

JURY EVALUATION AND COMMENT

INTRODUCTION

The following notes represent a summary of the jury evaluation process and comment. This necessarily represents a portion of a much larger body of discussion and review conducted over two full days of evaluation. This process was observed by both the Competition Adviser and the Probity Adviser who commend the jury for the high-level of probity followed throughout the evaluation process.

It is noted that this evaluation process was conducted in full accordance with the Competition Conditions, in particular with regards the evaluation of both the 3 team capability criteria and the 10 design criteria, as outlined within clauses 3.71 and 3.72 respectively. It is also noted that the jury reviewed all 75 submissions, with no lodged submissions having been deemed ineligible.

GENERAL

The jury was impressed by the diversity and range of design responses from the 75 submissions received. Given the complexity of the Design Brief and the scale of opportunity, the jury appreciated that many submissions prioritized high-level strategic response over design detail at this stage in the competition. As such, a number of recurrent themes were evident and became frequent talking points with the jury over the course of the two-day evaluation. These related to; the relationship between landscape and built form, the desire for a project with a strong identity yet capable of transformation over time, and a need to respond to several fundamental site constraints.

The most notable aspect of this competition and what marks it out from other design competitions, is the scale and quality of the site's landscape. With 11 hectares allocated for the cultural precinct and another 6 hectares set aside for partnership development to the west of the site, design responses to circulation, wayfinding and sightlines, along with the technical challenges associated with large-scale land forming and extensive hardscaping became a significant differentiator between submissions. Many successfully responded to these unique challenges and opportunities provided by the site's landscape. Others appear to have misunderstood the site's scale. While the jury appreciated the difficulty of responding to a Brief remotely, for those competitors who are unfamiliar with Evandale, it was unfortunate that some had failed to grasp this fundamental aspect of the Brief.

Some submissions proposed significant and expressive land forming. While the jury embraced the transformational possibility of such proposals, it was also cautious about the practical implications that these raised. The use of extensive artificial ground planes was thought to be problematic in those submissions that did not adequately communicate the quality of space below ground, as well as such pragmatic considerations such as the need for extensive balustrades and other measures to ensure safety in the case where raised ground planes were to be trafficable. Many such propositions, while producing dramatic visual effect, failed to adequately account for the realities of ensuring safety within a high-traffic pedestrian public area.

As emphasised in the Brief, the site has the potential to be a world-class sub-tropical garden. Particularly within a local context that includes areas of high density and intensely developed urban landscape, the potential for this site to be a lush urban oasis is one of the competition's key aspirations. As such, the jury supported those submissions that fully exploited this opportunity, through the preservation and enhancement of the site's overall verdant landscape and engagement with water bodies, including strategic opportunities to activate and program this valuable outdoor space.

The jury was very conscious of the site's flood map, with the impact development might have on flood behaviour and immunity of assets from risk of inundation. Most submissions responded to this consideration with great care, but some presented design proposals which, while highly commendable in other areas, were fatally flawed in their response to the very real risks of flooding, either in their placement of key built elements or in their altering of the landscape.

The jury understood that at this early stage it was unreasonable to expect a high degree of design detail regarding architectural elements. Many submissions limited their response to articulating a site plan and establishing the general scope of new buildings, scale and relationships among the components. In some instances where a sculptural architectural intent was expressed, the jury was concerned that such design was at best premature or at worst superficial. The jury was not supportive of those responses where figural architectural gestures failed to translate into volumetric forms, appearing instead to be little more than token design.

One important architectural quality that the jury was able to evaluate at this stage related to the relationship between interior and exterior spaces. The Brief repeatedly notes the importance of creating new interfaces between outdoor and indoor and the careful curation of these thresholds. The jury paid close attention to this objective which, in turn related to such considerations as the nature and extent of shelter provided across the site, and the overall quality of climatic response, particularly for outdoor areas. The jury was particularly supportive of submissions that explicitly sought to mediate these thresholds in creative and innovative ways.

A distinct but related matter concerned the extent to which submissions responded to the digital potential of the site. Understanding that a response to the functional elements of the cultural precinct's Core Capital Components will be more fully explored in Stage 2, the jury were nonetheless disappointed that few competitors appeared to recognise in their Stage 1 response the potential for digital media delivery of the cultural program within both proposed built form and future landscape. With the dynamic changes taking place in audience engagement and participation in cultural programming, the jury supported those submissions that sought to embed such digital opportunity at the very early stages of design intent.

In the general disposition of built forms, the jury noted the design response of many submissions fell into one of three categories of built form: fragmented/scattered, centralised cluster or 'big roof'. To the extent that each strategy held its own design potential, the question of staged development became a recurrent consideration for the jury. The Brief states that the precinct may be delivered over some time, and in an extended sequence. Therefore the jury were concerned by those responses that proposed either too monolithic a form or too fragmented. In the event of staged delivery, the former posed a significant challenge to deliver in part, while the later would likely struggle to establish the precinct's identity if partially delivered. In the end the jury supported design responses that sought to mediate between extremes and that provided the capacity to establish a strong precinct identity early, yet also created opportunities to expand and evolve over time.

Another aspect that was carefully considered by the jury relates to the decision by competitors to retain, or not, existing buildings on the site. While the competition provided the opportunity for each competitor to decide which (if any) buildings to retain, and how to deploy these retained buildings, the jury considered it important that each submission argued its case carefully, mindful of the balance to be struck between economic and environmental considerations and the overall needs of the site and precinct. While many design responses found innovative ways to reuse existing stock, it was also recognised that this was not always the most effective use of the overall site. In some responses the removal of existing buildings did not appear adequately argued through the logic of the proposed replacement buildings.

Considering the site's location within the Gold Coast, the jury noted a number of important urban design challenges. Given the scale of the precinct the jury was keenly aware of the need for future development to provide clarity within its site plan. The jury was particularly attracted to submissions that mediated thresholds from busy street to cultural precinct and through to a lush sub-tropical landscape.

Such passage was understood as important both in terms of its experiential potential, and its practical ramifications for public entry and egress and the servicing of facilities within the precinct. The jury was particularly aware of the logistical challenges that need to be resolved in relation to both the arrival of visitors to the site by various modes and pick-up and delivery logistics associated with cultural buildings such as theatres and galleries.

A key challenge in relation to both foot traffic and surface vehicle approach is the need to respond to bottle-necks that are likely to occur with event-based building programs. In some submissions it was

not clear how potentially thousands of visitors could arrive and depart safely and efficiently at times of high volume visitor numbers.

Theatres and galleries bring with them specific operational and logistical challenges, which can be supported by or hindered by the design of both the buildings themselves and their setting. The jury did not expect submissions to fully resolve such issues in Stage 1, however a number of submissions were assessed by the jury to be schematically problematic with regards both visitor and servicing access.

Another important design consideration by the jury relates to view lines and urban setting. The site's position, directly overlooking the impressive coastal skyline to the east and distant mountain skyline to the west, provides a great opportunity to dramatise the relationship between the precinct and its wider geography. The jury favoured submissions that provided opportunities to enhance visual appreciation of the wider city.

Considering the importance of overall site strategy the jury gave stronger support to submissions that addressed the relationship between Site A and Site B as well as other adjacencies, particularly to the bridge and Chevron Island and to the busy high-traffic zone along Bundall Road.

The ability for Council to appropriately capitalise on the opportunities within Site B represents an important part of the project's viability. The extent to which a design response to Site A promotes or inhibits such opportunities was an important factor in the jury's selection of shortlisted teams. Design strategies that presented options to effectively mitigate the traffic impact of Bundall Road on the precinct, along with enhancement of the precinct's setting to the west of the site were particularly favoured by the jury.

In determining their shortlist the jury also evaluated each submission's team capacity against the three team criteria as set out in the Competition Conditions. The important role of the site's landscape and urban setting make this as much a landscape design challenge as an architectural one, and this much was reflected in the team composition of the majority of submissions received. The jury was impressed by the multidisciplinary nature of most proposed design teams, however, some submissions failed to demonstrate the understanding that complex projects like this benefit from a collaborative array of specialist design inputs.

Local content was encouraged but not mandatory in the Competition Conditions, but the jury welcomed the extent to which competition teams included design practices and individual members who evidently know and understand the site's location and the wider character of the Gold Coast. The Brief emphasizes the need for the precinct to capture the spirit and urban character of the Gold Coast, and in submissions that successfully achieved this, the jury recognised the part played by those team members who understand and have close affiliation to the Gold Coast.

In making their final determination the jury was confident that the two sets of criteria, both design intent and team capability, were suitably evaluated and appropriately measured. The shortlisted competitors were selected following an extensive process of discussion, evaluation and elimination. The jury acknowledges that of its final shortlist, all three submissions combined a high level of design intent and team capability.

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