

Comment – Association of Consulting Architects

Comment

Summary – Six Things Queensland Must Do (extract for ACA QLDNT Submission)

1. Modernise government procurement – adopt quality-based selection, longer tender windows, and simplified documentation.
>Cuts wasted bid effort, lets firms focus on design excellence, and reduces downstream re-work.
2. Fix contracts & insurance – use standard AS 4122 terms, ban unlimited liability, and stabilise PI insurance with a government-backed risk pool.
>Removes hidden “risk premiums”, encourages more bidders, and supports innovation without fear of litigation.
3. Invest in people – create apprenticeships, paid architectural cadetships and continuous professional development (CPD).
>Closes the skills gap, keeps talent in the industry, and boosts capability to use digital tools.
4. Embrace technology – fund AI/BIM pilot projects, set open data standards, and give SMEs grants to adopt digital workflows.
>Global studies show AI-enabled teams deliver projects up to 30 % faster with 10-15 % cost savings.
5. Embed safety & quality – require lifecycle-cost analysis, independent site inspectors, and clear designer sign-off for high-risk buildings.
> “Doing it right first time” avoids billion-dollar rectification bills and tragedies like Grenfell tower fire.
6. Robust Scope Definition – include architects and related design professionals to develop robust, well defined project scope.
>Reduce abortive work. Identify design risks with experts that know projects. Align expectations with deliverables. Establish realistic budgets to reduce surprises.



Ms Angela Moody
Chair, Queensland Productivity Commission
Level 27, 145 Ann Street
BRISBANE QLD 4000

30 May 2025

Dear Ms Moody

We are pleased to present the Association of Consulting Architects (ACA) – Queensland/Northern Territory Branch submission on **Improving Productivity in the Queensland Construction Sector**.

The ACA is Australia's peak body for architectural businesses, representing 850 firms nationally and 145 in Queensland, with a combined staff of over 8,500 professionals. Our members design projects that generate billions in construction activity annually.

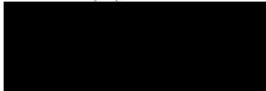
As the profession responsible for coordinating design teams, managing project delivery, and ensuring technical compliance, architects are well positioned to identify and implement productivity improvements across the entire construction supply chain.

We welcome the Commission's productivity focus and believe our proposed reforms will deliver:

- **Significant productivity gains** through improved procurement, fairer risk allocation and digital innovation
- **Enhanced public safety and building quality**, incorporating lessons from the Grenfell Tower Inquiry
- **Future-ready workforce development** via skills investment, technology adoption and workforce wellbeing
- **National leadership positioning** for Queensland in design and construction innovation

We welcome the opportunity to elaborate on our submission through public hearings or working groups and look forward to continued engagement with the Queensland Productivity Commission.

Yours faithfully


Brett Hudson
ACA QLD/NT President

Adam Perrier
ACA QLD/NT Advocacy Spokesperson

Attachment – ACA – Improving Productivity in the Queensland Construction Sector



Improving Productivity in the Queensland Construction Sector

Executive Summary – Six Things Queensland Must Do

#	Action	Why it Lifts Productivity & Public Value
1	Modernise government procurement – adopt quality-based selection, longer tender windows, and simplified documentation.	Cuts wasted bid effort, lets firms focus on design excellence, and reduces downstream re-work.
2	Fix contracts & insurance – use standard AS 4122 terms, ban unlimited liability, and stabilise PI insurance with a government-backed risk pool.	Removes hidden “risk premiums”, encourages more bidders, and supports innovation without fear of litigation.
3	Invest in people – create apprenticeships, paid architectural cadetships and continuous professional development (CPD).	Closes the skills gap, keeps talent in the industry, and boosts capability to use digital tools.
4	Embrace technology – fund AI/BIM pilot projects, set open data standards, and give SMEs grants to adopt digital workflows.	Global studies show AI-enabled teams deliver projects up to 30 % faster with 10-15 % cost savings.
5	Embed safety & quality – require lifecycle-cost analysis, independent site inspectors, and clear designer sign-off for high-risk buildings.	“Doing it right first time” avoids billion-dollar rectification bills and tragedies like Grenfell tower fire.
6	Robust Scope Definition – include architects and related design professionals to develop robust, well defined project scope.	Reduce abortive work. Identify design risks with experts that know projects. Align expectations with deliverables. Establish realistic budgets to reduce surprises.



Industry Context

About the ACA

- ACA QLDNT represents close to **145 Queensland & NT architectural businesses** employing **1,300+ staff**, from sole operators to national firms.
- We provide policy input, industrial relations representation, and business resources for architectural businesses.
- We partner closely with other industry representative organisations and agencies including Australian Institute of Architects, Consult Australia, the Office of the Queensland Government Architect and the Board of Architects of Queensland.

The Productivity Challenge in Plain Language

- **Flat for 20 years:** construction output per worker has not grown since the early 2000s.
- **Big pipeline:** 1 million new homes by 2044 + Olympic infrastructure = unprecedented demand.
- **Cost blow-outs:** material prices ↑35 % post-COVID; labour shortages push wages up; contractor insolvencies rising.
- **Design squeeze:** tender timeframes shrinking; fees discounted below sustainable levels; rushed documentation → cost overruns on site.
- **Bottom line:** Queensland cannot build faster or cheaper unless **systems** (procurement, contracts, skills, tech, regulation) improve.

How Procurement Drives (or Destroys) Productivity

Current Issue	Impact	Solution
2-week tender windows for architectural engagements & "Christmas Eve" releases	Staff work overtime, cut quality, or abstain, supports wellbeing in business	Set minimum 4-week tender periods and a December–January blackout
30+ bidders for mid-size jobs	Industry wastes \$millions on losing bids	Use two-stage - EOI → shortlist 3 rule
Lowest-fee wins	Under-resourced design, more variations later	Weight quality ≥ 70% in evaluation
Bespoke contracts with unlimited liability	Fewer bidders, higher premiums, defensive practice	Adopt un-amended AS 4122 ; cap liability at 2× fee



Detailed Recommendations (Numbered for Action)

1. Procurement

- a. Amend QPP to require **two-stage** EOI/shortlist for **design tenders**.
- b. Publish a **Professional Services Fee Guidance** note annually.
- c. Ensure **architects are involved in developing design and technical briefs** for all major projects.

2. Contracts & Risk

- a. Mandate **un-amended AS 4122** and **cap consultant liability** on state projects.
- b. Establish a standing **Contracts Advisory Panel** by Q4 2025.
- c. Offer **Government Professional Liability backstop** for cladding/high-risk façades until the commercial market stabilises.
- d. **Mandate Alternative Dispute Resolution (ADR) first** – mediation before litigation.

3. Workforce & Skills

- a. Fund 200 **architectural cadetships** over 3 years.
- b. Provide \$5m per year for Construction **Digital Skills** grants.
- c. Tie state contracts > \$5m to a **wellbeing** charter and certified CPD plans.
- d. **Develop diversity targets** – scholarships for women, First Nations and regional students.

4. Technology & Innovation

- a. Launch a \$20m "**Construction AI Challenge**" fund.
- b. Require **IFC-BIM deliverables** on new state projects from 1 January 2027.
- c. Partner with CSIRO to create an open **construction data** platform.
- d. **Provide \$25k SME tech vouchers** for small firms to adopt AI/BIM tools.

5. Regulatory Reform

- a. **Implement one-stop digital planning lodgement** with statutory decision times.
- b. **Maintain building code standards** but provide 12-month transition windows.
- c. **Fast-track mutual recognition** for skilled interstate/overseas professionals.
- d. **Fund QBCC random audits** and create public register of non-conforming products.

6. Safety & Quality

- a. Legislate **Principal Architect sign-off** for Class 2-9 buildings > 4 storeys.
- b. Fund 20 **independent Clerks-of-Works** through a QBCC register.
- c. **Enforce** mandatory building manuals and digital handover on completion.
- d. **Mandate non-combustible façades** on Class 2 buildings > 3 storeys. Doing it right once is cheaper than re-cladding 400 buildings.

The above are specific, actionable recommendations that the government can implement in partnership industry to directly to address productivity, improve outcomes and enhance safety.



Conclusion

Productivity gains will come from **better systems, not harder labour**. By adopting the reforms outlined, Queensland can:

- Deliver projects **faster and better value** without sacrificing quality.
- Strengthen the **professional capability** of the entire supply chain.
- Protect the public through **robust safety and risk governance**.
- Position Queensland as a **national leader** in construction innovation.

The ACA has an informed, experienced leadership team with engaged membership ready to assist the Commission and Government in turning these recommendations into actions to improve productivity in the delivery of buildings and infrastructure in Queensland.