

Policy Priorities 2024

Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand’s policy priorities for advocacy

Chartered Accountants Australia and New Zealand (CA ANZ) represents more than 136,000 financial professionals, supporting them to build value and make a difference to the businesses, organisations, and communities in which they work and live.

CA ANZ promotes the Chartered Accountant (CA) designation and high ethical standards, delivers services and lifelong education to members and advocates for the public good. We protect the reputation of the designation by ensuring members continue to comply with a code of ethics, backed by a robust discipline process. We also monitor Chartered Accountants who offer services directly to the public.

CA ANZ actively engages with governments, regulators, and standard setters on behalf of members and the profession to advocate in the public interest. We are also a professional accrediting body and a TEQSA registered provider of higher education.

Policy area and policy	Detailed policy position
Tax Australia	
Broad based tax reform	Australia needs long-term tax reform which will build a sustainable tax base for the nation’s future needs and for government to provide a roadmap for how it will be achieved. Broadening the base and/or the rate of GST is required to relieve strain on the personal income tax system and to replace the more inefficient taxes which will require State and Federal Government cooperation. The equity of the tax system, especially intergenerational equity, needs to be considered to help support the costs of an aging population. Continued implementation of balanced measures to counter the black economy and base erosion are also required.
Regulation, competence and governance of the tax profession	Chartered Accountants are under an increasing amount of regulation from a variety of sources, yet they are expected to compete with unregulated sectors. CA ANZ is actively participating in consultations with Treasury and the Tax Practitioners Board (TPB) to implement key recommendations from the review of the TPB and Tax Agent Services Act with a view to modernising the regulatory regime. Competence of tax agents and governance within tax practices will also be a focus for the Australian Tax Office.
Tax policy settings	CA ANZ advocates that governments forecast the fiscal implications of key policy decisions over 10 years and use a consultation process like the New Zealand generic tax policy system.
State tax reform	CA ANZ advocates for streamlining state taxes, which will particularly benefit small businesses, by eliminating the associated red tape. We support government initiatives which could assist this process including extending Single Touch Payroll to gather payroll tax data.

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Policy area and policy	Detailed policy position
Tax New Zealand	
An efficient and effective tax system	CA ANZ will advocate for an effective and efficient broad based, low-rate tax system that supports economic growth, innovation and entrepreneurship. We will continue to support and be a voice for small and medium businesses. Our advocacy will focus on the development of appropriate tax policies, the ongoing simplification of tax administration so that all taxpayers are able to easily comply with their tax obligations, and enhanced use of digital channels and business systems to reduce tax compliance costs. We support measures to address the taxation gap attributable to the hidden economy to maintain integrity and ensure the long-term sustainability of the tax system. CA ANZ will continue to advocate for: a reimagined and simplified fringe benefit tax (FBT) regime that is in line with its primary function and the “right sizing” of the proposed trustee tax rate alignment. CA ANZ has put forward a 2-tier trustee rate solution with a de minimis threshold. We will continue to engage with members to identify key issues and advocacy opportunities, and work constructively with Inland Revenue and Treasury, the Minister of Revenue and other key stakeholders.
Tax policy development and reform	CA ANZ will continue to advocate for practical and workable legislation that is fit for purpose to ensure certainty and low compliance costs. We will continue to champion adherence to the generic tax policy process including the benefits of early and meaningful consultation and promote change for a systematic and enhanced remedial process. We will advocate strongly for substantive tax reform to be developed in a considered manner commensurate with its importance to the integrity and sustainability of the overall tax system. Where relevant we will also challenge proposals that increase data collection and information sharing by Inland Revenue to balance compliance obligations with the cost to taxpayers of providing the requested data/information.
Adverse events	CA ANZ will continue to advocate for a permanent adverse events mechanism to enable the swift rollout of appropriate tax relief measures, providing certainty for taxpayers, employers and business when most needed.
Financial Planning New Zealand	
Public interest advocacy	We will continue to advocate in the public interest on financial services issues that are of concern to our members and to New Zealand as a whole. In addition, we will work through any financial advice boundary issues for members who are not financial advisors, and for those who are.
Financial Advice Australia	
Industry reform	CA ANZ will continue to advocate for reducing complexity and regulatory costs to enable individuals and small businesses to access affordable, quality advice in their best interests from their choice of trusted professional adviser. We will be active in advocating for Chartered Accountants (CAs) as the government reviews the financial adviser code of ethics and education standards and the recommendations of the Quality of Advice Review. We will encourage the government to implement all the recommendations of the ALRC’s review of the Corporations Act.

Financial Advice Australia continued overleaf >

Policy area and policy	Detailed policy position
Recognition of the CA qualification	CA ANZ will continue to advocate strongly with Treasury and ASIC to recognise the following four areas that are yet to be formally approved - CAs with overseas degree qualifications have already been assessed prior to commencing the CA program in Australia and should not need to be re-assessed; CAs who completed the CA program overseas should be recognised in certain circumstances; and CAs who have undertaken specialist SMSF courses should be recognised. Raising the standards of professionalism and ethics in the financial advice industry is best served by attracting and retaining CAs in the industry.
Superannuation	
Industry reform	The Australian superannuation system needs major simplification both from a structural and tax perspective because it is too complicated for the average consumer to understand. The government needs to expand the information it provides to consumers on the ATO superannuation fund investment return comparison tool. CA ANZ will seek to have the government's employer pay day super policy sensibly implemented including reviewing penalties for late compulsory employer superannuation. We will also continue to encourage the Tax Office to publish comprehensive superannuation savings data for singles and couples. We will continue to work hard to ensure the government implements sensible non-arm's length income rules for all superannuation funds. We will seek to have the government's Better Targeted Superannuation Tax Concessions policy withdrawn or its more egregious aspects recast. We will advocate for the Productivity Commission to comprehensively examine many areas of the superannuation system including replacing annual contribution caps with lifetime contribution caps to help those with broken and irregular work patterns and working out how the superannuation, aged care and aged pensions systems can work more harmoniously together.
Professional Standards	
Promoting the Code of Ethics	The Code of Ethics sets out the fundamental ethical principles that underpin our members' ethical behaviour to each other, their employer and their clients. We will continue to work with the local and international standard setters to ensure that the changes continue to allow our members to be held in the highest regard for ethical behaviour.
Limiting member liability	We support the policy principles underpinning Australian professional standards and proportionate liability legislation which includes the prohibition on contracting out. These principles can be best implemented through consistent legislation in all jurisdictions. We continue our advocacy around the implementation of a similar limitation of liability scheme in New Zealand.
Small Business	
Reducing complexity and regulatory burden	We advocate for reduced complexity and regulatory burden for small businesses and small and medium practices, including in the areas of financial advice, reporting and assurance and professional standards. CA ANZ will continue to advocate against the transfer of lending risk from financiers to accountants via 'accountants letters'. We continue to advocate for a Companies register to be built using the latest technology and link director IDs to their associated companies. We also support measures to assist the digitalisation of small business, as well as a Financial Health Check Grant for small businesses to ensure small businesses can work with their trusted financial adviser. We are advocating for more policy focus and resourcing to help alleviate the hardships being experienced by small and medium sized businesses carrying large debt loads.

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Policy area and policy	Detailed policy position
Reporting and Assurance	
Audit and assurance	<p>Audit quality is paramount for effective economies and capital markets. We are committed to maintaining a strong audit and assurance profession and will continue working to safeguard the confidence in, relevance, and quality of auditing and assurance. We will focus on advocating for a balanced and impactful approach to relevant reforms and policy developments in Australia, and internationally, that contributes to those overarching objectives and avoids unintended consequences. Assurance is increasingly relevant to addressing non-financial risks such as climate change and sustainability. We support the International Standards on Assurance Engagements as the most comprehensive and appropriate framework for these engagements and welcome the IAASB's efforts to further enhance this with specific standards. As sustainability reporting evolves, mandating high quality assurance for public interest entities, including a consistent baseline for the qualifications and experience, technical standards, quality management and independence of practitioners will be paramount. As comprehensive documents, auditing standards are currently very complex serving both large, complex, and smaller, simpler entities. We support efforts toward improving scalability and proportionality of audit requirements for SMEs.</p>
Financial reporting	<p>As businesses and their stakeholders evolve, it is essential that financial reporting keeps pace, serving the needs of investors, in addition to capital market and economy wide transparency and integrity. We will continue to advocate for effective, fit for purpose accounting standards that meet agreed objectives including in regard to topical matters such as climate risk, economic conditions, clarity of presentation and disclosure, and SME perspectives. We will focus on the need for reducing unnecessary complexity and improving the understandability and accessibility of the standards wherever possible. As Australian accounting framework developments progress, we remain committed to ensuring the perspectives of members and the users of financial statements are well represented and that the outcomes are practical and proportionate. We will continue to advocate for mandatory adoption of digital financial reporting to meet the needs of stakeholders, improve regulatory outcomes, consistency, and efficiency.</p>
Business Reform	
Climate-related disclosures	<p>In New Zealand, we are engaging with the standards setter and regulator and supporting our members as reporting commences under climate-related disclosure standards. In Australia, we are engaging with government, regulators, standards setters, peak bodies and investor groups on relevant policy settings and standards as the mandatory climate-related disclosures regime is designed and implemented. We are raising awareness within the membership of the important role the profession plays in supporting businesses to navigate climate risks, opportunities and the related disclosures.</p>

Business Reform continued overleaf >

Policy area and policy	Detailed policy position
Sustainability reporting	We advocate for the role accountants can play in helping businesses become more sustainable. We support a global approach to the development and implementation of sustainability disclosure standards. We engage with government, regulators, standard setters, peak bodies and investor groups in Australia and New Zealand on sustainability reporting developments. We also advocate for appropriate and flexible regulatory frameworks and internationally aligned policy settings to integrate broader sustainability disclosures into domestic reporting frameworks in Australia and New Zealand, including connectivity with financial information. We are also engaging both internationally and domestically in developments relating to nature-related disclosures and modern slavery reporting and continue to drive conversations to develop an interdisciplinary and collaborative approach in relation to sustainability generally.
Anti-Money Laundering and beneficial ownership	In New Zealand, we continue to monitor the impact of the AML regime on our members and engage with government on the recommendations from the statutory review. In Australia, we advocate for a balance between risk and obligations when Chartered Accountants, or their services, are captured under AML Tranche II. We continue to engage with governments in Australia and New Zealand on the implementation of a beneficial ownership register to minimise the regulatory burden and capture only useful information.
Data and technology	Implementing cyber security has become crucial to keeping data secure and mitigating the risk of business disruption. We continue to raise awareness with our members of the tools and resources developed by the government and available from the Australian Cyber Security Centre. We advocate for financial support to be available to small businesses to undertake education on cyber risk and to offset the costs to implement core cyber security. Accountants are increasingly operating in and affected by developments in data, technology and artificial intelligence. In response we are advocating and engaging with members and stakeholders in relevant areas. In Australia this includes Regtech/Fintech and the ABS deregulation project.
Insolvency	We continue to raise awareness with our members on the need to initiate the difficult conversation with their clients when signs of financial stress become evident. We provide information and guidance on the options to restructure a business and, if needed, how to exit the market. We encourage members to identify when their clients need to be referred to a specialist, a member who is also a registered liquidator (AU) or licensed insolvency practitioner (NZ). In Australia, we advocate for government to move to a single regime for insolvency and to amend the eligibility criteria to undertake a restructure, so it is available to more small businesses.
Consumer Data Right	We are working with the other professional bodies and associations to raise awareness of how the Consumer Data Right (CDR) will change access to a client's accounting data in Australia. We continue to advocate for a change in the CDR Rules so it is mandatory for accredited data recipients to provide a channel for trusted advisers to receive CDR data. In New Zealand, we supported the introduction of the Customer and Product Data Bill and provided feedback on particular aspects based on our learnings from the implementation of the CDR in Australia. We continue to monitor the progress of the Bill and will engage with members and policy officials in due course.

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Policy area and policy	Detailed policy position
Education, Skills and Migration	
Improving productivity through education, skills and migration investment and reform	<p>CA ANZ is continuing to advocate with the Australian Government to improve productivity through education, skills and migration investment and reform. Productivity can be boosted by addressing nation-wide skills shortages, investing in the skills and education of current and future workers, attracting and retaining global talent, and reforming the higher education and migration systems to build the talent pipeline and fill gaps in the local workforce.</p>
Skills shortage	<p>CA ANZ is continuing to raise awareness of the ongoing shortage of, and demand for, accounting and audit professionals, and the valuable contribution these professionals make. In Australia, we are engaging with Jobs and Skills Australia, Treasury, the Department of Education, the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations, the Department of Home Affairs, other professional bodies, education providers, employers and others in the skills ecosystem to address the nation's skills and workforce challenges across high school education, higher education, vocational education and training and the migration system. Short term focus areas include more targeted skilling and investment in digital, AI, sustainability, accounting and financial capability. Longer term focus areas include providing lifelong learning entitlements that learners can draw upon to fund continuous learning, reskilling, and upskilling.</p>
Declining university enrolments	<p>Against the backdrop of the skills shortage and increased demand for accounting and audit professionals in both Australia and New Zealand, domestic and international enrolments in undergraduate and postgraduate university degrees that typically lead to careers in the accounting profession in Australia and New Zealand are in decline. To help reverse this trend, CA ANZ is opening new pathways for entry into the CA program and as a higher education provider is approved by the Australian Government to offer FEE-HELP, which can make becoming a Chartered Accountant more accessible by enabling eligible full fee-paying students to access a government study assistance loan. In Australia, CA ANZ's short term focus areas for advocacy with government include reforming higher education funding and financing by recalibrating student and Commonwealth contributions to ensure price signals to students and providers are working in the same desired direction; and indexing the Higher Education Loan Program (HELP) to either CPI or the 10-year government bond rate, whichever is the lesser, as part of the Australian Universities Accord expert panel's review of the higher education system.</p> <p>In New Zealand, we continue to raise awareness with the Ministry of Education and its responsible Ministers about the declining enrolments in accounting, management and commerce degrees, the steps CA ANZ has taken to address the flow on effects and how the decline will be exacerbated by the NCEA curriculum changes.</p>

Education, Skills and Migration continued overleaf >

Policy area and policy**Detailed policy position**

Building the talent pipeline

To build the talent pipeline entering the profession, CA ANZ is opening new, flexible pathways into the CA Program and continuing to promote the attractiveness of a career in accounting through our partnership with Year 13. This includes launching the Business Class e-learning academy, and sharing our high school toolkit presentation, careers cards and other resources with governments, education bodies, high schools, students and parents to highlight the exciting career opportunities in accounting and finance.

To build the high school talent pipeline in Australia, CA ANZ's focus areas for advocacy include introducing a national senior secondary accounting curriculum which is more outcomes focused and improves students' financial literacy; strengthening financial literacy and accounting in the national curriculum for students up to Year 10; offering accounting as a stand-alone elective in the senior secondary school curriculums for Year 11 and Year 12 in all States and Territories; and widely promoting to students the option of studying accounting in Year 11 and 12.

In New Zealand, CA ANZ is continuing to monitor the outcome of the introduction of the Commerce subject at Year 11 – specifically the strength of the Accounting component and its enrolment flow on effects in Year 12 and 13 studies. CA ANZ is committed to increasing First Nations participation in the profession through the Māori and Pacific and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander scholarship programs and through support of university enablement programs promoting accounting pathways.

Skilled migration

CA ANZ is continuing to advocate with the Australian Government for migration system investment and reform and working closely with government on implementation of the Migration Strategy. Focus areas in the short term include maximising the benefits of Australia's permanent migration program by maintaining a focus on the Skill stream and migrant quality rather than quantity, preferencing prospective skilled migrants following merit-based pathways, and featuring accounting, audit and finance professionals prominently in the migrant intake. CA ANZ is also advocating to government jointly with other professional bodies for improving employment and migration outcomes for international graduates, and making best use of their skills, by supporting reform proposals to improve the quality and coverage of the Professional Year (PY) work readiness programs for accounting, IT and engineering. Longer term priorities include managing the transition from an occupation list to a core skills list to meet targeted workforce needs and consulting with key stakeholders on what is on and off the list, as part of the Migration Strategy's implementation.

In New Zealand, CA ANZ continues to monitor the implementation and operationalisation of the Green List straight to residence pathway (for auditors), the Skilled Migrant Category (for which CA membership can be used to claim the full six points required), and the Accredited Employer Work Visa.

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Policy area and policy

Detailed policy position

Diversity, Equity and Inclusion

Promoting a diverse, equitable and inclusive workforce and profession

CA ANZ will continue to champion diversity, equity and inclusion (DEI) across the accounting profession and all sectors of business and the economy, including our own organisation. CA ANZ’s DEI strategy sets clear expectations and holds members accountable for creating a safe and respectful profession free from harm where all our members can thrive and belong. Current focus areas include implementation of this strategy; widening the participation and representation of First Nations Peoples, and other under-represented groups, within our membership on both sides of the Tasman; and addressing the gender pay gap within our profession and supporting pay transparency.

Applying a DEI lens to policy development and implementation

We advocate for governments to review all policy areas and systems with a DEI lens to identify negative biases and examine policy options to remove barriers to full participation and representation for all people.