



19 December 2025

John Harry  
Chief Executive Officer  
City of Salisbury  
34 Church Street  
Salisbury SA 5108

Sent via email: [city@salisbury.sa.gov.au](mailto:city@salisbury.sa.gov.au)

Dear John,

**Re: Lead Design Consultant Fee Proposal Request – Parafield Gardens Recreation Centre Redevelopment**

The Australian Institute of Architects (the Institute) is the peak body representing architects in Australia, with over 14,000 members nationally and approximately 1,000 members in South Australia. The Institute advocates for best-practice procurement and delivery of professional design services in order to achieve high-quality, cost-effective and durable outcomes for the community.

The Institute has been made aware of the City of Salisbury's *Lead Design Consultant Fee Proposal Request* for the Parafield Gardens Recreation Centre Redevelopment. We commend Council for its investment in a significant piece of community infrastructure and for seeking to appoint a suitably qualified lead design consultant to deliver this project.

However, the Institute wishes to raise a specific concern regarding the submission requirement that tenderers:

*"Prepare 1–2 high-level concept sketches illustrating potential layouts and elevations with a focus on innovation and functionality."*

**Request for unpaid design services**

This requirement effectively asks tenderers to undertake conceptual design work as part of the fee proposal process, without payment and outside a formal client–consultant engagement. Concept sketches that explore layout, massing, and elevation are not generic or administrative material; they constitute professional design services and intellectual property generated through the application of specialised expertise. In procurement terms, such a requirement creates a de facto design competition at the fee proposal stage.

The Institute's long-standing position is that requests for unpaid design services during procurement are inconsistent with best-practice consultant selection and expose both clients and consultants to avoidable risk. Similar concerns have previously been raised with other local government authorities

where tenders required the submission of concept designs or sketches as part of selection processes. In those instances, councils were advised that such requirements:

- devalue professional design expertise and intellectual property;
- compromise the financial viability of architectural practices, particularly small and medium practices;
- attract professional liability regardless of whether the service is paid;
- limit the quality and usefulness of design responses due to the absence of full briefing, consultation with users, and access to technical information; and
- discourage experienced and suitably qualified practices from participating, thereby reducing competition and value for money.

### **Best-practice procurement guidance**

Best-practice procurement frameworks consistently distinguish between *selection of a consultant* and *delivery of design services*. The selection stage is intended to assess capability, experience, methodology, and capacity to deliver outcomes—not to procure design solutions.

AS 4121 *Code of Ethics and Procedures for the Selection of Consultants* clearly states that a principal should not require consultants to undertake work without payment. This position is reinforced by the Institute's *Guidelines: Expressions of Interest and Requests for Tender for Architectural Services* (2019, updated 2021), which expressly advise that EOIs and RFTs should not request drawn or diagrammatic design responses. This principle is reflected in the Institute's procurement policies and in contemporary government procurement guidance, which emphasise fairness, probity, and value for money over the whole life of an asset.

Requesting conceptual design as part of a fee proposal also creates ambiguity around ownership and future use of intellectual property, and may unintentionally bias the evaluation process toward aesthetic impressions rather than a robust assessment of a consultant's ability to manage risk, coordinate complex inputs, and deliver within budget. As outlined on **page 9 (Design response)** of the Institute's *Guidelines*, the inclusion of sketches, drawings or image-based design proposals at EOI or RFT stage undermines probity, undervalues design services, and limits the ability to properly test and refine the project brief.

### **Recommended alternative approach**

To align the procurement process with best practice, the Institute recommends that Council consider the following alternatives:

1. **Remove the requirement for concept sketches** from the fee proposal stage.
2. **Assess design capability through qualitative means**, such as: – written design approach and methodology; – understanding of the project brief, constraints, and risks; – demonstrated experience on comparable projects; and – examples of *previous work* (without requiring new project-specific design).
3. **Appoint the preferred consultant first**, then procure concept design as a paid service under an agreed contract, enabling proper briefing, stakeholder engagement, and risk management.

This approach will support a broader and more competitive field of respondents, improve the quality of design outcomes, and ensure Council receives genuine value for money over the life of the facility.

**Enclosures and offer of assistance**

A copy of the *Australian Institute of Architects – Guidelines: Expressions of Interest and Requests for Tender for Architectural Services* is enclosed for Council’s information, with particular attention drawn to page 9, which addresses requests for design responses during procurement.

The Institute would welcome the opportunity to discuss this matter further and to assist the City of Salisbury in refining its procurement approach to align with recognised best practice for professional design services. Our experience working constructively with local government authorities demonstrates that small adjustments at the procurement stage can deliver materially better project outcomes.

We thank Council for considering this feedback and look forward to continued constructive engagement.

Yours sincerely,



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**Craig Glasson**  
*Executive Leader SA (interim)*  
Australian Institute of Architects

**Enclosed:** *Australian Institute of Architects – Guidelines: Expressions of Interest and Requests for Tender for Architectural Services*