



**Australian
Institute of
Architects**

ABN 72 000 023 012
The Royal Australian Institute of Architects
trading as Australian Institute of
Architects

Tasmanian Chapter
1/19a Hunter Street
Hobart TAS 7000

P: (03) 6214 1500
tas@architecture.com.au
architecture.com.au

The Hon. Peter Gutwein MP
Premier
Treasurer
Minister for the Prevention of Family Violence
Minister for Climate Change
Minister for Tourism

Department of Treasury and Finance
21 Murray St
Hobart TAS 7000

Date: 05 August 2020

By email to: communityconsultation@treasury.tas.gov.au, peter.gutwein@parliament.tas.gov.au

Dear Premier,

RE: 2020-21 State Budget Submission

On behalf of the Tasmanian Chapter of the Australian Institute of Architects (the Institute), we would like to make the following submission for consideration in the preparation of the 2020-21 State Budget. It is clear that COVID-19 will greatly impact this year's budget, and we feel that now, more than ever, it is critical to see money spent in Tasmania in a way that is well considered, sustainable and delivers the greatest benefits to our state and our communities.

Architects in Tasmania are seeing a reduction in the amount of work and are experiencing hardship. The Institute recognises that architects are the 'canary in the coal mine' of the building and construction industry, and without new projects being designed by architects now, there will be a lack of projects being constructed in the future, which will greatly impact the building and construction industry as a whole. Without a pipeline of work being steadily rolled out, we won't have a sustainable building and construction industry, and the broader impacts on the economy will be far-reaching and felt for many years to come.

This is particularly evident in medium to large architecture practices which undertake public and commercial work. A member from a larger architecture firm in Hobart has informed us that there still hasn't been a tender advertised for architectural services on the government website for many months. The impact of this is that practices are needing to reduce staff hours and/or make staff redundant, resulting in a loss of skills and knowledge. We question whether the lack of new government projects is a result of the delay in the state budget.

The Institute commends the support from both the Federal and State Governments in relation to COVID-19, and our members have found this to be valuable. We welcome the recent extension of JobKeeper, however members are concerned about the reduction in the amount of this scheme. Members have suggested that the Tasmanian Government could contribute to this scheme to top up the short-fall when the Federal amount is reduced.

We acknowledge the measures announced in the Tasmanian Government COVID-19 Response – Rebuilding Tasmanian Infrastructure Investment package ensured that these projects, of which many were already underway, were able to be realised. This has created some surety within the industry, however many of these projects had already had architectural design work commenced prior to the onset of the pandemic. We also note that the HomeBuilder packages only benefit a very small section of the building and construction industry and it is reported to be over-heating some sections of the industry. We would encourage the timeframe of these packages to be extended to alleviate some of these issues.

The Institute would like to assist in any way we can to ensure the viability of the industry moving forward and would like to reiterate suggestions to assist with this below. In all projects, in order to ensure a quality built outcome, it is critical to have thorough client briefing, realistic timeframes for design, realistic budgeting, community consultation, energy efficient design and construction, and a low carbon footprint. These measures ensure the long-term economic benefits are felt by the community well into the future, as they make for a sustainable built environment.

The Institute believes that any projects that are funded should benefit the whole community. This should include focusing on projects that are spread across the state and that differ in size so that they are suitable for both small, medium and large practitioners across the design and construction process.

We would be happy to assist in identifying the size and capacities of Tasmanian architecture firms, along with assisting by providing advice on appropriate procurement models to provide fair and equitable opportunities for all local architects. We would also like to highlight that master planning is critical for high-quality outcomes that are well-thought out and provide long-term solutions.

While time is of the essence, it is critical to acknowledge that while design work can be fast-tracked to a degree, it still takes time to design a building properly to ensure the best quality outcome, which results in the process taking at least between four to six months, depending on the size and complexity of the project. Architects have the ability to provide cost effective designs, from the layout of the building through to detailing and material selection, and quality for budget that considers not only the built cost, but the usage and maintenance costs of the building (whole-of-life cost) after it has been built. It is important that design is undertaken prior to any construction commencing to ensure that delays don't occur further down the track. Architects have the unique design ability to be able to add value to all projects, be this a toilet block or a large-scale health project.

While the above are our primary concerns and suggestions, we have compiled further suggestions from our membership below.

Underlying principles of building work

- It should not just be a case of what can be spent quickly, but what is most needed.
- The Government must identify initiatives that deliver a long-lasting dividend from Government investment.
- Existing health, educational, affordable and social housing and infrastructure projects that are currently in the process of being delivered should be fast tracked through government to market.
- Focus should be placed on projects of a variety of scales and locations. This would enable a spread of the dollar value across local, state and federal governments, regions, towns and cities in an equitable manner for small, medium and larger companies.
- In all projects, large or small, energy efficiency and sustainable design need to be a priority and should focus on the integration of both renewable energy sources and passive and active energy systems.
- All projects, whether new or upgrades, need to have a focus on equitable and quality design.

Potential further economic stimulus

Process

Governments must keep regulatory approvals flowing through State agencies and local government.

Governments of all persuasions should be encouraged to implement a temporary but necessary freeing up of potential planning bottlenecks and fast track approvals provided they meet acceptable standards of planning compliance and construction regulation. This process could also be expedited by relaxing supporting information requirements (with these then becoming a condition of the permit).

We encourage fast tracking of the planning process but emphasise the importance of quality outcomes for both the built environment and the public domain and the importance of sufficient time for design prior to construction commencing. Most importantly, the approval processes need streamlining so work is not held up at the local government level. This might require additional assistance to local governments.

Incentives for private sector projects to both commence and continue should be considered. This could be by way of governments subsidising fees for approvals, including development applications, building applications and change of use applications, for a period of time, and waiving renewal fees for extensions of time where this encourages projects to commence in the short term.

In order to move projects from the list of possibility, toward shovel readiness, more effort needs to be placed on getting the design, documentation and approvals for such opportunities underway as soon as possible. Now is an excellent time, with a very small investment, to set up business cases for small and large projects to stimulate the design and construction industry, as these projects, with forward thinking and input, can then be 'shovel ready' by the next election.

Projects

The focus would be on projects that benefit the community, create jobs and provide an economic as well as a social benefit. These would include:

1. Make new public and social housing a priority and fast-track housing projects with a socially responsible housing mix: 30/40/30 – affordable (key worker) 30%; private 40%; and social 30%. Existing buildings could also be repurposed for housing. This could incorporate some of the recommendations of the [Inquiry into Housing Affordability](#).
2. Make improvements to education facilities that increase equitable access for children in vulnerable circumstances and fix basic problems with existing buildings that will have a lasting benefit such as condition upgrades, disability access and energy efficiency.
3. Fund quality community buildings and public spaces – these have proved invaluable during the current restrictions and will also be required as our population grows. This could include extensions-to, upgrades or maintenance of regional Tasmanian sports and cultural precincts.
4. Fund aged care housing (facilities & independent living) – ideally as part of mixed-housing developments, not stand-alone. Projects like the Goulburn St housing project currently under construction and commissioned by Richard Gilmour from the Department of Communities Tasmania, is an ideal example of this.
5. Fund public healthcare facilities.
6. Invest in green spaces – urban design, landscape and especially waterways and catchments that support sustainable places and human health and wellbeing. This would include parks and landscape infrastructure, especially the provision of accessible play areas.
7. There are many projects for which grant applications have been prepared and either put on hold or rejected due to lack of funding in previous rounds. These would include many local government upgrades and initiatives to public amenities, regional tourist initiatives or community projects. These could be revisited as many are ready to go essentially.
8. Smaller town centre and amenities upgrades especially in regional and developing density suburban areas. Many areas are under-done in terms of place amenity with poor paving, public domains and landscape infrastructure. All local councils need to re-set with regard to public amenities and invest across their municipalities in new design-led public amenities outcomes that create safe amenity environments for everyone. This could be assisted by additional grant funding to Local Government for community infrastructure projects in 2020/2021 and beyond.
9. Design-led urban planning projects to support inclusive, nurturing and walkable neighbourhoods along with active transport projects – that is cycle and pedestrian linkages and hubs.
10. Built heritage maintenance and adaptive re-use of existing buildings.
11. Fast forward planning policy to introduce the ‘Medium Density Residential Development Standards’ and planning code as per the Hobart City Deal.

12. Fast-track all Tasmanian 'City Deal' projects.
13. The City of Hobart has produced and commissioned many reports, including the Gehl Report and the Inner-City Action Plan, and elements of these could be actioned. This is also the case in Launceston, and likely in other larger municipalities.
14. A focus in Hobart needs to be on the inner-city and the public transport corridor to ensure that development is close to infrastructure and existing services. Inner-city development is also critical in Launceston, which has been encouraged already by the Launceston City Deal, and this should continue.

Other Considerations

- Expert panels should be utilised to make decisions.
- There is an opportunity for architects to assist government agencies to strategically plan for the future. Architects are strategic and can be pivotal in responding to a need for changing environments and to plan the way we live, work etc in this fast-paced change environment we find ourselves in.
- Architects could provide additional paid services to Government, outside of building work and at a more academic level, e.g.: research projects, policy reviews/input, master planning reviews/input, knowledge sharing (web-based public seminars/workshops).
- The funding of continuing professional development and education of all practitioners in the building and construction industry should be a priority for the Government. This ensures that there is a high level of knowledge, skill and expertise within the state which enables and facilitates the realisation of quality built outcomes and a sustainable and innovative building and construction industry.

Policy

1. Make architecture fees tax deductible like accountants or financial advisor fees.
2. Ensure that there is gender equity within the workforce. We suggest that procurement processes for projects aim for gender equity targets in line with the Institute's Gender Equity Policy (refer attached document). Current Tasmanian Government EOI/tender processes already embed zero tolerance to violence against women which is fantastic, and Local SME statements aim at ensuring the local economy is supported. Gender Equity targets could be addressed in the Local SME statement. The Tasmanian Government Women's Strategy highlights leadership and participation, and financial security as two of the government's key concerns for women - so this would be an active measure on these two fronts.
3. We commend the recently announced amendments to the Buy Local Policy.

In Summary

- We urge the Tasmanian Government to contribute to the Jobkeeper scheme to increase its duration.
- Don't delay the state budget any further.

- We support the recent reduction of the procurement threshold and the Buy Local Policy.
- HomeBuilder package should be extended to relieve market pressure and to make it more accessible.
- Government projects should be varied in scale and type and procurement models adopted which enable the full range of local architects and building practitioners to participate.
- The Institute can provide support and advice on appropriate procurement models.
- Government projects should champion master planning as key to good project outcomes.
- Appropriate time frames should be embedded within government projects and funding models to enable good design outcomes.
- Governments must keep regulatory approvals flowing.
- Invest in sound projects which will benefit our State, all its people and its most vulnerable, now and for the long term, refer to suggested list included.
- In any stimulus packages Government should invest in sustainability and provide funding incentives for energy efficient building design and construction or for low carbon footprint buildings.
- The Government should invest in continuing professional development for all practitioners within the building and construction industry.

We thank the Tasmanian Government for its support of the building and construction industry, and we look forward to working together to ensure that the industry is able to navigate through the challenging months ahead.

Yours sincerely,



Shamus Mulcahy
Tasmanian President
 Australian Institute of Architects



Jennifer Nichols
Tasmanian Executive Director
 Australian Institute of Architects

Copy to:

The Hon. Elise Archer
 Attorney General
 Minister for Justice
 Minister for Corrections
 Minister for Building and Construction
 Minister for the Arts
 Minister for Heritage
 By email: minister.archer@dpac.tas.gov.au

The Hon. Sarah Courtney MP
 Minister for Health,
 Minister for Strategic Growth
 Minister for Small Business
 By email: sarah.courtney@parliament.tas.gov.au

The Hon. Roger Jaensch MP

Minister for Housing

Minister for State Growth

Minister for Human Services

Minister for Planning

Minister for Aboriginal Affairs

By email: roger.jaensch@dpac.tas.gov.au

Mr John Perry

Coordinator General

By email: john.perry@cg.tas.gov.au