Australian Institute of Architects

QUEENSLAND CHAPTER

IMPLICATIONS FOR ARCHITECTS AND THE BUILT ENVIRONMENT



2026–27 QUEENSLAND STATE BUDGET REVIEW

JUNE 2026

Executive Summary



The 2026–27 Queensland State Budget is a major infrastructure and service delivery Budget. It places strong emphasis on housing supply, hospitals, schools, transport, energy, water security, regional infrastructure and 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games delivery.

For the architectural profession, the Budget presents significant opportunities but also important risks. The scale of capital investment will generate demand for design, planning, documentation, procurement and delivery expertise across the state. However, the Budget's focus on speed, activation and delivery should be matched by a clear commitment to design quality, climate resilience, liveability, long-term value and regional procurement access.

The Queensland Chapter of The Royal Australian Institute of Architects will continue to position itself as a constructive partner in delivering better built outcomes from this investment pipeline. Advocacy will focus on ensuring that major public expenditure delivers enduring public value, not simply short-term project outputs.

Budget Context



The Budget identifies three broad priorities: making Queensland safer, building Queensland's future, and delivering better services through a stronger economy.

The most relevant theme for the built environment is "Building Queensland's Future", which includes new and upgraded hospitals, schools and TAFE centres; the Energy Roadmap; more homes; and major road and rail investment.

The scale of the capital program is substantial. The Government has committed more than $119 billion over four years, including nearly $30 billion in 2026–27. A significant majority of this investment is directed outside Greater Brisbane, which is particularly relevant to regional practice, local procurement, workforce capability and place-based design.

Key Budget Measures



Housing and Social Infrastructure

Housing is one of the strongest built-environment themes in the Budget. The Budget continues the $2 billion Residential Activation Fund, including a doubled Round 2 allocation of $1 billion. The Government states that the fund will help unlock land and support more than 98,000 new homes.

The Budget also provides $5.725 billion four-year capital program for social and community housing. This includes continued delivery and upgrades of social housing, First Nations housing, youth foyers, domestic and family violence shelters, and homes in remote and discrete Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities.

Implications for architects

This creates a clear opportunity to advocate for design quality in social, affordable and market housing. The Institute will emphasise that housing supply must not be measured by quantity alone. Good design, climate responsiveness, durability, accessibility, adaptability and neighbourhood integration will be critical to achieving lasting value.

There is a strong case for ensuring architects are engaged early in land activation, master planning and housing delivery, rather than being brought in only after yield, cost and procurement parameters are fixed.

Health Infrastructure

The Budget provides capital investment in health infrastructure, including new hospitals at Coomera, Bundaberg and Toowoomba, and major expansions and upgrades across the health system. The Government's Hospital Rescue Plan is expected to deliver more than 2,600 additional hospital beds.

Implications for architects

Health infrastructure is one of the most complex areas of public architecture. Design quality has direct implications for patient wellbeing, staff retention, operational efficiency, infection control, cultural safety and long-term adaptability.

The Institute will advocate for procurement models that properly value specialist health design expertise, regional participation where projects are located outside Brisbane, and design processes that support patient-centred, climate-responsive and flexible health facilities.

Education and Training Infrastructure

The Budget includes investment in new schools, special schools, school upgrades and TAFE Centres of Excellence in Rockhampton, Caloundra, Moreton Bay and Petrie.

Implications for architects

Education projects are highly visible community assets. They influence learning outcomes, student wellbeing, inclusion, safety and community identity.

The Institute will advocate for school and TAFE investment to embed contemporary learning design, universal access, shaded outdoor learning, passive cooling, landscape integration and whole-of-life asset performance. There is also an opportunity to promote good design in regional education infrastructure as a catalyst for local pride and community resilience.



Transport, Roads and 2032 Games Infrastructure

Transport is the largest capital category in the Budget. Major commitments include the Queensland Transport and Roads Investment Program, Bruce Highway investment, Cross River Rail, Faster Rail to the Gold Coast, Coomera Connector, Gold Coast transport planning, The Wave on the Sunshine Coast, and 2032 Games-related transport and venue planning.

The Budget also provides $765 million in 2026–27 to progress planning and delivery of the new Brisbane Stadium, other Games venues and athlete villages.

Implications for architects

The Institute will continue to advocate that 2032 infrastructure must be more than event delivery. It should leave a civic, social, environmental and design legacy.

Key advocacy opportunities include:

- embedding design excellence in Games venues, villages and precincts;
- ensuring athlete villages contribute to long-term housing and community outcomes;
- prioritising walkability, shade, public realm and active transport around venues;
- supporting a coordinated design governance model for 2032 delivery;
- promoting a green grid and urban canopy legacy across Games precincts.

This aligning with the Institute’s existing Green Pathways Gold Places advocacy.

Energy, Sustainability and Climate Resilience

The Budget continues implementation of the Energy Roadmap, with state-owned energy businesses investing more than $5 billion across the energy supply chain. Key investments include CopperString, the Gladstone Project, system strength infrastructure, and investment in generation assets.

The Budget also includes water security, dam safety, flood resilience, reef conservation and environmental investment, including funding for the Great Barrier Reef and catchment health.

Implications for architects

While the Budget contains energy and environmental measures, the connection to the built environment could be stronger. The Institute will advocate for sustainability to be embedded across the entire capital program, not treated as a separate environmental or energy portfolio issue.

Energy, Sustainability and Climate Resilience

Priorities include:

- climate-resilient public buildings;
- low-carbon materials and construction;
- adaptive reuse before demolition where feasible;
- passive design and reduced operational energy demand;
- urban heat mitigation;
- flood, cyclone and bushfire resilience;
- consistent post-occupancy evaluation of public buildings.

The Budget is an opportunity to advocate that every publicly funded building should contribute to Queensland's climate resilience and long-term sustainability.

Regional Investment and Procurement

The Budget emphasises regional delivery, with a large proportion of capital investment outside Greater Brisbane. This is highly relevant to our regional architect members and local practice capability.

Implications for architects

The Institute will advocate for procurement settings that allow regional architects and smaller practices to compete fairly for public work. This includes addressing barriers such as bundled project packages, excessive insurance requirements, unrealistic tender timeframes, overly complex submissions, and procurement models that favour large metropolitan practices.

There is opportunity to advocate that regional infrastructure should use regional expertise wherever possible. Local architects bring knowledge of climate, culture, community, materials, supply chains and place.



Strategic Risks



The Budget provides significant opportunities, but several risks should be monitored:

Speed over quality
Housing and infrastructure delivery pressure may lead to procurement and design shortcuts.

Capital spend without design governance
The scale of investment requires strong design review, design leadership and public-sector capability.

Regional exclusion
Large bundled packages may unintentionally lock out regional practices.

Sustainability treated as secondary
Energy investment does not automatically translate into low-carbon, climate-resilient buildings.

2032 legacy risk
Games infrastructure could become project-led rather than place-led unless design coordination is strengthened.

Social housing quality risk
A focus on delivery numbers may underplay design, durability, tenant wellbeing and neighbourhood outcomes.

Advocacy Priorities



The 2026–27 Queensland Budget represents investment in the physical future of the state. The opportunity now is to ensure this investment delivers not just more infrastructure, but better places, healthier communities, climate-resilient buildings and lasting public value. Architects are ready to work with government, industry and communities to ensure Queensland's growth is supported by good design.

Priority 1: Design Quality in Housing Supply
Advocate for the Residential Activation Fund, social housing pipeline and Land Activation Program to include clear design quality expectations.

Key asks:

- early engagement of architects in master planning and feasibility;
- design quality criteria for publicly supported housing;
- climate-responsive and accessible housing standards;
- support for medium-density housing that is liveable, well-designed and community accepted;
- stronger links between housing, transport, shade, public realm and social infrastructure.

Priority 2: Public Infrastructure Design Governance
Advocate for a stronger design governance framework across major public infrastructure.
Key asks:

- whole-of-government design leadership;
- independent design review for major public projects;
- project briefs that include design quality, sustainability and whole-of-life performance;
- post-occupancy evaluation for public buildings;
- stronger client-side design capability within government.

Priority 3: Regional Procurement Access
Advocate for procurement reform that enables regional architects and smaller practices to participate in public work.
Key asks:

- unbundling of projects where appropriate;
- regional participation targets or local capability weighting;
- reasonable insurance and tender requirements;
- early market sounding with regional practices;
- transparent reporting on regional procurement outcomes.

Priority 4: Climate-Responsive Public Buildings
Advocate for sustainability and resilience to be embedded across the capital program.
Key asks:

- whole-of-life carbon assessment for public buildings;
- climate adaptation requirements in project briefs;
- passive design and operational energy targets;
- urban heat and shade requirements for public realm projects;
- adaptive reuse assessments for government assets before demolition.

Priority 5: 2032 Design Legacy
Continue Green Pathways Gold Places advocacy to ensure Olympic and Paralympic investment delivers a long-term civic and environmental legacy.
Key asks:

- a 2032 design coordination unit;
- green grid and urban forest investment across Games precincts;
- place-based planning around venues and villages;
- legacy housing outcomes from athlete villages;
- design excellence procurement for venues and public realm.

Conclusion

The 2026–27 Queensland State Budget creates a major platform for built-environment advocacy. It confirms that Queensland's growth, housing challenge, health demand, education needs, regional development and 2032 preparations will be addressed through a significant public capital program.

The Institute's opportunity is to ensure that design quality is central to this delivery agenda. The strongest advocacy position is constructive: welcome the investment, support delivery, and make the case that architects are essential to achieving better, more sustainable and more enduring outcomes for Queensland.