

The Government Architect's Office



***The OVGA acknowledge the traditional
Aboriginal owners of country throughout
Victoria. We deeply respect their
continuing connection and custodianship
of country, and undertake to act with
similar regard for place.***

Design Leadership

The Office of the Victorian Government Architect (OVGA) works with all government departments to achieve long term community value for Victoria's capital projects. We advise and advocate for high quality in all types of public buildings and spaces.

Our independent voice continues to remind government that 'design as legacy' helps define Victoria as a place that is vibrant, economically thriving, healthy, sustainable, loved by its citizens, great to live in and visit.

We have significant responsibility to ensure change in our built environment is never dictated purely by economics, but is always overlaid by deep considerations about the quality and long term impact of the places we build, and concern for the community for whom we build.

Our guidance helps steer Victoria towards outcomes in our built environment that have, or will, become part of the heart and soul of our state.



Jill Garner AM

Victorian Government Architect



Good Design

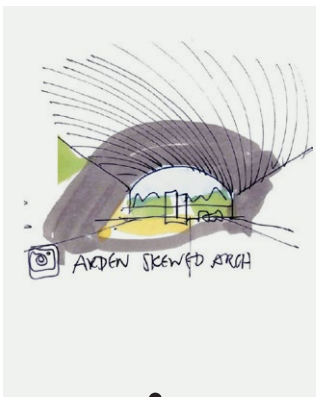
We all value inspiring places - places that embody Good Design. These are the places in our community that:

- work well and can adapt over time
- are engaging, diverse and inclusive
- promote confidence, health and well-being in the community
- are culturally rich and delightful
- are environmentally and socially sustainable
- are resilient in a changing climate and champion the necessary path to zero emissions
- have lasting financial value.

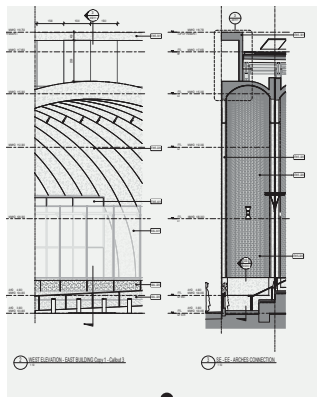
Such positive outcomes can only be achieved if smart design decisions are made early on and consistently throughout a project.

The OVGA arms leaders and decision-makers with the necessary insights and confidence to pursue high-quality design outcomes for the community.

The design evolution of Arden station was supported by the OVGA, ensuring the initial concept was delivered.



Vision



Design Concept



Construction

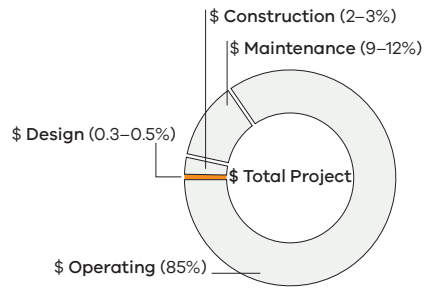
Getting There

Early Involvement

The impact of OVGA's advice depends on its timing. As a guiding principle, the earlier advice is sought, the greater the positive influence this advice can have on achieving good design outcomes. This is particularly important for project ambition, sustainable design and functionality.

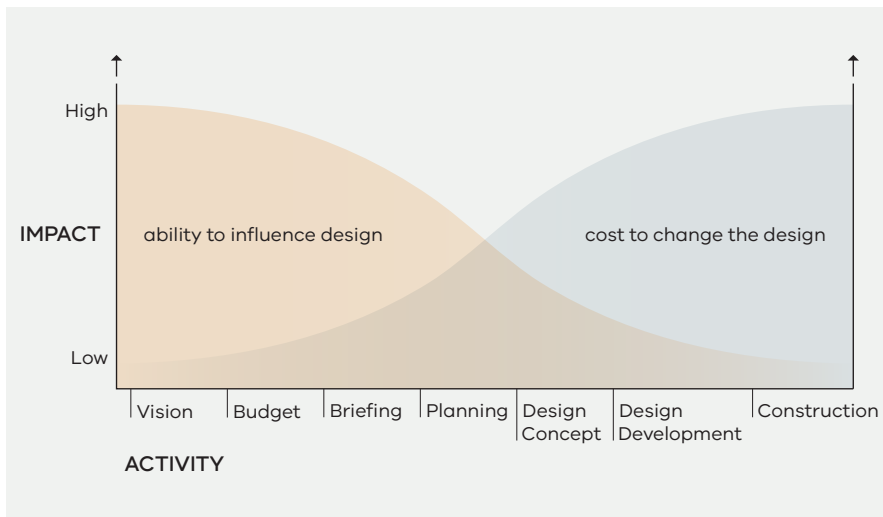
Building OVGA into the process

From concept design through to procurement, consistent and iterative design reviews ensure quality is sustained throughout all project stages. OVGA's expert advice needs to be integrated into the delivery program at key touch points to ensure the value to the project can be maximised.



Did you know?

The design phase of a project typically costs less than a half percent of total project costs but can save significantly more over the project's life cycle.



Advice

The OVGA advises ministers, state government departments, agencies and local government on how to practically improve design outcomes for specific projects, capital works programs or broader planning initiatives.

The OVGA also offers advice on the development of business cases, feasibility studies, project scope and briefs.



Full scale demonstration of exemplary 'Future Homes' apartments. Images: OVGA

The OVGA helps government to:

- make design an important part of the decision making process
- challenge poor design and understand its implications
- demand and articulate good design outcomes and how to get there.

We engage with government project teams in diverse ways, including:

- formal design review of projects via the Victorian Design Review Panel (VDRP)
- dedicated design review embedded within government project teams
- workshops to inform project requirements and solutions
- contributing advice for reports authored by other government departments.

Advice includes:

- project definition and vision
- briefing, business cases and procurement
- pre-planning and planning review
- masterplan design review
- concept design review
- design development review
- post-occupancy evaluations.

Support for Department of Planning and the Minister for Planning:

- reviewing significant projects pre-planning
- identifying benefits, disbenefits, challenges and opportunities of proposals
- supporting DTP and the Minister for Planning in negotiations and decision making
- advice on policy and city strategies.

Advocacy

The OVGA promotes the value of good design and design culture within government. The office helps establish integrated and consistent design procurement and quality assurance that make government a smart client. Practically, this can take the form of workshops within government, developing guidelines for design professionals or making a case for good design for specific sectors.

The OVGA can tailor design review and collaboration to the specific needs projects. This can assist in understanding how the design of a hospital can enable better patient care, how school environments can enhance student learning or how our streets can encourage more active lifestyles.

The OVGA publishes 'Good Design' guides for specific sectors such as health and education. It also promotes the value of good design to a broad audience through public events and celebrating best practice and design achievements.

We advocate for design in a variety of ways:

- supporting design competition briefs and evaluations
- supporting demonstration projects
- describing how to achieve good design in a variety of publications
- speaking at public, industry and educational design events.

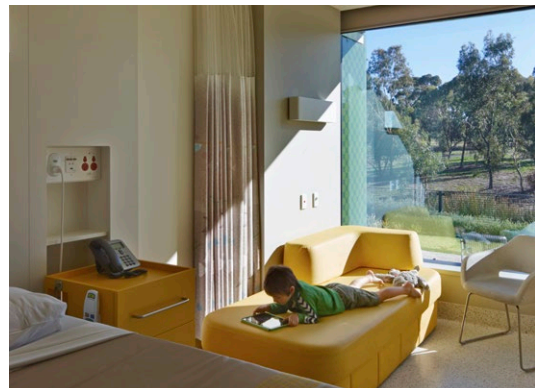
Examples of our advocacy work include:

- 'Case for Good Design' publication
- 'Government as Smart Client' publication
- the Good Design publication series
- NGV Contemporary competition
- the 'Future Homes' initiative.

'I found OVGA's support of great value to help articulate the State's design aspirations, provide feedback to the design teams as the design was developed, and ensure that design integrity and quality was maintained through delivery.'

Tony Lubofsky

Project Director, Royal Children's Hospital,
Department of Health



Royal Children's Hospital by Bates Smart and Billard Leece. Photography: Peter Bennetts

Victorian Design Review Panel



The OVGA's Victorian Design Review Panel (VDRP) comprises experts in architecture, urban design, landscape architecture and planning, and specialists in sustainability, accessibility, health, place making, heritage and art. These include:

- Directors, Principals
- Professors, Adjunct Professors
- Gold Medallists, Life Fellows, Fellows of the Australian Institute of Architects
- Members, Order of Australia

Design Review is held for significant projects and helps identify challenges, risks and opportunities. It is constructive and aims to assist with the practical improvement of projects. For some complex ongoing projects a design quality team (DQT) may be convened to provide continuity of panel members.

The benefits of design review:

- independent expert peer review
- improved design outcomes
- testing of ideas and options with experienced, multi-disciplinary experts
- expedited decisions
- confidence to stakeholders and decision-makers.

Our Impact

Independently evaluated

In 2021 the OVGA was independently evaluated by SGS Economics for its impact 2018-21. Client surveys indicated that the OVGA has 'greatly progressed' or 'greatly improved the design quality' of projects. These projects had a combined value of approximately \$17.5 billion.

Survey responses and stakeholder interviews found that clients believe firmly that the OVGA contributes to better design outcomes through the following means:

- Contributing to good design outcomes and improved progression of projects
- Supporting fair and transparent procurement processes
- Supporting good decision-making and planning approval
- Setting up projects for success (good design governance)
- Valuing diverse perspectives
- Providing an independent voice
- Offering design expertise and gravitas
- Building skills through knowledge-sharing.

'Moreover, all (100 per cent) OVGA clients reported that they were 'likely' or 'very likely' to use the OVGA services again'

SGS Economics (2021)

452

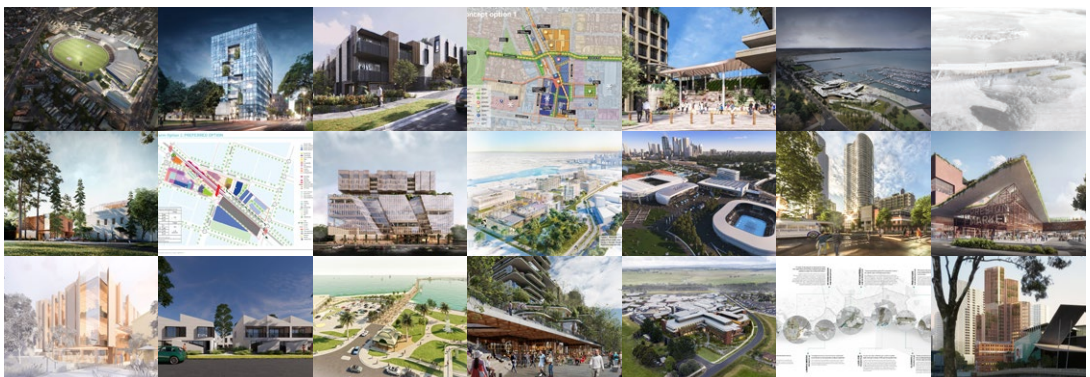
ENGAGEMENTS

187

PROJECTS

315

PIECES OF ADVICE



The OVGA reviews a large range of significant projects at various design stages.

Case Studies

SECTOR

Housing

CLIENT

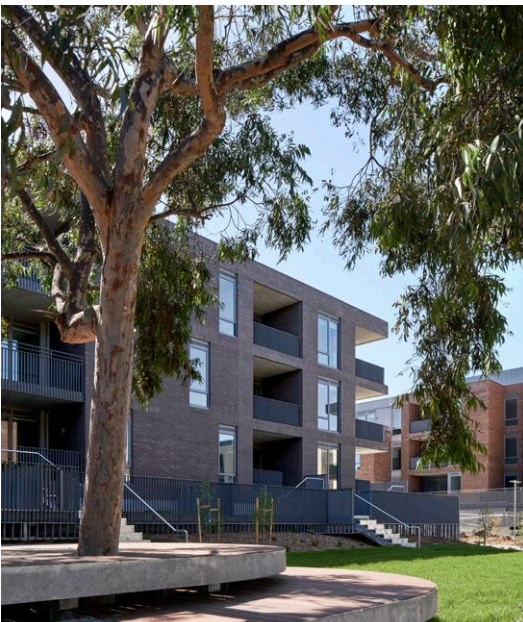
Homes Victoria

DESIGN CONSULTANTS

Architectus, MALA

YEAR

2022



Photographer: Peter Clarke

MARKHAM AVENUE HOUSING

The redevelopment of Marham Avenue replaces 56 no longer fit for purpose public housing dwellings, with 178 modern, expertly designed, energy efficient social and affordable homes. The landscape-led development takes advantage of the sloping site and existing vegetation and optimises the connection between people and nature.

OVGA contribution

The OVGA provided significant input into the objectives, principles and sustainability targets of the government's housing program. The VDRP reviewed this project four times in various design phases, including masterplan, architecture, landscape architecture and internal planning. Recommendations for improvements included:

- Site arrangement, massing and density
- Prioritising tree retention and landscape
- Optimising circulation and basement car parking
- Supporting daylight, attractive stairs and visual connection to the outside
- Accessibility and intuitive way-finding
- Optimising apartment layouts and improving functional spatial arrangements.
- Support for simple, robust materials

Homes Victoria and Architectus adopted the OVGA's expert advice resulting in a successful project that sets a new benchmark for social and affordable housing.

FUTURE HOMES

Delivering on Plan Melbourne and part of the Better Apartments program, Future Homes supports the delivery of healthy, comfortable, and sustainable apartment buildings through a streamlined planning process.

Future Homes feature high-quality, competition-winning designs with excellent environmental performance. The designs are family-friendly and accommodate ageing-in-place. The designs prioritise communal and private green open space.

SECTOR

Housing

CLIENT

Department of Transport and Planning

DESIGN CONSULTANTS

Design Strategy Architecture with IncluDesign, LIAN, McGregor Westlake Architecture, Spiral Architects Lab

YEAR

2022

OVGA contribution

In partnership with the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP) the OVGA provided strategic input and leadership on design and procurement:

- Co-development of design brief
- Research into applicable zoning and sites
- Sustainability targets and benchmarks
- Competition jury chair
- Design management and refinement, including feasibility, buildability and amenity
- VDRP design reviews
- Co-design of the planning process and planning and adaptation guidance
- Advocacy and engagement with local government to commit to the pilot program

The OVGA continues to collaborate with DTP in the implementation of the pilot program and to explore the application of the Future Homes model to other housing types and settings.



Concept Image: McGregor Westlake

METRO TUNNELS AND STATIONS

Melbourne Metro is a city-shaping project. A new cross-city rail tunnel delivers five new stations, two new integrated over-station developments, and two tunnel portals. This vital new public transport infrastructure will be carefully integrated into the public realm improving access to public transport and enhancing places.

SECTOR

Transport

CLIENT

Rail Projects Victoria

DESIGN CONSULTANTS

RSHP, Hassell, Weston Williamson

YEAR

2023



Photography: OVGA

OVGA contribution

The OVGA has supported the Major Transport Infrastructure Authority (MTIA), Rail Projects Victoria (RPV) and several departments throughout all project stages – from reference design to construction. A dedicated Principal Advisor has provided expert independent design review and advice, in close collaboration with RPV, ensuring the value of high-quality design is understood, supported and sustained.

As part of an Urban and Architecture Advisory Panel (UDAAP), chaired by the Victorian Government Architect, the OVGA has also provided independent design review for the Minister of Planning at all key approval stages.

The OVGA's involvement has supported the delivery of the project's world-class ambitions including:

- Strengthening of the architectural design before the award of contract ensuring the project would meet its ambitions for building on the State's reputation for design excellence
- Independent design review at key planning stages of a very complex project gave the Planning Minister confidence that a high-quality ultimate built outcome could be achieved
- Retaining and enhancing the quality of the architecture during an intensive value engineering process that resolved several material and constructability issues
- Advocating for the involvement of the lead architects in the construction stages which has improved build quality and supported the efficient resolution of design issues on site.



Photography: Peter Clarke

LEVEL CROSSING REMOVAL STATION STREET, CARRUM

The level crossing at Station Street was removed with trains now travelling along elevated rail and stopping at the new Carrum Station. A new direct connection from McLeod Road to Nepean Highway has opened underneath, creating safer connections for pedestrians and cyclists moving from neighbourhoods to the station and foreshore.

Communities are now better connected along and across the rail corridor to 22 km of continuous shared path networks, Patterson River, and the new Carrum foreshore park. The project received the Australian Institute of Architects 2021 Joseph Reed Award for Urban Design.

SECTOR

Transport

CLIENT

Level Crossing Removal Project

DESIGN CONSULTANTS

Rush Wright Associates, Cox

YEAR

2020

OVGA contribution

The OVGA advocated to LXP that an elevated rail solution could make a positive contribution to the Carrum precinct and adjacent neighbourhoods through high quality design.

A dedicated OVGA Principal Advisor chaired the LXP Urban Design Advisory Panel (UDAP) to champion and guide the design quality through all stages of planning and construction and achieve high quality integrated urban design outcomes. This included advice on:

- Station architecture, platform arrangement and material palettes
- Public realm and open space below the elevated rail
- Bridge elements, retaining walls and pedestrian underpasses
- Mitigating the visual impact to adjacent residents
- Protection of existing vegetation and landscaping
- Co-design with Traditional Owners at Carrum Carrum bridge
- Alignment of shared paths through environmentally sensitive coastal vegetation



Photography: Peter Clarke

BENDIGO HOSPITAL

The Bendigo Hospital is the largest regional health infrastructure development in Victoria's history. Built over two stages, the hospital has connected three separate sites into one unified precinct to support bringing the very best healthcare, technology and research to regional Victoria.

Stage one delivered the main hospital which included 372 inpatient unit beds, 80 mental health unit beds, 11 operating theatres and an integrated cancer centre. Stage two included Bendigo's first helipad, a bridge link and multi deck carpark for over 1,350 vehicles.

Widely recognised as setting a new benchmark in healthcare, the hospital has won numerous major awards across design, construction, sustainability, and health sectors.

SECTOR

Health

CLIENT

Victorian Health and Human Services Building Authority (VHHSBA) and Bendigo Health

DESIGNERS

Bates Smart, Silver Thomas Hanley, Oculus

YEAR

2018

OVGA contribution

The OVGA was involved in all stages of the design, from brief development, contract award, design development, through to on-site delivery. The office played a critical role in ensuring that design quality was maintained through all phases:

- Review of the brief to ensure that key design aspirations were integrated into the scope
- Review of consortia bids with particular emphasis on design quality which helped improve Best and Final Offer outcomes for the State
- Multiple gateway design reviews for each major element of the project throughout design development to ensure quality aspirations from the bid were maintained
- Onsite independent review of construction quality.

The architects and landscape architects have stated how important the OVGA's role was throughout the project in ensuring a quality design outcome was achieved. The project clearly showcases that quality outcomes can be achieved on time and on budget.

SOUTH MELBOURNE PRIMARY SCHOOL

Victoria's first contemporary vertical primary school is an integrated development which maximises the use of a compact, inner urban site. It comprises a primary school for 525 students, an early learning centre, maternal and child health centre, multi-purpose community rooms, and indoor and outdoor multi-purpose sports courts.

The design advances the school model for densifying urban environments and how a school operates in its community. Vertical learning spaces facilitate contemporary pedagogy whilst maintaining essential elements typical to schools like active play spaces, natural light, and pickup/drop off areas. To maximise accessibility and connectivity the project features a fenceless ground-level which is experienced as a shared public park.

The vertical school represents a rich and exciting learning environment, setting the example for similar schools on constrained sites.

OVGA contribution

The OVGA helped guide the project through a variety of design stages to maximise the opportunities of a new model for schools on a constrained site:

- To help lift both the ambition and understanding of all collaborating parties, the OVGA provided a range of internationally leading precedents
- The OVGA brokered a constructive and collaborative design discussion between the local council, architects and Department of Education and Training to explore synergies and foster integrated outcomes for the school and the community
- Site constraints including a nearby high-pressure gas line and light rail corridor were holistically addressed to ensure they did not compromise the ultimate built outcome.

SECTOR

Education

CLIENT

Department of Education

DESIGNERS

Hayball

YEAR

2018



Photography: Dianna Snape



Photography: Parks Victoria - Construction progress 2022

SADDLE LOOKOUT AT THE TWELVE APOSTLES

Parks Victoria was looking at more than a replacement lookout at the famous Twelve Apostles. It wanted to provide a superior, safer and more accessible experience for visitors, a design that celebrated this Aboriginal cultural landscape on Kirrae Wurrung Country.

Denton Corker Marshall's stunning, sculptural work will help keep footfall from the fragile coastal landscape while providing unforgettable vantage points and selfie spots – a boost for regional tourism at this popular local and international destination. Developed in collaboration with Eastern Maar Aboriginal Corporation, the dramatic design expresses the resilience of the Eastern Maar peoples.

SECTOR
Tourism

CLIENT
Parks Victoria

DESIGN CONSULTANTS
Denton Corker Marshall, McGregor Coxall

YEAR
2023

OVGA contribution

At the project outset, OVGA introduced Parks Victoria to some of the world's best coastal tourism projects to elevate the project vision. Showcasing the incredible architectural interventions along Norway's Atlantic Coast helped the State to lift the aspiration embedded in the brief. Ongoing OVGA input included:

- Recommendation for a design-led procurement process resulting in significant interest from great architectural practices
- Assistance in selecting preferred designers
- VDRP review of the design at several critical milestones
- The Government Architect engaged with Commonwealth Department of Environment to support a contemporary design located in a place of national environmental significance.

BENDIGO LAW COURTS

The new Bendigo Law Courts replace outdated heritage buildings that were no longer meeting the needs of the community. Set over three levels the new building features nine courtrooms, two hearing rooms, two mediation suites and remote witness facilities, making it one of the state's largest regional court hubs.

The design successfully communicates civic values through the building's striking design while responding to its sensitive heritage setting. The project demonstrates deep engagement with local indigenous Dja Dja Wurrung and utilises local artisans to enrich the material and aesthetic elements of the building.

SECTOR

Justice

CLIENT

Department of Justice and Community Safety

DESIGN CONSULTANTS

Wardle, Aspect Studios

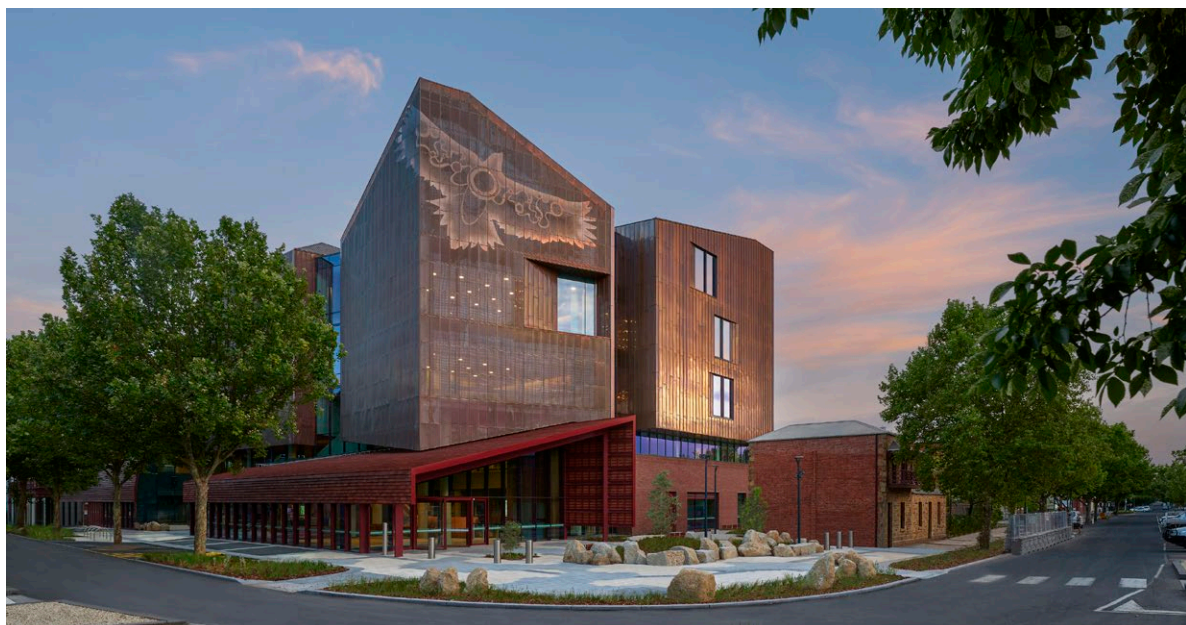
YEAR

2022

OVGA contribution

The OVGA provided design review throughout the project's development engaging stakeholders in the opportunities of the project to revision the civic centre of Bendigo. Recommendations that led to improvements include:

- Support for the sculptural architectural form resulting in a landmark civic building and an exemplary addition to Bendigo's skyline
- Encouragement for the material expression and a building 'in the round' embracing the site's corner location
- A second building entry to separate the Children's Court from the main building entrance delivering a safer and more sensitive user experience
- Interrogation of scale and setback to support a respectful relationship with the adjacent heritage building.



Photography: Tim Griffiths

MELBOURNE AND OLYMPIC PARK

The Melbourne and Olympic Park precinct is unique. There is no other place in the world with this quality of sporting and entertainment facilities grouped together within walking distance of the city. But to maintain global status, a commitment to ongoing revisioning is critical and this has been a more than ten-year engagement, across multiple projects, for the OVGA.

There have been new buildings, revisioning of existing buildings, pedestrian bridges and hidden precinct services solutions. Formed landscapes flow together, connecting space between arenas.

SECTOR

Sports and Recreation

CLIENT

Department of Jobs, Skills, Industry and Regions

DESIGN CONSULTANTS

NH, Snøhetta, Aspect Studios

YEAR

2012-2022

OVGA contribution

OVGA's Design Quality Team continuously undertook review at critical stages of each project in the rollout of the masterplan vision. Over ten years, on ten projects, with four design teams, OVGA significantly impacted:

- Holding onto the vision to solve wayfinding challenges using universal design ambitions embedded into the public realm providing invisible, connected access from Richmond to Flinders Street Station
- Reducing the impact of undercroft car access from Olympic Boulevard, which was subsequently set back with trees to the median, significantly improving street presence
- Chairing the design-led competition for Tanderrum Bridge with a vision for a poetic landscape-focused intervention connecting Birrarung Mar with the sports precinct
- Supporting the change in arrival by elevating arrival by public transport / foot into the heart of the precinct.



Concept image: Scharp

PORT OF SALE

The Port of Sale project offered an opportunity for Wellington Shire Council to transform a council-owned commercial building into a cultural hub comprising an art gallery, state-of-the-art public library and new Council Chambers.

By carefully undertaking a heritage transformation of the significant late modernist building, a new sense of openness and light were introduced into the centre of the building to enhance shared multifunctional spaces. The new hub revitalised links to the local port, providing the regional centre with a new cultural and community heart.

SECTOR

Public/Civic

CLIENT

Wellington Shire Council

DESIGNERS

FJMT

YEAR

2018

OVGA contribution

Through targeted and strategic advice, the OVGA enabled and supported Council to be a smart client, broadening its understanding of the long-term value of good design. The OVGA's expert advice assisted with:

- Reviewing pre-concept plan to inform a revised brief with a stronger emphasis on design-based requirements
- Assessment and evaluation of proposals, resulting in the selection and contracting of an award-winning architectural practice with the capability to turn the project into a regionally significant cultural hub
- Supporting council to obtain additional funding for the site's landscape, which significantly improved the hub's amenity
- The OVGA also encouraged council to use the cultural hub as a catalyst for rethinking the wider area which has been addressed in the Port of Sale master plan.



Photography: John Gollings

PUFFING BILLY LAKESIDE DISCOVERY CENTRE

The Discovery Centre is a unique attraction centrally located on the Puffing Billy Railway adjacent to Emerald Park Lake, bringing together rail enthusiasts and local park goers. It offers a new spatial experience through a unique geometry that is distinct from the old train stations. It spatially expresses the overarching organisational logic which brings together visitors and the train platform.

SECTOR

Public/Civic

CLIENT

Puffing Billy Railway

DESIGN CONSULTANTS

Terroir, Tract

YEAR

2021

OVGA contribution

The OVGA provided advice on the competition brief, procurement process and evaluation. The project was reviewed by the VDRP at key project milestones including masterplanning and concept design stages. The independent and expert advice assisted with:

- Establishing a design competition as part of the procurement process to better support the project's ambition and quality
- Navigating complex State and local Government processes
- Stakeholder engagement including obtaining support and funding
- Strengthening the connection between the building and the landscape to enhance the visitor experience
- Sustaining the competition winning concept through to a successful built outcome.



Photography: Rory Gardiner



Photography: Dan Preston

QUEENSLIFFE HUB

The Queenscliffe Hub co-locates the Museum, Library and Visitor Centre in a single facility with shared resources. As a key piece of civic infrastructure it provides a focus for the local community as well as a distinctive attraction for visitors.

The design successfully integrates the site's heritage listed library building with the new building and public space along Hesse Street to extend the museum experience into the public realm.

The Borough of Queenscliffe acknowledge the OVGA's involvement led to the procurement of an expert design team capable of delivering a unique and high-quality contemporary building sensitive to its heritage setting.

SECTOR

Public/Civic

CLIENT

Borough of Queenscliffe

DESIGN CONSULTANTS

KTA Architects

YEAR

2022

OVGA contribution

The OVGA provided significant input into the functional brief and Request for Tender. The VDRP reviewed the project at several key stages throughout its development. Recommendations that led to improvements included:

- Optimising use of the site, internal amenity and connection between the front and rear of the site through reorganisation of the entry
- Resolving issues around existing vegetation that enabled meaningful public space of the building forecourt that can be used as an event space for the wider township
- Supporting indigenous engagement as a key process of reconciliation of the colonial and indigenous perspectives and histories resulting in a richer design
- Support for the materials and details that contribute to the architectural expression including the folded glass facade and engaging concrete façade peep holes.



The OVGA is an Administrative Office of the Victorian Department of Transport and Planning. It is staffed by a team of professionals from complementary design disciplines including architecture, landscape architecture, planning and urban design.

Publications

<p>Good Design</p> <p>2016</p>	<p>Good Design + Education</p> <p>2016</p>	<p>Good Design + Heritage</p> <p>2016</p>	<p>Good Design + Health</p> <p>2016</p>	<p>Good Design + Design Review</p> <p>2016</p>
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<p>Good Design + Movement</p> <p>2016</p>	<p>Good Design + Sustainability</p> <p>2016</p>	<p>Small Utility Infrastructure Design Precedents</p> <p>2016</p>	<p>Multi-Deck Carparks Integrated Design Precedents Beyond facades</p> <p>2016</p>	<p>Definitions of Design Excellence</p> <p>February 2016</p>
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<p>Government as Smart Client</p> <p>2016</p>	<p>Architecture Design Competitions</p> <p>2016</p>	<p>The Case for Good Design</p> <p>2016</p>	<p>DESIGN PRINCIPLES FOR MULTI-DECK COMPUTER CARPARKS</p> <p>2016</p>	<p>DESIGN PRINCIPLES INLAND RAIL FOR THE REGIONS</p> <p>2016</p>
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<p>PUBLIC PRIVATE PARTNERSHIP LESSONS LEARNED</p> <p>2016</p>	<p>SCHOOL PROJECTS LESSONS LEARNED</p> <p>2016</p>	<p>VICTORIAN DESIGN REVIEW PANEL</p> <p>2016</p>	<p>CASE STUDY</p> <p>2016</p>	<p>CASE STUDY</p> <p>2016</p>
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The OVGA is a member of the Government Architects Network of Australia (GANA) and connects with similar organisations internationally.

Accessibility

Contact us if you need this information in an accessible format: please telephone +61 3 9651 6583 or email ovga@ovga.vic.gov.au

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