



TENDERS | BIDS | PROPOSALS | SUBMISSIONS

TRANSPORT SECTOR

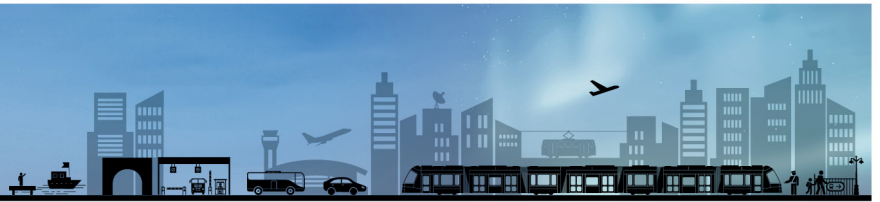
CAPABILITY STATEMENT





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Projects that transform cities

Where would we be without the transport sector?

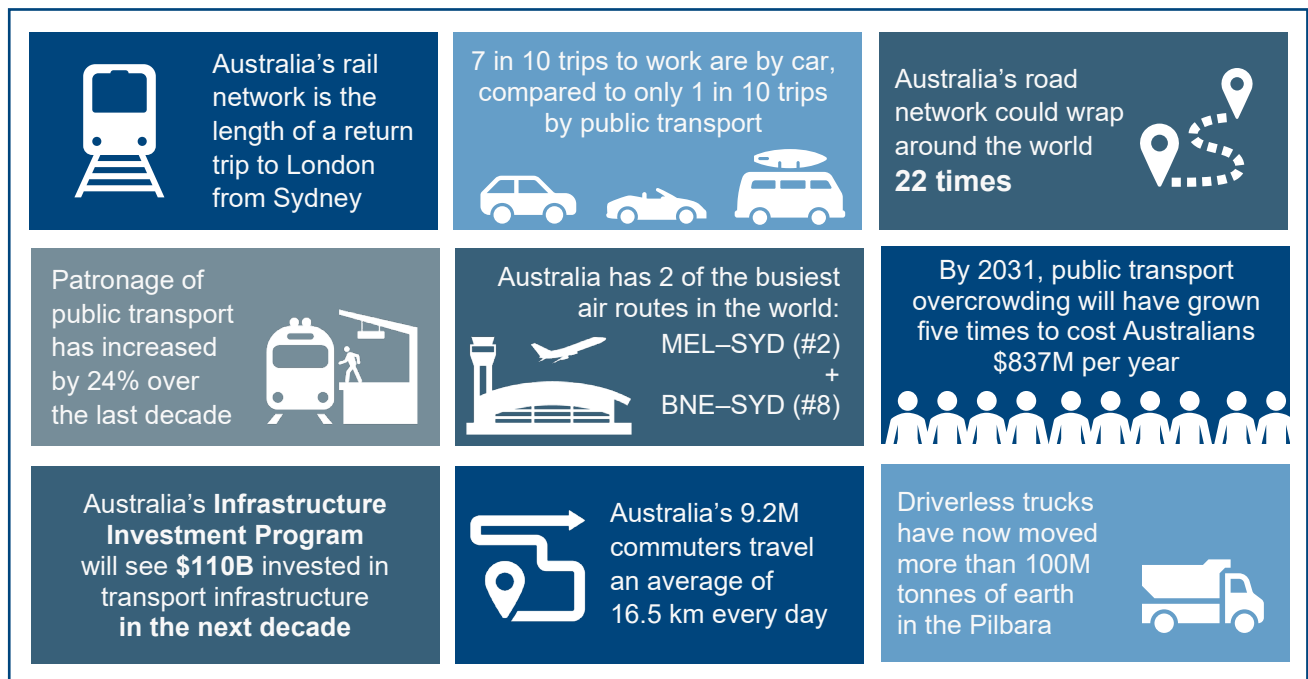
From mega projects that literally transform our cities, to long-term programs of work that drive innovation and evolution, to the smaller projects that make a difference at a local level. The transport sector keeps our communities moving and economies thriving.

And the impact of the industry is matched by its extraordinary complexity.

The scope of a transport project can cover an incredible range of infrastructure from roads, rail and runways, to tunnels and toll roads, to light rail platforms, train stations and airports. Or, a transport project might not involve infrastructure at all: it might focus on the vehicles like rolling stock, buses, ferries or aircraft, or the complex equipment and signalling systems that control them. Whatever the scope, a transport project could span the lifecycle from design through to build and/or manufacture, to installation, testing and commissioning, and ultimately to operations and/or maintenance.

The complexity and diversity are what make this sector so exciting.

By sea, by air, by track and by road, the transport sector is taking us places.





Transport's unique complexities

From a bidding perspective, the transport sector presents its own particular challenges:



LARGE MULTI-DISCIPLINARY TEAMS

Large, multi-disciplinary teams bring extra challenges for bid coordination and team communication. Each discipline tends to dive deep into their area of expertise so the bid team needs to keep the focus on the client and align the disciplines to tell a compelling, persuasive and consolidated story.



CONSORTIUM LEADERSHIP

Different companies, different values, different ways of working. It's easy for a consortium-led bid to go off the rails. The bid team needs to align the team's vision, agree on acceptable behaviours, establish clear expectations, and support the varying levels of capability within the team.



TECHNICAL JARGON

With so many engineering specialties under one roof, a transport bid is always at risk of being overloaded by techno babble and TLAs. The bid team needs Olympic-level linguistic dexterity to synthesise, translate and communicate complex information to ensure it's accessible to all without losing its potency.



IMPASSIONED COMMUNITIES

Transport projects have a way of impassioning their communities which can put a blazing spotlight on transport bids. Bid teams need to know how to engage appropriately with the community, understand the potential political fallout of a decision and stack the bid with powerful stakeholder messages.



DRIVE TO INNOVATE

Many transport projects are visionary in nature – pushing the boundaries to deliver better outcomes and striving for new horizons in safety and performance. Bid teams need to be able to inspire and energise teams to imagine and engineer smarter solutions.



EMPHASIS ON NON-PRICE CRITERIA

More than in many other sectors, transport projects need to achieve multiple objectives. Evaluators are seeking smart solutions that improve safety, drive whole-of-life value, deliver community outcomes, and achieve sustainability targets. Bid teams need to be able to foster excellence across all criteria.



Transport: a fiercely competitive sector

The transport sector in Australia and New Zealand is extremely competitive, with most transport bids being hotly contested by a range of aggressive contenders including well-known Australian companies and new-to-market international behemoths.

If you're about to embark on a transport tender, you'll need every possible advantage to win.

As a rule of thumb, you can expect a typical transport bid to follow a process similar to this:



The bidding phase is shown in pale blue. Depending on the procurement process being followed, the process might include all three bidding steps (or more) or might concentrate on just one bidding step (usually the Request for Proposal).

Bid timing can vary enormously, depending on the size and complexity of the project:

- An Expression of Interest will typically take between 2–4 weeks
- A Request for Proposal could vary from 4 weeks to as many as 20 or 26 weeks for a mega project
- A Best and Final Offer might take a week or several months (one recent project took 11 months).

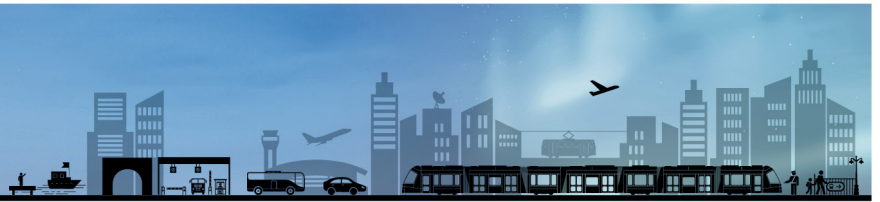
Despite the variation in bid process and timing, typical bid budgets are quite consistent, particularly for the top tier and major players. **A comprehensive bid budget, including allocation of internal costs, typically runs to around 2% of project value.**

From our experience, we consistently see that the winning transport bids are those that have been developed and prepared by teams that have a clear partnership between the 'project team' and the 'bid team'. Success comes when the project team can focus on developing a smart solution while the bid team takes responsibility for selling the solution through a persuasive submission. The important point here is that both elements are needed – a smart solution and a persuasive submission.

In terms of bid team resources, the winning bidders are typically scaling up their bid team with:

- Bid strategists and innovation experts (what we call Bid Catalysts)
- Bid managers and team leaders (like our Bid Whips)
- Bid writers and content developers (our Bid Writers)
- Formatters and production experts (our Production Managers)
- Graphic designers (our Design Team).

A strong bid team frees the bid director to focus their effort on leading the team, driving the solution and negotiating the commercial arrangements, knowing that the submission is under control.



Feedback from transport buyers and evaluators

Having worked in bids and tenders for more than 20 years, we consistently hear clients express frustration at the complexity of the procurement process and the challenge in gathering real, meaningful and constructive feedback from evaluation panels.

Since the release of our *Behind Closed Doors* report, we've undertaken numerous confidential interviews with evaluation panel members and procurement directors who evaluate major and mega projects.

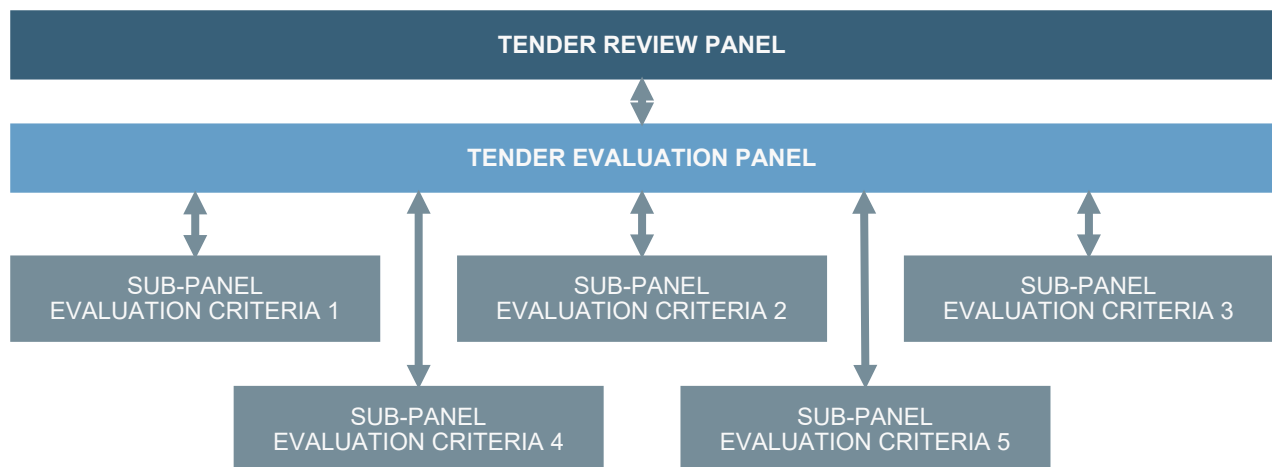
Our research has revealed a few surprises, overturned a few myths of the dark art of bidding, and transformed some teams to embrace a new approach to their submissions.

Lessons learnt from a transport mega project

We conducted a confidential interview with the procurement director of a recent transport mega project.

Before the tender, the State had a good understanding of who could do the work. Their industry briefings and market sounding process were designed to help industry form into consortia that would all be capable of delivering. The State's objective was to get three bids in the box, any one of which could win the tender, and before the Expression of Interest went to market, they knew the three bidders they wanted.

Their evaluation team was structured like this:



The Tender Review Panel comprised the 'heavy hitters'. Their formal job was governance but their informal job was to ensure stakeholder satisfaction. Interestingly, they read every page of each of the three submissions!

The Tender Evaluation Panel was a diverse decision-making panel comprising an independent chair plus 10 members representing all of the project disciplines (engineering, project management, treasury, community engagement, passenger service, etc). They read and scored every page of each of the three submissions and every panel member had an equal say.

The sub-panels reflected each of the evaluation criteria. Each sub-panel was made up of three or four subject matter experts and was chaired by a Tender Evaluation Panel member. Their role was to provide expert opinion, but they didn't officially evaluate the submissions. Notably, they had access to each of the full submissions; not just their discipline.



When undertaking their evaluations, the Tender Evaluation Panel used the following scoring matrix:

SCORE	BENCHMARK
9 to 10	Excellent understanding or capability. Complete confidence evaluation criteria will be met. World's best practice.
6 to 8	Good understanding or capability. Confident that evaluation criteria will be met.
4 to 5	Acceptable. Satisfactory understanding or capability. Reasonably confident evaluation criteria will be met.
2 to 3	Demonstrates limited understanding or capability. Not confident that the criteria will be met.
0 to 1	Not acceptable. Has not addressed the criteria. Could not work with them.

This is a very typical scoring matrix and is a good reference for the kind used on most transport tenders.

Interestingly, the 'pass mark' for basic, compliant answers, i.e. the correct technical answer, is 4 to 5.

And the results for our three transport mega project bidders? The majority of the scores for most of the evaluation criteria ranged from 3 to 5! One bidder scored some 6s and 7s for some evaluation criteria, but generally the bidders were a long way from being 'world's best practice'!

So, what lessons can you take away from this?

Evaluation panels are diverse and human

- Make it easy for all of the evaluators to read, understand and evaluate your proposal
- Make it easy for them to like you and want to work with you
- Know your audience – there's a full spectrum of expertise on an evaluation panel.

People buy from people and they use their emotions to make decisions even when they try not to. Evaluators are forming assessments and making judgements based on how you've responded. Make their job easy, make your submission interesting, and take them on the journey with you, regardless of their specific area of expertise or their level of experience.

Evaluation panels read and score the full submission

- Cater to the full spectrum of disciplines and expertise
- Be consistent and cohesive across the full submission.

On a major project, engineers and construction people will be MAYBE 40% of the panel membership. Don't neglect the majority of the panel by insisting on catering only to a minority of expertise. And make sure your full submission is cohesive, consistent and aligned. If you've developed the submission in silos, they'll see it immediately and they'll find the conflicts.

A compliant answer scores pathetically low

- Go beyond compliance to demonstrate your capability and solution
- Demonstrate your broader and deeper knowledge of the project objectives, risks and challenges.

A basic compliant response will typically score 4 out of 10. To put yourself in front requires much more effort.

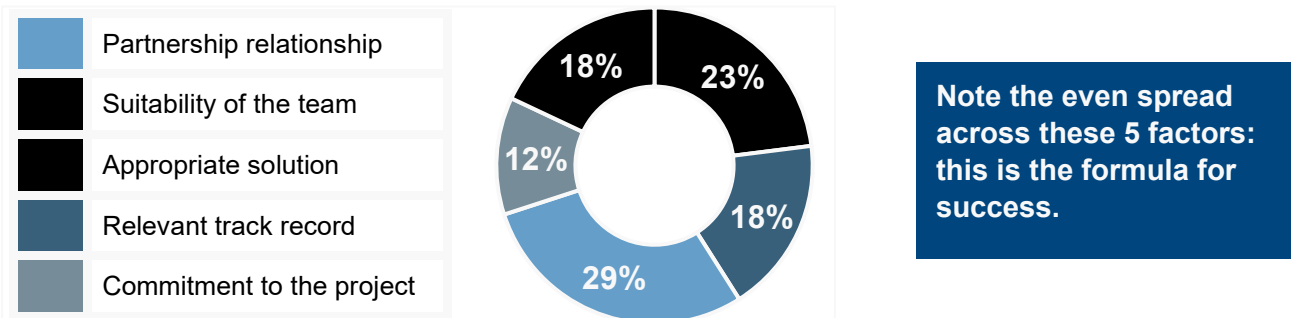


Lessons learnt from our major projects research

In 2019, we conducted a major research program with ~100 evaluators from major projects. The purpose of the research was to collect confidential, non-identified and non-specific feedback from evaluators that would provide open, honest and helpful direction to bidders.

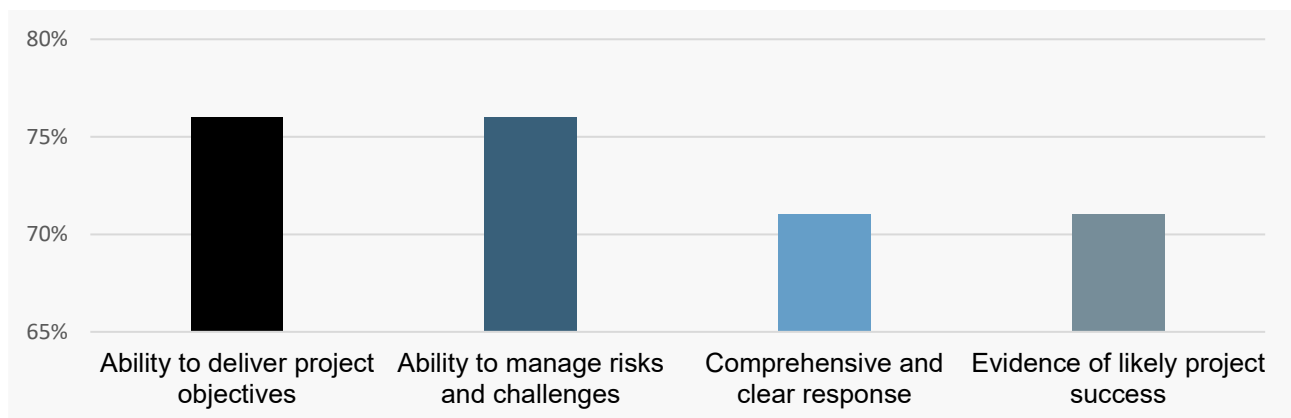
Key findings

Evaluators are looking for five key factors when selecting the winning bidder



Almost one-third of respondents said that a partnership relationship between the buyer and the bidder was the most important factor. The evaluators went to pains to clarify that this didn't necessarily mean an existing relationship; it meant the perceived ability of the buyer and bidder to work well together in delivery.

Evaluators are looking for four key elements in submissions

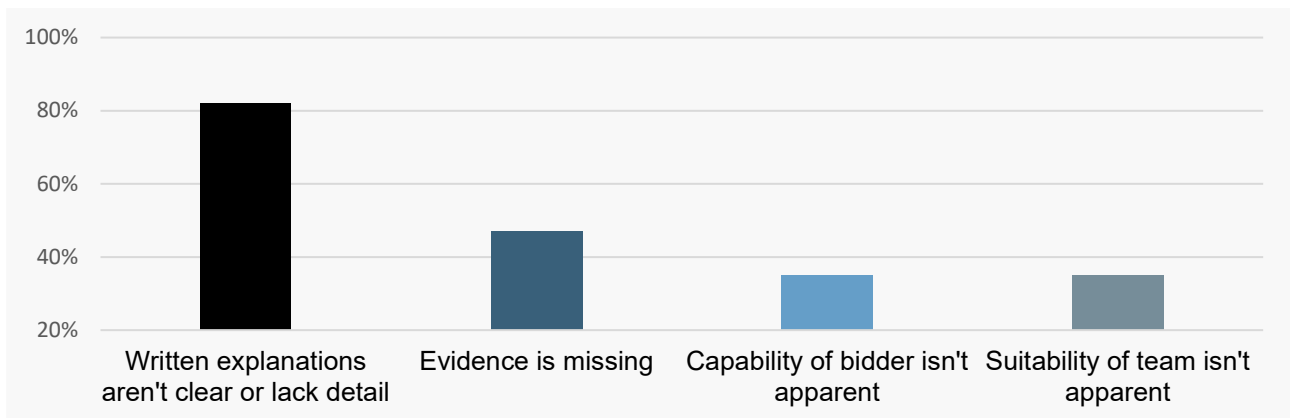


In the wise words of one evaluator:

"The bidder must show they understand the risk allocation and objectives, they understand what the measure of success of the project is, understand the expectations of the buyer and show how they will commit and meet these expectations throughout the project delivery phase."



Bidders are most frequently let down by simple – and avoidable – failings



With obvious frustration, one evaluator reported:

“These have all happened: didn’t answer the question, provided poor and business-as-usual answers, didn’t demonstrate skill or experience, didn’t demonstrate understanding of project scope / objectives, and exceeded page limit.”

Poor quality documentation leads to project delays and drives up bid costs

Common problems include:

- Proposals are vague or ambiguous
- Proposals are missing key information
- Proposals do not address the specific tender requirements
- Risk allocation, assumptions and warranties are not clearly defined, and
- The transition between bid team and delivery team is not clearly planned.

Almost **50%** of buyers say that poor quality documentation drags out negotiations and engagement.

Evaluators struggle to provide open feedback...

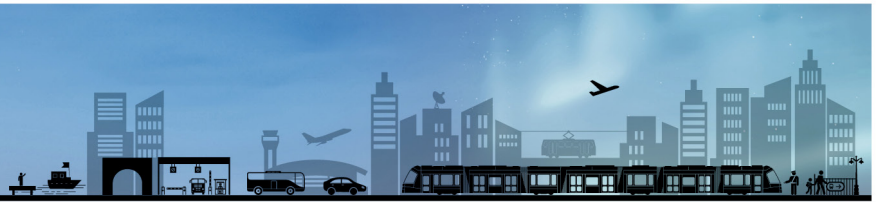
Some of the key concerns for buyers in giving open and honest feedback were:

- Confidentiality requirements which lead to comments being general and vague
- **Hostility from losing bidders (including physical threats!)**
- Discomfort providing feedback where it relates to the team members proposed
- Risk of legal or political action.

...and feedback frequently lands on deaf ears anyway

In the words of one evaluator:

“Do something with the feedback you receive. Make sure the right people are at the debrief to take the feedback on board and make it happen. In one contract it was evident that one of the bidders had taken on board past feedback, whereas the others hadn’t, despite being told multiple times.”



Takeaways for writing transport tender responses

Six simple ways to improve your success in transport tenders:

1. Provide a comprehensive answer to every question

This is so basic it astounds us, but for buyers, their biggest frustration is an incomplete tender and it happens more than you can imagine. Blank questions introduce risk and confusion. Is it a mistake? Left out intentionally? Don't know the answer? Can't be bothered?

2. Ask questions

One area that baffled buyers was the widespread reluctance to ask questions. Buyers hold briefing sessions and site visits to provide information, outline their priorities, set boundaries and define risks to save bidders time and effort, but the opportunity is frustratingly being wasted. And while bidders always think that asking questions will give away their competitive advantage, the buyers wanted to see bidders be bolder and more confident that if they really are the best team they'll be able to prove it in the end.

One buyer's advice was:

"Bidders need to make sure their responses address the questions being asked. If they don't understand the question, they need to ask questions and seek clarifications to understand what the buyer is asking for. Be honest – don't try to bluff your way through."

3. Provide a clear commercial response

Again, another no-brainer from our perspective, but according to buyers a very common phenomenon is to avoid the commercial conversation and remain silent on commercial or contractual terms. Buyers were adamant that they expect to receive a mature commercial response.

For those bidders thinking they are sneakily giving themselves a lower cost offering, the buyers said that it's a false economy. Buyers calculate their own version of the cost of the risk and add it to the offer, effectively enabling them to compare apples with apples on the risk anyway. By staying silent, the bidder has given away control over the risk costings by that stage.

4. Keep it together

Documents aren't necessarily divided up and it's common for evaluation panels to have access to the entire submission and read responses from cover to cover. For this reason, bidders need to make sure their story is consistent and integrated across discipline and subject areas.

5. Steer clear of the 'bait and switch' ruse

Yep, buyers are sick of being sold the 'A Team' but given the 'F-Troop'. They understand competing commitments, but it's critical you replace like with like and provide a succession and transition plan. And for goodness' sake, don't nominate someone who could be named on a competitor's submission – that could be very awkward.

6. Offer value for money

And lastly, what we've all heard before and the buyers are adamant is true: it really doesn't come down to price. Indeed, if you're running a low-price strategy, think carefully because it's more likely to raise suspicions and concerns rather than create excitement or secure the work.

On this topic, one buyer had a firmly worded message to bidders:

"Tenderers should submit realistic tenders even if it means losing the bid. Aggressive low bid / claim strategies are unsustainable and not good for industry."



Factors for success in transport bids

From our experience in transport bids, there are a few key factors that enhance your likelihood of success:



BID MINDSET

Embrace the bid mindset to win the competition and go beyond business as usual. Submitting a compliant tender is the starting point; submitting a winning tender requires a completely different attitude.



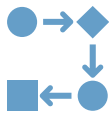
EARLY AND BROAD
ENGAGEMENT

Engage early to position and prepare for the tender. Don't wait for the bid documents – get your project and bid team up and running, aligned and focussed. It's also crucial to engage early with your project partners, and potentially also with stakeholders, community groups and local industry.



OUTSTANDING
SOLUTION

Develop an outstanding approach or solution that differentiates you and provides real and genuine value to your client. Pack your proposal full of smart initiatives that minimise risks, maximise opportunities and create value.



DISCIPLINED PROJECT
MANAGEMENT

Follow a disciplined bid management process including detailed content analysis, iterative content development and collaborative document review. Did you know: a first draft usually scores only 40%? If your process is to gather it all together three days before the deadline, you may be in trouble...



CONTENT THAT
SCORES

Develop compelling and persuasive content that goes beyond a compliant answer to maximise your score through the formal evaluation process. Remember: a compliant answer usually scores only 4 out of 10. To elevate your submission, you need to create more potent and comprehensive content.



Get the edge with Aurora Marketing

Over the last 20 years, Aurora Marketing has pioneered the submission management space in Australia.

At the pointy end of our expertise is the work we do in tenders, bids, proposals and submissions. In many sectors, all the effort invested in marketing, promotion, sales and business development culminates in an all-or-nothing competitive offer which is the client's opportunity to really showcase their unique offering and close the deal.

This is the space where we thrive.

We're experts at developing **pragmatic business growth programs**. These programs help position companies as market leaders across selected industry sectors, and give guidance on how to actively pursue a targeted list of clients and prospects. Our expertise covers all aspects of marketing, promotion, sales and business development; but always with the crystal-clear focus of driving revenue through more or bigger clients, and more or bigger contracts.

Our expertise goes beyond tenders, bids, proposals and submissions. We excel in preparing **any kind of highly technical document** that needs to be clear and compelling for its target audience. Think capability statements, white papers, research reports, grant applications, award submissions, information memoranda and annual reports.

We work with teams of all sizes, shapes and skills. Some of our clients are very well resourced with high calibre, experienced tender experts, a strong internal bid culture, and well-honed bid systems. Others are at the opposite end of the spectrum, with limited resources and processes. Depending on what your team needs, we can provide **extra resources** to fill gaps or an **entire holistic solution**.

We can help you to **assemble the team** for your tender using your own internal resources and preferred suppliers, or we can assemble a full team of our own resources. We'll happily work with you to find the best solution depending on the scale of the tender, your budget and your available resources.

Importantly, the size and scale of our team enables us to ramp up **resources when you need them**. Whether you need a team dedicated to a key project for three months, a tender coach in-house for three weeks, a team of writers working around the clock for three days, or a document formatter for a few hours, we can help.



Deep understanding of the transport sector

Aurora Marketing is deeply and passionately engaged in the transport sector.

Since our first rolling stock tender over 15 years ago, we've embraced this exciting, challenging and dynamic sector. We're members of the Australasian Rail Association and regular participants at major industry events including AusRail and AusRail Plus in Australia, and even Innotrans in Berlin. We're also active participants in transport industry conferences, seminars and events around Australia and New Zealand, and are proud members of the Queensland Major Contractors Association (QMCA) and La Camara. Furthermore, we're recognised Industry Experts with Queensland Leaders and provide valuable education and mentoring for members across numerous sectors.

In November 2019 we partnered with QMCA to conduct a behind-the-scenes investigation of the tender evaluation process. We wanted to understand how evaluation panels score major tenders, what they're really looking for, and what the common shortfalls are. The result is *Behind Closed Doors*, an indispensable resource for companies who want insights into what it takes to get that bid-winning edge. You can read or download the report from our website.

Our bidding experience reflects the full diversity and complexity of the transport sector including:





A track record of winning landmark deals

We've worked on literally thousands of live tender opportunities for organisations of all sizes and we're proud to have contributed to some of Australia's biggest contracts including:

- Melbourne High Capacity Metro Trains PPP
- Queensland New Generation Rolling Stock PPP
- NSW Rolling Stock Procurement PPP
- Sydney Growth Trains
- Adelaide EMU Rolling Stock
- Perth Metronet Railcars
- Country Regional Network NSW
- Trackwork Services Alliance NSW
- Regional Rail Link Work Package A & B VIC
- ARTC Southern Improvement Alliance
- Victoria Regional Rail Revival – Gippsland Line
- Brisbane Cross River Rail
- Gold Coast Light Rail PPP
- Queensland ETCS Signalling System
- Melbourne Metropolitan Train Franchise (MR3)
- Melbourne Metropolitan Trams Franchise (MR4)
- Melbourne Metro Bus Franchise
- Adelaide Heavy Rail Operations Franchise
- Sydney Ferries Franchise
- Sydney Buses Franchise
- Darra to Springfield Transport Corridor Alliance
- Brisbane Airport Link and Northern Busway PPP
- Sydney Metro Tunnelling PPP
- South Road Superway SA
- Tiger Brennan Drive NT
- North West Shelf Passenger Transfer WA
- New Air Combat Capability (NACC)
- Land 2097 Special Operations Helicopters



1500
PROJECTS



\$160 B+
SUCCESSFUL
PROJECTS



98.5%
SUCCESS RATE



Offices



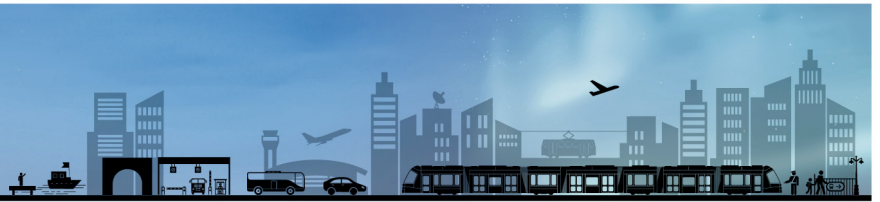
Teams



Major Projects



Projects



Trusted by the leaders in transport

We're particularly proud of the client base we've served. Across the transport sector, we've worked with some of Australia's best-known companies including:





Delivering exceptional results

Don't just take our word for it – our clients sing our praises too:

Antonio Da Costa, **Alstom**

Efficiently led the team to provide the best possible outcome...

Fantastic even with our engineers...

Resilience and dedication were exemplary until the last minute!

John Seale, **Downer Group**

Experienced tender professionals...

Relentless focus on how to create the most compelling proposal...

Mark Weeden, **CHC Helicopter**

Deliver an exceptional end product...

Know how to draw out the ingredients for success...

Professional approach, attention to detail and ability to integrate with our organisation have been unmatched...

Chris Lock, **Transport Advisor**

Support including team leadership, strategy and winning proposal development, team training and complex submission management and writing...

Commitment to best practice...

Good grace and humour, attention to the smallest detail and passionate desire to both do the best for the client and win...

Talk to us

We can help you win that 'must win' bid, improve your success rate or improve your bidding methodologies.

Brisbane | Sydney | Melbourne | Adelaide | Perth | Canberra

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