000:1997) are likely to encourage the industry to consider use of a DRB or a facilitation in attempting to resolve disputes. They provide two options for dispute resolution. Both options require the parties to first attempt to resolve the dispute by conference but one ends with arbitration and the second with expert determination, followed by litigation (if the expert determines an amount is payable to one party in excess of a specified threshold or that no amount is payable). The second option also provides for resolution by a 'contract facilitation' or a DRB. This option is set out in a new proposed AS11001:2015 Dispute Avoidance, Management and Resolution under Construction Contracts.

This section will focus on the three primary methods by which construction disputes are resolved in Australia: arbitration, adjudication and litigation.

ii Arbitration

Arbitration was once the preferred method of dispute resolution within the Australian construction industry, but has fallen out of favour in recent decades.

Arbitration is commonly criticised as having become 'litigation by a different name' and losing the qualities of a genuine alternative dispute resolution process. The pre-hearing procedures that are adopted by the parties to an arbitration dispute often mirror those that would be imposed by a judge if the matter were being contested in the courts. The arbitration hearing itself is also often governed by procedural protocols that emulate those of the court system.

As a result of these issues, reforms were introduced a number of years ago at the federal and state levels to restore arbitration as a genuine method of alternative dispute resolution and establish Australia's reputation as a desirable forum for the conduct of international arbitration proceedings.

Given the number of large-scale projects being undertaken across Australia, as well as within South East Asia, Australia is establishing a renewed presence in international arbitration.

iii Adjudication

Since December 2011, every state and territory in Australia had enacted legislation providing for the interim statutory adjudication of construction disputes (commonly referred to as 'security of payment legislation').

Although they differ in content and procedure, the rationale underlying each of the legislative regimes is to establish a rapid means of securing interim progress payments to secure cash flow and reduce the instances of insolvency within the industry (which can have

a cascading effect down the contractual chain on a project). Adjudication determinations do not finally determine the parties' positions *inter se* and payments made pursuant to them are made 'on account' only.

Despite its ubiquitous presence within Australia, the security of payment legislation lacks national uniformity. Instead, the nation's legislative regimes may roughly be divided into two categories: the 'West coast model', which is intended to operate in a fashion similar to the Housing Grants, Construction and Regeneration Act 1996 (UK) and has been implemented in the Northern Territory and Western Australia, and the 'East coast model', which operates in New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, Tasmania, the Australian Capital Territory and South Australia.

New South Wales and Queensland have recently called for submissions on proposed reforms to their respective security of payment legislation and it is likely that these reforms will be introduced over the coming year.

iv Litigation

Litigation is acknowledged to be a costly and often protracted process. These characteristics are only compounded when courts are called upon to determine construction disputes, with all their attendant complexities. For this reason, and given the availability of comparatively efficient and less expensive alternative dispute resolution procedures, litigation remains an option of last resort by the parties to construction disputes.

While Australia does not have specialist courts in place whose sole function is to hear and determine construction disputes, certain jurisdictions (such as New South Wales and Victoria) have specialist case lists to facilitate the management and hearing of construction litigation. Judges with expertise in construction litigation are appointed to preside over such lists.

In recent years, legislation has been enacted to improve the case-flow management of matters that are before the courts.

XI OUTLOOK AND CONCLUSIONS

Australia remains an attractive jurisdiction for both domestic and foreign investment, largely because of its mining and resources projects, as well as projects involving the construction of significant public infrastructure.

The key constraints affecting Australian projects remain the availability of a suitable work force to undertake the projects and the volatility of commodity prices underpinning project valuations. The ability of international companies to introduce their highly skilled work force to Australian projects and reduce project operating costs will be critical to the completion of these projects within budget and on time.

It is expected that the ongoing investment of Chinese and Indian companies in major Australian projects will continue to fuel the expansion of construction activities. Peak construction activity (for approved projects) is currently expected to occur in 2017. Major infrastructure spending is under way and increases are forecasted. Though the resources sector remains a dominant component of the Australian economy, other sectors, such as agriculture, tourism and social infrastructure, are rising to prominence.

Appendix 1

ABOUT THE AUTHORS

MATT BRADBURY

McCullough Robertson

Matt Bradbury is a partner in McCullough Robertson's projects group. He is an infrastructure, construction and engineering lawyer who has advised on civil, building, mechanical, resources and structural projects in each state and territorial jurisdiction of Australia and throughout South East Asia. Mr Bradbury advises on all aspects of construction, infrastructure and major engineering projects, where he works side by side with his clients and their external consultants to successfully deliver their projects. He advises clients on risk mitigation and administration of contracts so as to avoid disputes. He also currently acts on behalf of state and local governments, government-owned corporations, owners, contractors and consultants and advises a number of professional bodies and industry associations. He is currently advising a number of major contractors with respect to the various LNG projects that are being completed in Queensland and Western Australia. Mr Bradbury has practised in both Australia and the United Kingdom.

DAVID GILHAM

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David Gilham is a partner in McCullough Robertson's finance group. He acts for financiers and corporate borrowers on a broad range of debt financing transactions including real estate investment or development financings, leveraged and acquisition financings, project financings and general corporate financings. He has significant experience in advising foreign financiers and corporates on their participation in Australian projects. He is currently advising Dalian Wanda on the financing aspects of its redevelopment of Gold Fields House, Fairfax House and the Rugby Club at Circular Quay in Sydney and its Project Jewel development on Queensland's Gold Coast.

KRISTEN PODAGIEL

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Kristen Podagiel is a partner in McCullough Robertson's resources group and has worked closely with the Australian mining and resources industry for the past 13 years. She has considerable experience in the area of structuring and establishment of major projects and joint ventures in the resources industry, including financing for a wide range of resource projects and structures. Ms Podagiel has acted for a range of clients in the resources sector, including listed and large private companies involved in exploration and operational projects in coal, coal seam gas, conventional oil and gas, mineral sands and metals.

JENNIFER TURNER

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Jennifer Turner is a partner in McCullough Robertson's projects group. Jennifer is a construction law and dispute resolution expert. She has more than 15 years' experience in dispute resolution for construction, engineering and infrastructure projects, including litigation, arbitration, adjudications and alternative dispute resolution processes. Jennifer has worked on major disputes across Australia involving airport, commercial, defence, dredging, industrial, process plant, rail, residential, resources, road, tunnelling and university projects. Her primary focus is working with clients to resolve their disputes on a time and costs' efficient basis. Jennifer's current matters include advising a contractor with respect to a substantial building information modelling (BIM) dispute on an Australian project.

ADAM WALLWORK

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Adam Wallwork is a partner in McCullough Robertson's projects group. He specialises in all aspects of procurement and construction law. He has had more than 20 years' experience in the negotiation, documentation and administration of major construction, PPP infrastructure, civil engineering, real estate development, resources, power, facilities management and maintenance projects throughout Australia, Asia, the Middle East and Europe. He acts for developers and other owners (including international investors), contractors, state and local government entities, financiers and consultants. Mr Wallwork has recently assisted a major contractor with its successful bid for the design and construction of a social infrastructure PPP project and continues to assist with its implementation.

LIAM DAVIS

McCullough Robertson

Liam Davis is a senior associate in McCullough Robertson's projects group. As a dedicated resources environmental regulation and approvals specialist, he has been involved in the delivery of approvals for some of the largest projects in Australia. He specialises in environmental approvals, native title and cultural heritage, land access and tenement issues. In addition to advising a range of clients, Mr Davis has also worked in-house for both mining and gas companies, advising on the complex regulatory environment, identification of areas of risk and provision of solutions that assist with the on-time delivery of projects while ensuring compliance with procedural requirements.

JAMES ARKLAY

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James Arklay is a senior associate in McCullough Robertson's projects group, where he practises in construction dispute resolution. He provides strategic advice to owners, contractors and government clients in the construction and resources sectors about the administration of their contracts to reduce the risk of claims and disputes, as well as the resolution of such disputes when they arise. Mr Arklay has acted for clients in federal and state court proceedings, as well as in various alternative dispute resolution procedures, particularly adjudication.

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