



Australian  
Institute of  
Architects

# DELIVERING THE 2032 GAMES



Submission to the Deputy Premier and Minister for State  
Development, Infrastructure and Planning

**QUEENSLAND CHAPTER**

Submission: June 2025





## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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The Australian Institute of Architects (the Institute) strongly supports the Queensland Government and the Games Independent Infrastructure and Coordination Authority (GIICA) in their goal to deliver a Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games that embodies community, sustainability and connection, and leaves a lasting, positive legacy.

As well as sporting and community outcomes, this vision will be realised through significant built projects — venues, villages, and transport infrastructure. The Institute identifies three key risks that threaten successful outcomes:

- Time and cost blowouts
- Poor operational performance
- Failure to deliver enduring built legacy

These risks — if unaddressed — could erode public support, damage Queensland's and the International Olympic Committee's reputations, and leave a long-term economic burden.

The Institute is here to help. Architects can play a pivotal role in assisting government to navigate delivery challenges. We are uniquely equipped to support cost-effective delivery, ensure long-term functionality, and achieve the Games' legacy ambitions.

As momentum builds, we urge the government to move quickly — but not at the expense of quality, functionality, or value. Rushed processes often result in inefficiencies, design errors, and costly variations. We recommend that the Queensland government:

### **1. EMBED IN HOUSE SENIOR ARCHITECTURAL EXPERTISE IN PROJECT GOVERNANCE AND DELIVERY**

Architects experienced in complex project delivery are urgently needed at the highest governance levels, including GIICA Board, senior management, government directorates and advisory panels. Include in-house heritage and environmental expertise — especially for sensitive precincts like Victoria Park.

### **2. EMPOWER AND EXPAND THE OFFICE OF THE STATE GOVERNMENT ARCHITECT**

Ensure this office leads procurement strategy, brief development, design integrity and governance, based on successful Sydney 2000 models. It must be significantly resourced to fulfil this expanded role.

### **3. PROCURE BASED ON VALUE, NOT LOWEST COST**

Prioritise high-performing, multidisciplinary teams accountable to client outcomes.

### **4. INVEST IN EARLY PHASES**

Allocate time and funding to detailed briefing, site planning and iterative design to reduce downstream risks and cost blowouts.

### **5. ESTABLISH AN OLYMPICS DESIGN INTEGRITY PANEL**

A multidisciplinary, independent panel should oversee design quality and alignment with Games objectives from procurement through to delivery.



**Caroline Stalker, FRAIA**

PRESIDENT, QUEENSLAND CHAPTER

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## INTRODUCTION

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The Australian Institute of Architects (the Institute) represents 2,400 architects statewide, and 14,000 nationally. Our members work on large scale projects around Australia and the world. We are made up of businesses that are solutions focused, and as a body have deep expertise in complex projects delivery.

We believe the Brisbane 2032 Olympic and Paralympic Games offers an exceptional opportunity for Queensland to showcase our innovation, prosperity and entrepreneurship to the world.

The Institute can be of great assistance to the Queensland Government and the Games Independent Infrastructure and Coordination Authority (GIICA) to chart a course through the inevitable challenges of delivering multiple venues during a time of unprecedented skills shortages and cost escalation — at no cost to the Government.

The stakes for the Games are immense — financially, socially, and politically. The community and the International Olympic Committee (IOC) expect performance and legacy: infrastructure that endures, venues that serve, villages that create lasting housing opportunities, built places that thrive.

However, with dispersed, complex projects under pressure of deadlines the risk of cost blowouts, underperformance, and diminished outcomes is high.

We want to help the Government and GIICA maintain strong community support for the Games, avoid reputational damage to Queensland and the IOC's new norms, and avoid ongoing economic burden.

**Architects are uniquely qualified to play a more pivotal role in the delivery of Olympic Infrastructure than we have seen to date.** Architects are the only professionals trained to see built projects in their entirety — from concept to completion, across cost, time, construction methods, operations, and all technical disciplines. This, as well as our members' expertise in delivering large scale complex projects, means we are in a unique position to assist in meeting the challenges ahead.

Our analysis of the primary risks and our solutions-focused strategies are outlined in this submission.





## TIME AND COST BLOWOUTS

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The risk of cost and time blowouts in the Olympic Games is significant, with studies consistently showing that most host cities exceed their initial budget and time estimates.

This is a recurring problem, driven by factors like rushed planning, changing scopes, and political pressure. The average cost overrun for Summer Games is 213%, while Winter Games average 142%.<sup>1</sup>

### STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

Engaging appropriate expertise at senior levels and implementing robust procurement processes and planning are essential to avoiding cost blowouts.<sup>2</sup>

#### EMBED IN HOUSE SENIOR ARCHITECTURAL EXPERTISE IN PROJECT GOVERNANCE AND DELIVERY

The Institute notes with concern the absence of senior architectural involvement in project governance, for example, the current GIICA Board lacks members with design, project and procurement expertise in delivering Olympic venues or mega-projects. We believe this is a critical vulnerability.

Design, project and procurement leadership must be embedded within the client body — not only within project teams — to enable informed decisions from inception to completion. The expertise that sits within the Office of the State Government Architect can be further utilised in all aspects of project establishment and delivery.

#### SELECT DELIVERY PARTNERS BASED ON VALUE, NOT JUST PRICE

Procurement should prioritise value-for-money over lowest-cost bids. High-performing delivery teams, including empowered and accountable design teams, deliver better outcomes with fewer variations and a greater capacity to navigate complex stakeholder environments.

Queensland's local design industry has the talent, experience, and contextual knowledge to deliver world-class results under pressure. These teams must be empowered through contractual arrangements that provide direct accountability to the client, not solely to the builder.

#### INVEST IN EARLY, HIGH-QUALITY TECHNICALLY ACCURATE DESIGN AND PLANNING

Cost uncertainty decreases as design certainty increases. Unrealistic design timelines lead to shortcuts and missed requirements — driving downstream blowouts. Robust early-phase design, thorough precinct integration, and iterative development must be baked into procurement strategies and project governance.

## POOR OPERATIONAL PERFORMANCE

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<sup>1</sup> Regression to the Tail: Why the Olympics Blow Up September 2020 Environment and Planning A 53(4): Flybbjerg B, Budzier, A and Lunn D

DOI:[10.1177/0308518X20958724](https://doi.org/10.1177/0308518X20958724) License [CC BY 4.0](https://creativecommons.org/licenses/by/4.0/)

<sup>2</sup> Three Ways to Avoid mega Projects Going Way Over Budget; 18 March 2024; The University of Melbourne Pursuit Business and Economics Journal by Parr, K

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Previous host cities have been left saddled with huge infrastructure projects, built at a massive cost, which are not properly briefed and designed for ‘legacy’ mode — that is, to be used beyond the Games. There are images of abandoned stadiums and empty pools in Athens and Brazil, regularly cited as modern examples of poor planning and design. These facilities provide an ongoing cost and operational burden without the ability to generate income.<sup>3</sup>

Consensus amongst researchers indicates key causes include:

- Poorly defined briefs and scopes
- Lack of operational flexibility and legacy planning
- Inadequate integration with surrounding precincts.

Given time constraints, and the need to get projects going quickly, there is a huge risk of poor long term operational performance if the projects are procured directly with contractors without well drafted briefs and contractual structures to support desired project design and project outcomes.

## STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

### EXPERTLY WRITTEN PROJECT BRIEFS

Briefs must be developed by architects with deep operational and venue design knowledge. These briefs should articulate not only spatial and technical requirements but also long-term operational modes, site conditions, and legacy use.

### PROCUREMENT THAT ENABLES, RATHER THAN SUBJUGATES, ARCHITECTURAL EXPERTISE

Formation of delivery teams which are properly structured as a partnership between contractor, client and design team, where the design team is able to provide ongoing advice to an expertly informed client and contractor to ensure all key operational, design and cost decisions assure long term venue performance.

### EXPERT REVIEW AND DESIGN OVERSIGHT

While having the correct expertise within the design team is essential, it is highly beneficial to validate designs to ensure the best possible solution is possible. The investment in proper design processes is tiny compared to the potential costs of not getting all the operations and city integration right.

We understand the Government and GIICA are currently building the resource base to deliver Olympics Infrastructure. The Institute strongly recommends that the Government and GIICA engage in-house architectural design quality expertise at a high senior organisational level and engage effectively with the Office of the State Government Architect, like the in-house expertise that was created during the delivery of the Sydney Olympic infrastructure. This team needs to be in the room for all key project decisions – sitting alongside, not beneath, financial and program governance.

## ENSURING DELIVERY OF BUILT LEGACY OUTCOMES

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<sup>3</sup> Okada, Isao, and Stephen A. Greyser. "After the Carnival: Key Factors to Enhance Olympic Legacy and Prevent Olympic Sites from Becoming White Elephants." Harvard Business School Working Paper, No. 19-019, August 2018





The Department of State Development website clearly articulates the importance of effective built legacy to deliver better places to live and work, a stronger economy and a happier society.

*“The 2032 Games will reach beyond Brisbane. Well-planned infrastructure will help South-East Queensland become an even more exciting and welcoming region. Regional Queensland will feel those effects too, thanks to investment in sports, community and transport infrastructure.”<sup>4</sup>*

These objectives involve both ‘hard’ and ‘soft’ infrastructure. In terms of the ‘hard infrastructure’, delivering high quality design is essential.

## STRATEGIES FOR SUCCESS

### EMPOWER THE OFFICE OF THE STATE GOVERNMENT ARCHITECT’S OFFICE IN PROJECT PROCUREMENT AND OVERSIGHT OF DESIGN OUTCOMES

Major projects will be heading to market rapidly. Project delivery partners will be tasked with delivering on complex promises in one of the most high-profile, time-pressured projects in a generation. (Not to mention in the context of escalating costs and a labour shortage). Without a clear design governance and coordination structure on the government side, working on behalf of Queenslanders, there’s a real risk that built legacy outcomes will be left to chance, or simply not delivered.

We are lucky to have an extremely capable team in the Office of the State Government Architect whose remit and resource surely needs to expand to a more pivotal role for these Games. This role should include working on appropriate procurement and contracting forms; preparing detailed project briefs; and providing design governance processes and oversight.

We note that from a resourcing point of view, currently the Office of the State Government Architect compares very unfavourably with those of other states. The Queensland Office has just 5 roles. South Australia has 26 roles, Victoria 15, NSW 14 +12 FTE through other departments, and WA 9 roles. Only the ACT has just 5 roles, a very small jurisdiction compared to Queensland. There is an urgent need to upscale the resource in this office, and expand their remit more formally into the Olympics delivery.

### ENSURE THE RIGHT IN-HOUSE EXPERTISE AT THE PROJECT MANAGEMENT LEVEL

Given the suspension of Planning Regulations relevant to heritage and environmental protection, it is essential that in-house heritage and environmental expertise is included as part of this team to ensure important heritage and environmental values are not destroyed, particularly in Victoria Park.

### ACCELERATE THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A DESIGN INTEGRITY PANEL

Ensuring the delivery of high-quality design that delivers all these objectives on a project of this scale doesn’t just need great designers, it needs great design governance. An overarching design governance entity — tasked with verifying design integrity across all Olympic projects — is essential to ensure the original expressed design for legacy outcomes doesn’t get lost in delivery, and that user and community expectations are met.

High design quality as a legacy outcome needs to be actively governed throughout the life of a project. The Institute strongly recommends that the Government and GIICA establish a Design Integrity Panel that is given clear terms of reference to provide advice throughout the life of the project, from tendering, establishing contract conditions, through inception to completion. We strongly recommend that this is a multidisciplinary design integrity panel has a direct link to Departments’ and GIICA

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.statedevelopment.qld.gov.au/news-and-events/building-a-lasting-legacy-infrastructure-planning-for-the-2032-olympic-and-paralympic-games>



procurement and works closely with the Office of the State Government Architect, from briefing and procurement advice all the way through project delivery.

## CONCLUSION

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Sydney, London, Barcelona all had embedded design integrity governance as part of delivery to ensure best-for-community outcomes. They didn't just build venues. They built cities that are more liveable, with improved pedestrian areas, accessibility, more public space, green space enhancement — because they put great design at the centre, not the edge, of Olympic delivery.

Queensland has the design talent, experience, and public mandate to deliver infrastructure that works — now and into the future.

However, doing so depends on embedding high level architectural expertise, design governance, early planning, and value-led procurement at the heart of Olympic delivery.

