



**Sydney Morning Herald**  
**22/11/2008**  
**Page: 58**  
**Business News**  
**Region: Sydney**  
**Circulation: 209508**  
**Type: Capital City Daily**  
**Size: 124.65 sq.cms**  
**MTWTFS-**

## Construction sector rises to a fractious challenge

THE real estate slump appears to be causing friction in the construction industry, with disputes and legal actions on the rise.

To help the industry avoid costly disputes, the Co-operative Research Centre for Construction Innovation has set up a nationwide taskforce involving clients and groups, construction companies, design consultants and universities to create a best practice toolkit.

The chief executive of the taskforce, Professor Keith Hampson, said the decision to form the group came at a crucial time.

"It will be a critical step for the Australian construction industry to quantify the cost, extent and impacts of disputes nationwide," said Professor Hampson, of the Queensland University of Technology.

"The research will be used to produce an industry-wide best practice toolkit for dispute avoidance."

Dwelling approvals fell 7.2 per cent to 11,167 in September – the worst month-to-month fall in seven years – and were down 21.6 per cent in the year to September.

The chairman of the taskforce will be Tony Barry, chief operating officer of the engineering consultants Connell Wagner.

"Our targeted outcome is identifying the root causes of disputes and developing practical industry strategies to avoid disputes," he said. "One of our key aims is to establish a better understanding of the real costs resulting from disputes on construction projects. There is a lot of speculation – but very few hard facts."

Other taskforce members include a former royal commissioner into the building and construction industry, Terence Cole, as well as representatives of the Australian Procurement and Construction Council, the Civil Contractors Federation, the Australian Constructors Association, the Australian Council of Built Environment Design Professions and state road agencies.

"The research and outcomes of this project will focus on relationships at the critical contractor/sub-contractor level as well as the head contractor/owner relationship," Professor Hampson said.