

Melbourne uni architecture building hits briefing stage

■ **SHORTLISTED FIRMS FOR UNI PROJECT TAKE CAMPUS TOUR**

BY GEMMA BATTENBOUGH

One of Victoria's most exciting projects, the University of Melbourne's new architecture building, is hitting the next stage of the competition process as the faculty today briefs the six-strong shortlist of architectural firms.

Today's full-day meeting will include a campus tour, briefing session, virtual site visit, meeting with academic and professional staff and meeting with students.

The university confirmed that the briefing will be attended by all the shortlisted teams, including McBride Charles Ryan, Denton Corker Marshall, Sauerbruch Hutton with NH Architecture, KoningEizenberg with William J Mitchell and Gehry Technologies, John Wardle Architects and Office dA, and Diller Scofidio + Renfro with BVN Architecture.

The teams will be given information on the campus and existing architecture building, and asked to respond to the criteria of design, quality, value and design



and delivery capacity, in their final designs and presentations to be given in August.

The university is hailing the project a "once-in-a-lifetime" opportunity to showcase design and innovation, and it anticipates a six-star Green Star rating. The resulting design, it says, will provide an excellent working environment to encourage high quality research, teaching and learning.

The new 18,000sq m building will consist of educational facilities for staff and students, on the site of the current Architecture and Old Commerce buildings.

The commissioned firm will have to take into account the heritage value of these buildings, including murals, stained glass windows, sculptures and statues.

The budget is approximately AU\$90 million for construction and fitout, plus consultant fees. While the university has stumped up a major portion of this sum, the remaining funding is currently being sought from federal, state, and private sources.

Construction is anticipated to commence in early 2011, with an anticipated completion date of 2013.

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Recovery promised for sick buildings

A NEW Green Star rating tool created especially for the healthcare sector will help reduce the environmental impact of healthcare buildings, improve patient outcomes and staff productivity, as well as achieving real cost savings and adding value, according to the Green Building Council of Australia (GBCA).

Robin Mellon, the GBCA's Green Star executive director, said the move towards green and

healthy buildings is consistent with a growing body of research, which suggests that green healthcare facilities improve patient outcomes and reduce health risks to staff.

"International studies include a case study at the Mackenzie Health Sciences Centre in Canada, which found that depressed patients in sunny rooms recovered 15 per cent faster than those in darker rooms," Mellon said.

A study at Bronson Methodist Hospital in Michigan found that green design principles such as increased daylight, rooms with external views, more fresh air and better quality ventilation systems, as well as using more natural materials with fewer pollutants in its redevelopment project led to an 11 per cent reduction in secondary infections and a decrease in nursing turnover rates to less than 7 per cent.

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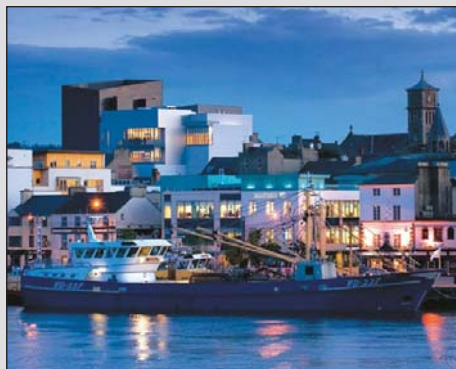
Architectural Record has launched its Top 250 Firms list and it can reveal that – recession or no recession – last year the total architecture revenue for all firms on the list gained nearly 9 per cent over 2007 figure, rising from a total of \$11.5 billion to \$12.5 billion. However, to pop the champagne would be a false celebration the magazine points out, because a recession never hits architectural firms uniformly. “Headaches for architects who work in the hospital and education markets may have been more psychosomatic than not so far, but few were spared them,” says AR.

|| SCOTLAND

Scottish firm RMJM has won the \$613 (£300) million athletes’ village for the 2014 Commonwealth Games in Glasgow. The village will accommodate 8,000 athletes and officials during the event, with further housing being built on the site after the games. The athletes’ accommodation will also be refurbished to create family housing. Construction is expected to start in autumn 2010. The firm was also recently named planning consultant on the delivery of key venues for next year’s Commonwealth Games in Delhi.

|| IRELAND

Royal Institute of Architects in Ireland has announced its big architecture awards and O’Donnell & Tuomey, BDP, Grafton Architects and Keith Williams Architects and Office of Public Works in Ireland are among the well-known recipients. The prizes were presented by John Gormley, minister for the environment, heritage and local government, to buildings that were completed in 2008. The award for the best cultural building went to Wexford Opera House (pictured below), by Keith Williams and the OPW, which has already won an RIBA Europea 2009 Award.



|| UNITED STATES

The AIA Architecture Billings Index shows the rapid recovery seen two months’ ago has begun to slow. After rocketing from a near-record low of 35.3 in February, billings hit 43.7 in March, however, they have remained close to that mark since. Although well above the historic low of 33.3 the index hit in January, billings are also well below the break-even point of 50, at which firms’ payments are increasing instead of decreasing.

|| AUSTRALIA

Archicentre, the building advisory service of the Australian Institute of Architects, has announced that Robert Caulfield will move from being managing director to taking on a new role coordinating communications and special projects. Caulfield was responsible for the concept of Archicentre 31 years’ ago. Commenting on his new position, Caulfield said he looks forward to increasing Archicentre’s public relations output and continuing to build its role of providing housing pre-purchase inspections, renovation designs and consumer information to Australian home owners.

Housing industry heavyweight steps down

AFTER NEARLY 30 years, Housing Industry Association (HIA) managing director Ron Silberberg yesterday announced that he is retiring from the role on 30 November.

Silberberg is handing over the helm to current deputy managing director Shane Goodwin, who has been in his current role for more than 10 years.

The HIA was in “a very strong position”, despite the economic climate and Goodwin’s succession was a positive thing for the industry group.

“I am delighted that Shane Goodwin will be succeeding me as managing director.

Shane has been very much a part of HIA’s succession plan and his appointment will ensure that HIA can look forward with confidence,” Silberberg said.

“Ron has been a driving force, leader and a voice for the home building industry for nearly three decades

and his achievements for members and the community are too numerous to list,” Jill Lee, the HIA’s national president, said

Silberberg was heavily involved in major housing policy initiatives, including taxation reform, immigration, housing affordability measures, first home buyers’ assistance, social housing initiatives and environmental programs.

“Most recently Ron was instrumental in advocating for the federal government to introduce its Nation Building Economic Stimulus Program, which contained extensive stimulus measures for the home building industry though the expansion of Australia’s social housing stock,” Lee said.

Silberberg has accepted an invitation to remain on HIA’s National Board of Directors after his retirement.

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