



19 May 2025

SUBMISSION TO THE STATE DEVELOPMENT, INFRASTRUCTURE AND WORKS COMMITTEE
Planning (Social Impact and Community Benefit) and Other Legislation Amendment Bill
2025

The Australian Institute of Architects Queensland Chapter is deeply concerned that heritage and environmental values and safeguards are at risk if Olympic-related infrastructure is allowed to bypass standard heritage and planning laws.

We believe Olympic developments must be subject to existing Queensland laws like all other developments.

The proposed amendments to the *Brisbane Olympic and Paralympic Games Arrangements Act 2021* pose high risk to the State's reputation and to the success of the 2032 Olympic Games, as they could potentially result in the destruction of important heritage places and places with significant environmental values.

We believe additional safeguards are essential to ensure important heritage and environmental values are not destroyed, particularly in Victoria Park.

With the eyes of the world on Queensland's preparation for the 2032 Olympic Games, we welcome the creation of the Games Independent Infrastructure and Coordination Authority (GIICA), and its stated mission:

"The Authority will deliver new and upgraded venues for use before, during and long after the Games, as we work towards a more inclusive, sustainable and connected society."

These are ambitious and worthy goals; however, they can easily be eroded by poor project governance, inappropriate expertise overseeing projects, and, crucially, the absence of high quality design assurance processes, creating significant risks for Queensland.

The stakes for the Games are immense – financially, socially, and politically. The community and the International Olympic Committee expect performance and legacy, infrastructure that endures, venues that serve, and urban improvements that uplift.

Olympic infrastructure that delivers the best-value projects for the best possible public outcome, on time, on budget, and to an exceptional standard is vitally important.

That is why we implore the Queensland Government to ensure in-house expertise and design governance processes including panel reviews with heritage, environmental and other relevant expertise are introduced within the GIICA's governance and embedded in Olympics projects.

Without a structured overall design value framework, there is a real risk of white elephant legacies— projects that are underused, overbuilt, or fail to meet community expectations. Achieving high-quality design is essential, but it doesn't happen by accident. It happens through investing in the right expertise, assurance processes, and governance structure.

Time is short. Major projects will be heading to market rapidly, often via managing contractors who will brief designers further down the line. Contractors are being tasked with delivering on complex promises — connection, inclusion, sustainability — in one of the most high-profile, time-pressured projects in a generation and 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 great design will be left to chance, or simply not delivered, and that important environmental and heritage values will be lost to future generations.

A powerful, overarching design governance entity tasked with verifying design integrity across all Olympic projects is essential. It's the only way to ensure the original vision doesn't get lost in delivery. We are lucky to have an extremely capable team in the Office of the State Government Architect whose remit and resources surely need to expand to a more pivotal design governance role for these Games.

There is a deep well of exceptional local talent in our design industry in Queensland with the experience, capability and critical local knowledge to deliver world-class results even under intense time and budget pressure. They understand how to design for Queensland's climate, materials and building systems. However, they must be properly empowered and supported by a governance framework that assures delivery of public benefit design objectives from day one.

We implore the Queensland Government to adopt a design-led delivery model, with embedded peer review, independent project assurance, and design quality sitting alongside – not beneath – financial and program governance.

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

High-quality design is about achieving the best possible outcome for a project, the people it serves and the setting that it is in within defined cost and time parameters. In the context of the Olympics, design value is about spending public money wisely through careful, considered design and safeguarding our heritage and environmental values.

The evidence base for the benefits of high-quality design is strong:

- Well-designed hospitals help patients heal faster, support staff performance, recruitment and retention, and reduce operating costs.
- Well-designed schools improve student performance and support staff performance, recruitment and retention.
- Well-designed workplaces support productivity.
- Well-designed urban spaces improve wellbeing and social connectedness.¹

Delivering inclusive infrastructure means Olympic venues must be free of physical and cultural barriers, generous, welcoming, and made for everyone. Great design doesn't just remove obstacles; it creates places where people genuinely want to be. Places that reflect us, where we come together, and where we all feel we belong.

Delivering sustainable infrastructure means venues must be designed for zero carbon outcomes – smart, efficient use of resources, low-embodied energy materials, water-sensitive urban design, heat mitigation and resilient green spaces. Great design drives all of this.

Recommendations

The Australian Institute of Architects Queensland Chapter recommends:

¹ The Case for Good Design - Office of the Victorian Government Architect (<https://www.ovga.vic.gov.au/sites/default/files/2020-09/OVGA-Case-for-good-design%20%281%29.pdf>)

1. The Government should not proceed with the proposed amendments that would override heritage and environmental standards.
2. Safeguards must be introduced within the governance of projects under GIICA to protect heritage and environmental values, engaging appropriate expertise inhouse to ensure these outcomes.
3. GIICA must adopt high-design quality teams, processes and governance supported by the architectural profession to ensure Olympic infrastructure delivers lasting, high-value outcomes for Queensland and Australia.
4. A Design Integrity Panel should be established with clear terms of reference to provide advice throughout the life of the project, from tendering, and establishing contract conditions, through inception to completion. The panel should:
 - be a multidisciplinary, independent design excellence panel comprising representatives of architecture, landscape architecture, urban design, heritage, sustainability, pedestrian and transport planning/modelling, environmental management and cost risk.
 - have a direct link to GIICA procurement and work closely with the Office of the State Government Architect, from briefing, and procurement advice through project delivery.



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