



TENDERS | BIDS | PROPOSALS | SUBMISSIONS

# INFRASTRUCTURE SECTOR

CAPABILITY STATEMENT





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# Projects that transform the nation

Infrastructure is fundamental to our quality of life and our productivity as a nation. The right infrastructure connects us to our families and communities, our jobs, our education and all of the essential services that we rely on every day. Infrastructure is the framework that supports our lifestyle and our economy.

Whether we're working on PPPs and mega projects that transform cities, long-term programs of work that drive innovation and evolution, or smaller projects that improve local communities, the infrastructure sector provides our nation with essential services and connects our supply chains nationally and globally.

The sector builds our national foundations in energy, water, telecommunications, roads, airports, and ports, and social infrastructure such as hospitals, schools, parks and access to goods and services. Each infrastructure project, big or small, impacts the way we live. These projects must meet evolving standards of sustainability, security and resilience to support customer needs. They must mitigate risks associated with a global economy, and deal with the pressures of climate change, as well as diverse community concerns. More so than most industries, infrastructure solutions must also allow for upgrades and the incorporation of future innovations and expectations.

The scope of an infrastructure 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. It is this incredible diversity and the sheer wealth of opportunity that makes this sector so exciting.

With heavy investment from the federal government post Covid-19, it is the infrastructure sector that will drive our economic recovery and reconnect Australia with the world.

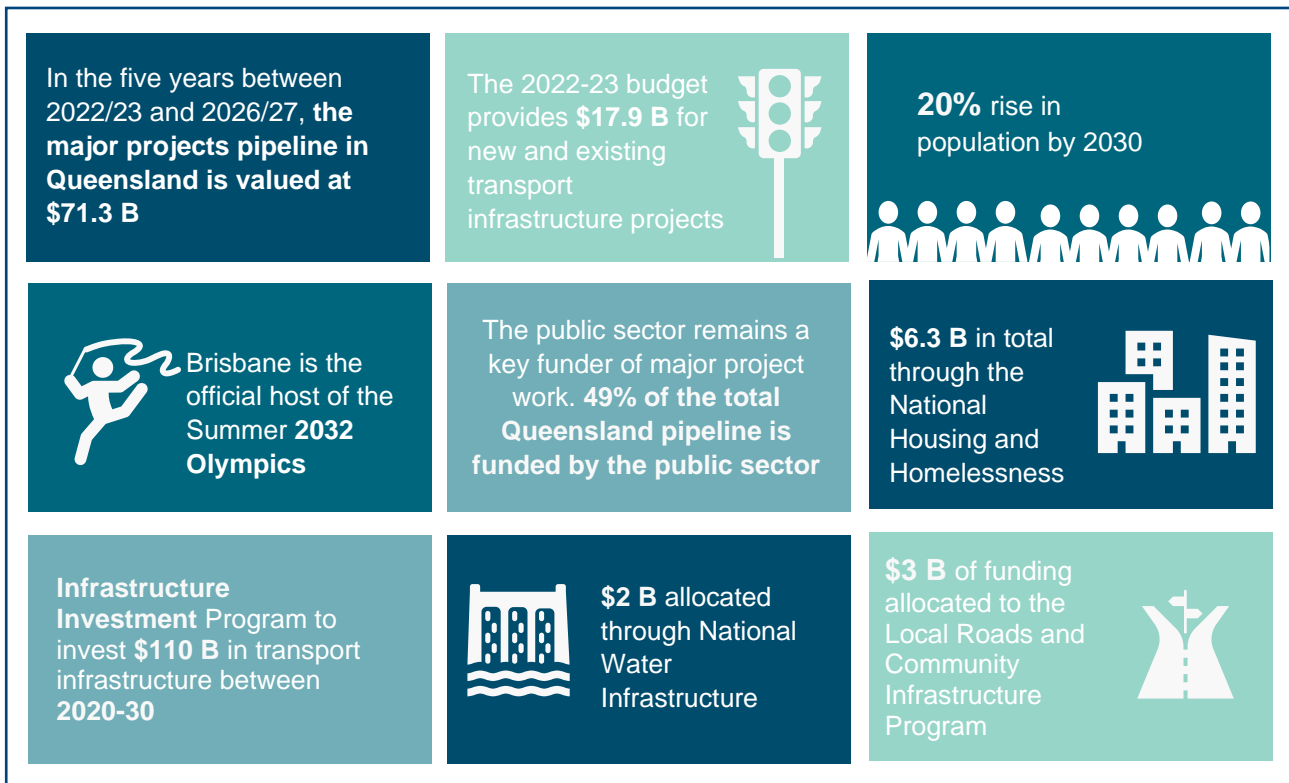


Figure 1: A look ahead at what the industry can expect in terms of investment and opportunity.



# Infrastructure’s unique complexities

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

Table 1: Challenges within the infrastructure industry.



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.



COMPLEX DEAL STRUCTURE

The Size and scale of infrastructure bids usually leads to complex deal structures with multiple parties, tricky scope split and intricate risk allocations. Bid teams need to navigate these waters and help manage risk while pitching to win.



IMPASSIONED COMMUNITIES

The expectations that Australian communities place on infrastructure projects are changing. Communities want greater choice and flexibility in their lives, in response to both social and technological advancements. 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 infrastructure projects are visionary in nature – pushing the boundaries to deliver better outcomes and striving for new horizons in safety and performance. Infrastructure projects are often public gateways and place greater emphasis on end-user experience than ever before. Bid teams need to imagine and engineer smarter, more streamlined solutions that speak to community agendas.



EMPHASIS ON NON-PRICE CRITERIA

More than other sectors, infrastructure 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.

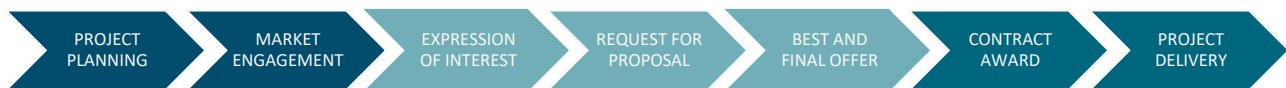


# Infrastructure: a fiercely competitive sector

**The infrastructure sector in Australia and New Zealand is extremely competitive, with most infrastructure 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 an infrastructure tender, you'll need every possible advantage to win.

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



*Figure 2: A typical bid process will follow these seven steps.*

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, but sometimes up to 12-15 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 infrastructure 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:

- Performance coaches and teaming experts (like Alliance Coaches)
- Industry experts and people with client insight (like our Shadow Catalysts)
- 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 infrastructure 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 first **Behind Closed Doors** report, we have 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 the approach many bid teams take to developing their submissions.

## Key findings

### Evaluators are looking for five key factors when choosing a winning bid

We asked evaluators to tell us how important various factors were when assessing a bidder’s submission, such as previous experience, technical capability, an innovative solution, clarity of communication and so on. The results show that evaluators have high expectations across a wide range of factors, but a clear top 5 emerged. **Note the even spread across these 5 factors: this is the formula for success.**

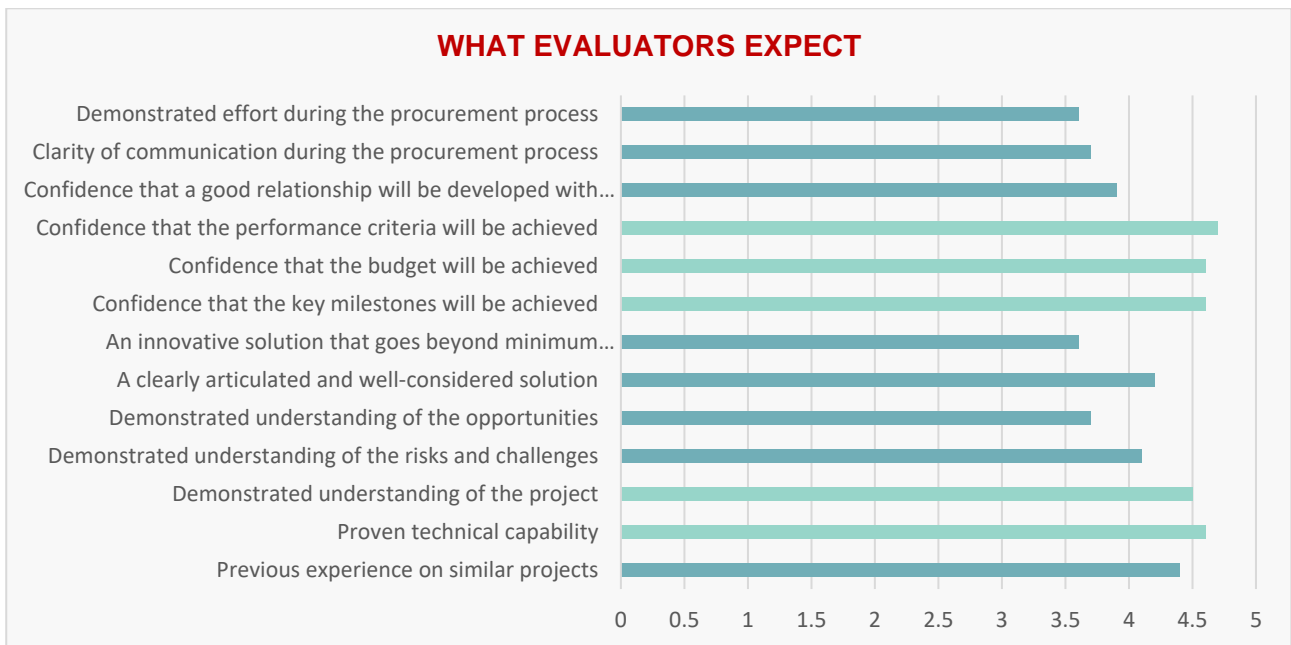


Figure 3: Evaluators were clear about what made a strong submission, with 7 stand-out characteristics.



## Evaluators are looking for seven key elements in submissions

Evaluators cited almost 20 characteristics common to the best submissions, with 7 characteristics standing out as the most important. Readers may jump to the conclusion that ‘concise’ justifies keeping their submissions short and sweet, but ‘comprehensive’ and ‘thorough’ also rated strongly. The key is to include information that is both **relevant and pertinent**.

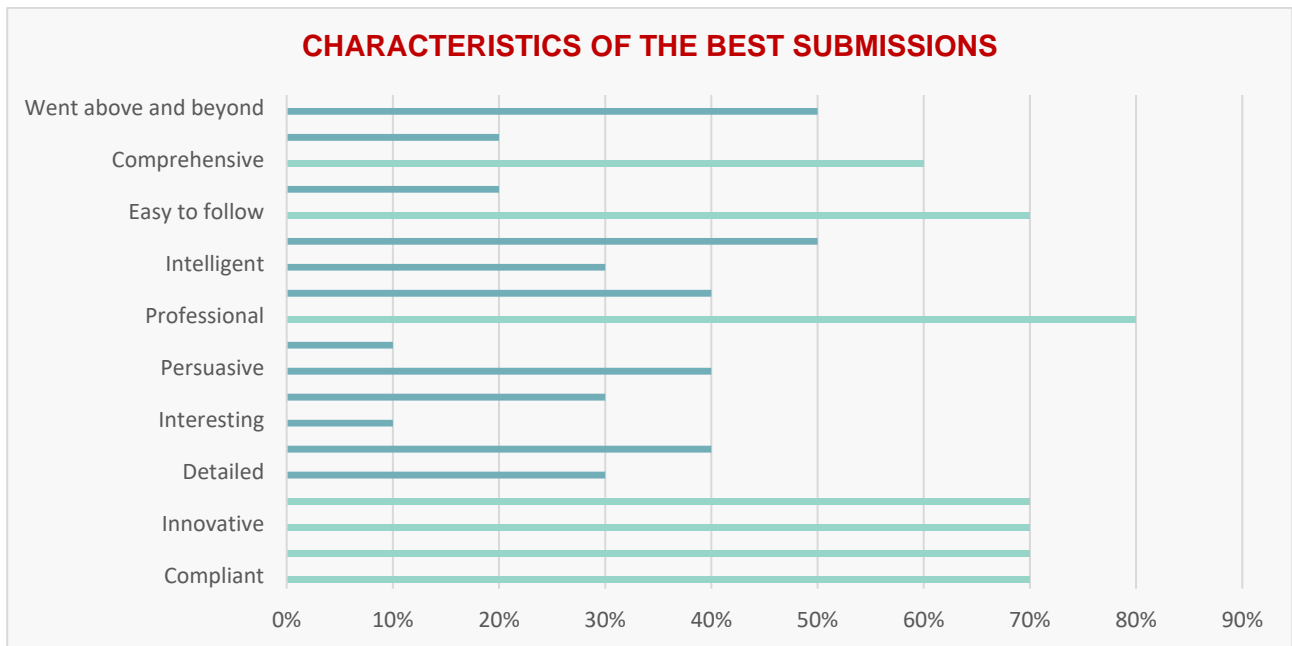


Figure 4: Evaluators were clear about what made a strong submission, with 7 stand-out characteristics.



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

Evaluators cited almost 20 common failings in the submissions they reviewed, but 7 deadly sins stood out as the most common failings, all referenced by **at least 50%** of evaluators.

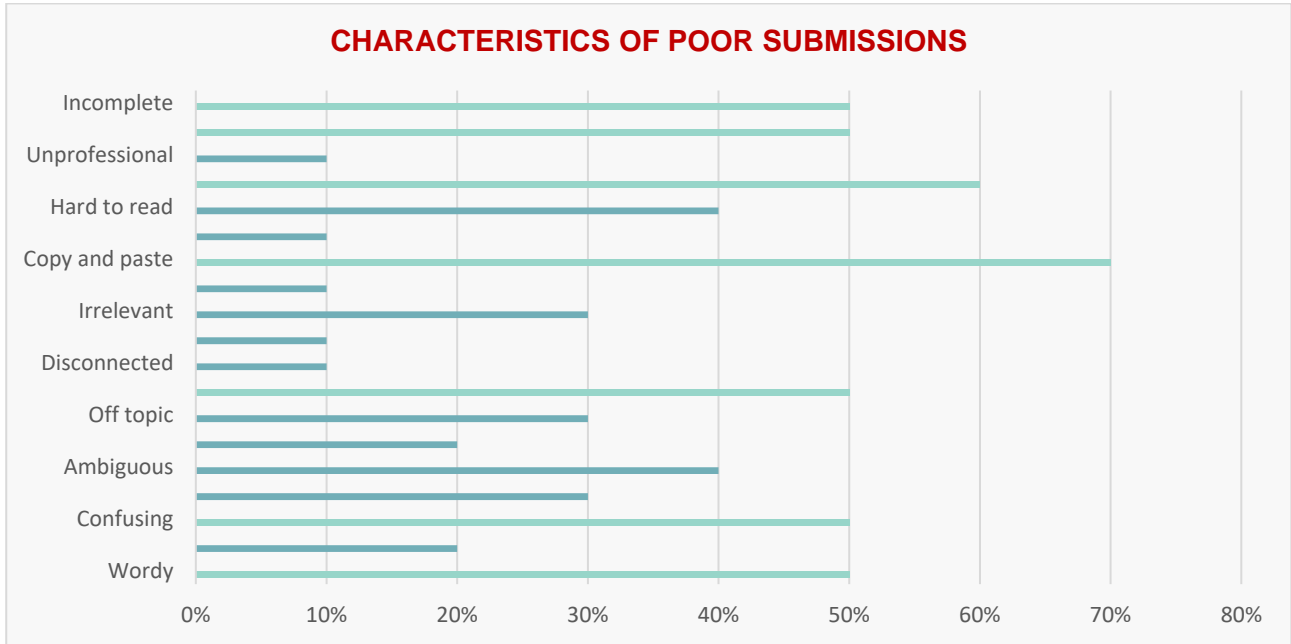


Figure 5: Evaluators saw consistent themes in poor submissions, with 7 deadly sins occurring frequently.

Further to this, when asked where bidders dropped the ball, evaluators referenced a wide range of issues, from not addressing criteria, to demonstrating poor attitudes and behaviours, through to missing the mark on project objectives and risks.





## How well are bidders currently performing?

The good news is that 80% of evaluators report that the bids received are ‘fine – adequate and compliant’. The even better news for bidders is that there is a tremendous opportunity to up their game **as only 10% of bids are considered ‘excellent – very thorough and compelling’**.

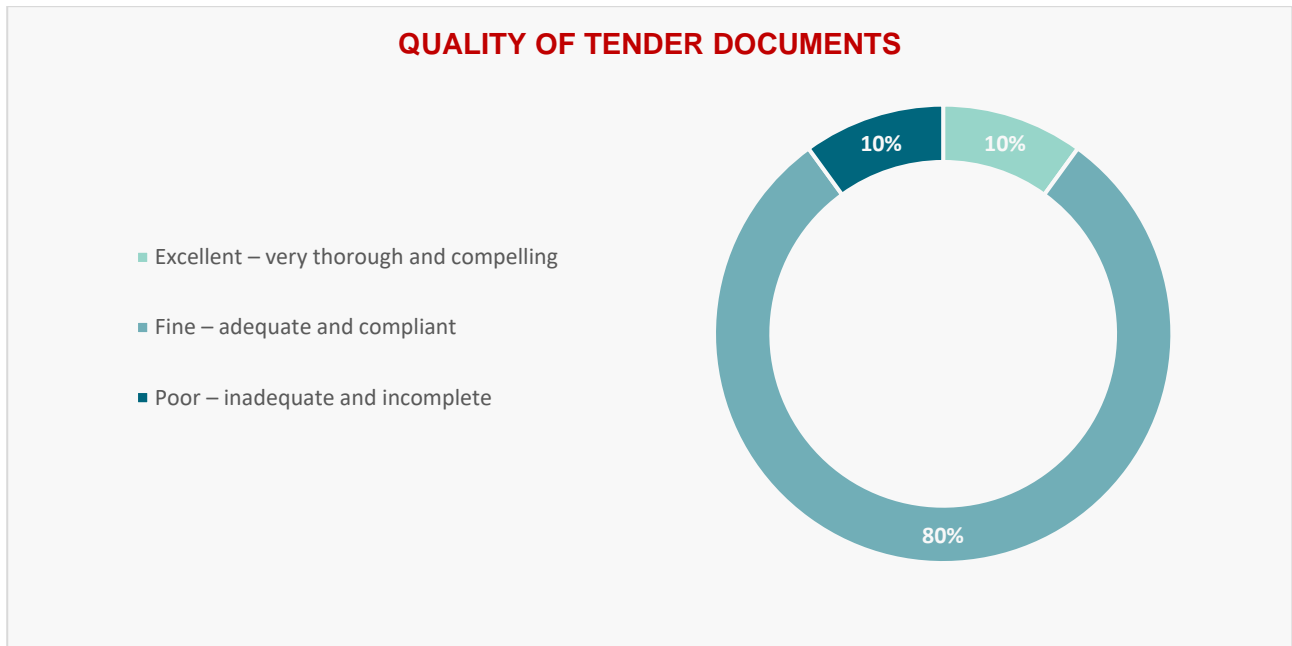


Figure 6: The typical quality of tender documents is ‘fine’ – meaning there is a great opportunity for bidders to step up and impress the evaluators.



## Importance of price

As usual, questions about price produced an interesting mixed response.

Price was the most important consideration for 20% of evaluators. In contrast, a collective 30% of evaluators said that price was either the least important consideration or less important than all other elements. In addition, the majority of evaluators (50%) said that price was very important but other elements were also considered.

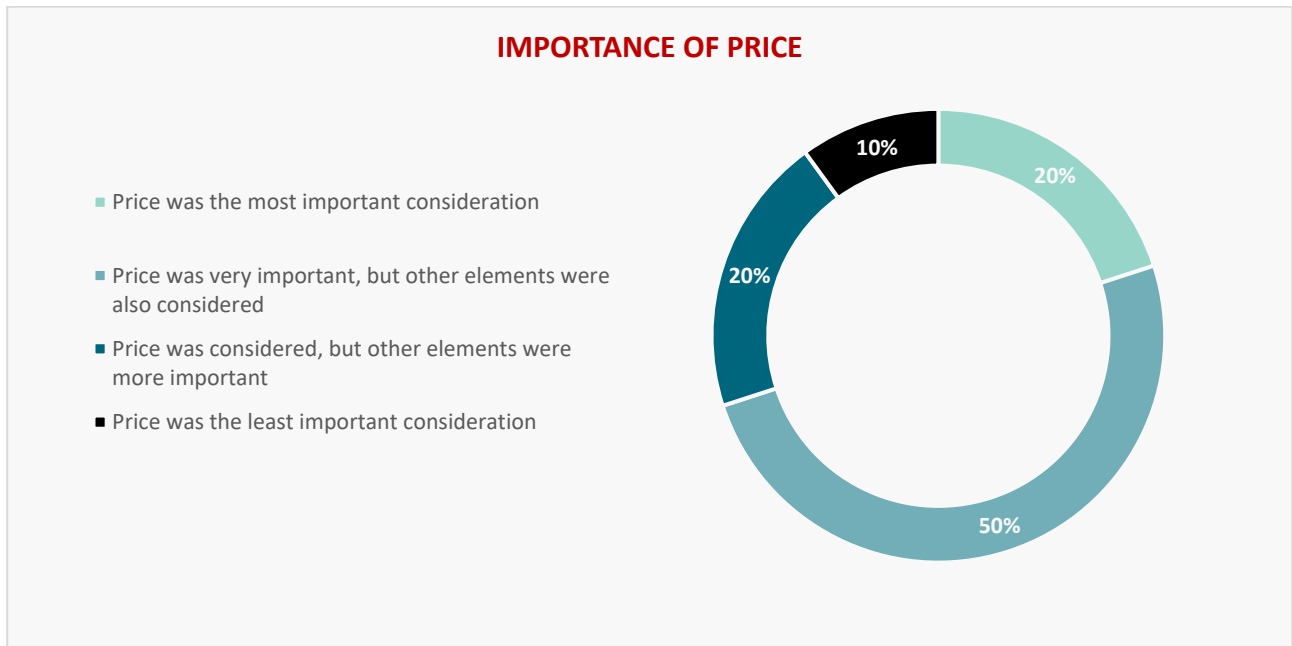


Figure 7: As we have come to expect, the importance of price prompted mixed responses.



# Lessons learned from an infrastructure mega project

We conducted a confidential interview with the procurement director of a recent infrastructure 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:

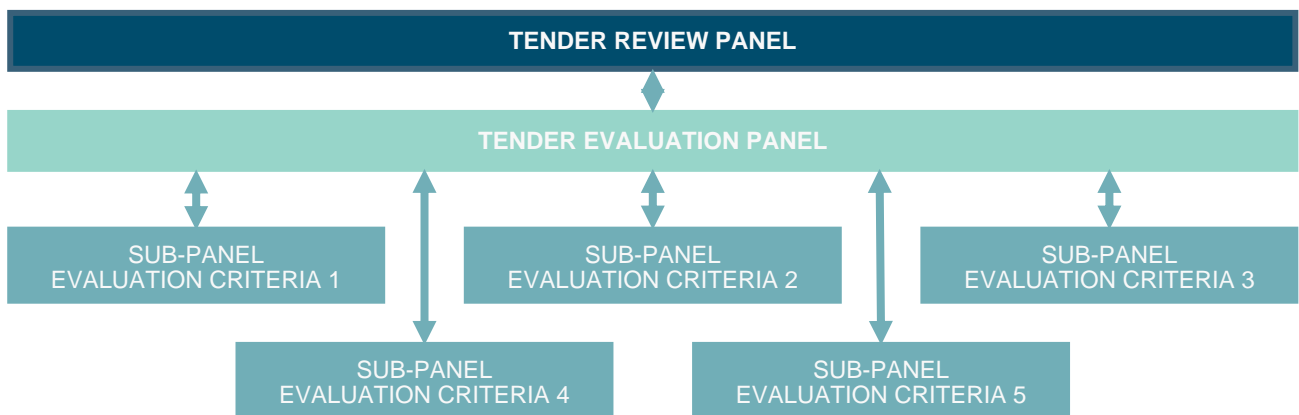


Figure 8: An example of a tender review panel from a recent mega project.

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:

Table 2: An example of a typical tender evaluation 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 infrastructure 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 infrastructure 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.



# Takeaways for writing infrastructure tender responses

Six simple ways to improve your success in infrastructure tenders:

## 1. Know and respect your audience

You should know everything you can about the buyer and their project. While a pre-existing relationship is not critical, it will improve your chances to have had effective preliminary discussions with the buyer prior to the bid period and will improve your understanding of the project's risks and challenges. On this point, evaluators commented that bidders often showed a lack of understanding of the project and the big picture, which resulted in generally poor submissions. It's also important to understand who the evaluators are so you can pitch your responses accordingly. Even in the rail sector, evaluation panels include a diverse cross-section of disciplines – they're not all engineers!

## 2. Bring your A-game to every question and presentation

Yes, price remains one of the most important sections of a tender but it's rarely the only factor evaluators consider. To win a tender, bidders need to bring their A-game to every question and every presentation they deliver. Evaluators will frequently read the entire submission so it's important that you tell a complete and consistent story that shows you understand the project and that you can give evaluators confidence in your ability to meet the performance criteria, achieve the key milestones and make budget. With only 10% of submissions and presentations deemed excellent and the remaining 90% deemed 'adequate' or 'poor' there is plenty of room for bidders to step up.

## 3. Pay attention to the 'soft stuff'

The so-called 'soft stuff' matters, with the majority of evaluators stating what we know to be instinctively true: well-presented submissions are easier to follow and make a good first impression. Neat formatting and presentation make it easier for evaluators to do their job and will engage them more easily, improving your chances of their understanding your solution and following your proposal. A clear structure and grammatical polish aren't just nice-to-haves – they demonstrate effort, professionalism and attention to detail.

## 4. Attach only pertinent information

Think carefully about what to include in your attachments. If you think you can just attach your capability statement or marketing brochure – think again. The key word here is 'pertinent': your attachments need to be pertinent and relevant to the bid. Generic information not only doesn't cut it, but it will also do your submission more harm than good with the vast majority of evaluators saying generic information is never welcome.

## 5. Stand out from the crowd

Evaluators noted that bidders are often clustered and that choosing the winning bidder is not always straightforward. This presents a fantastic opportunity to stand out from your competitors and create memorable differentiators for the evaluation panel to consider. Offer more than a compliant, business-as-usual response. Explore innovative solutions and be open to alternatives. Demonstrate your energy and enthusiasm for the buyer's project. Show your smarts and your professionalism, and your commitment to delivering a first-class submission.

## 6. Ask questions: don't be coy

A common request from evaluators is for bidders to ask more questions of the buyers. Engage with the Q&A process and ask searching questions that will help you understand the project and its inherent risks and challenges. If you're worried that your questions will reveal your solution, use the confidential question function for those types of questions; but it's in your best interests to join in the Q&A process and demonstrate your commitment and enthusiasm.



# Factors for success in infrastructure bids

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

Table 3: This is the winning formula for 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.



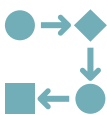
**EARLY AND BROAD ENGAGEMENT**

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 focused. 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

For more than 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, a submission like this is where all the effort our clients invest in marketing, promotion, sales and business development culminates in an all-or-nothing competitive offer. It is an 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.

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 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 and the scale of your tender, we can provide **extra resources** to fill gaps or an **entire holistic solution**.

And while this is what we are best known for, 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.

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 have the solution you need.



# Deep understanding of the infrastructure sector

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

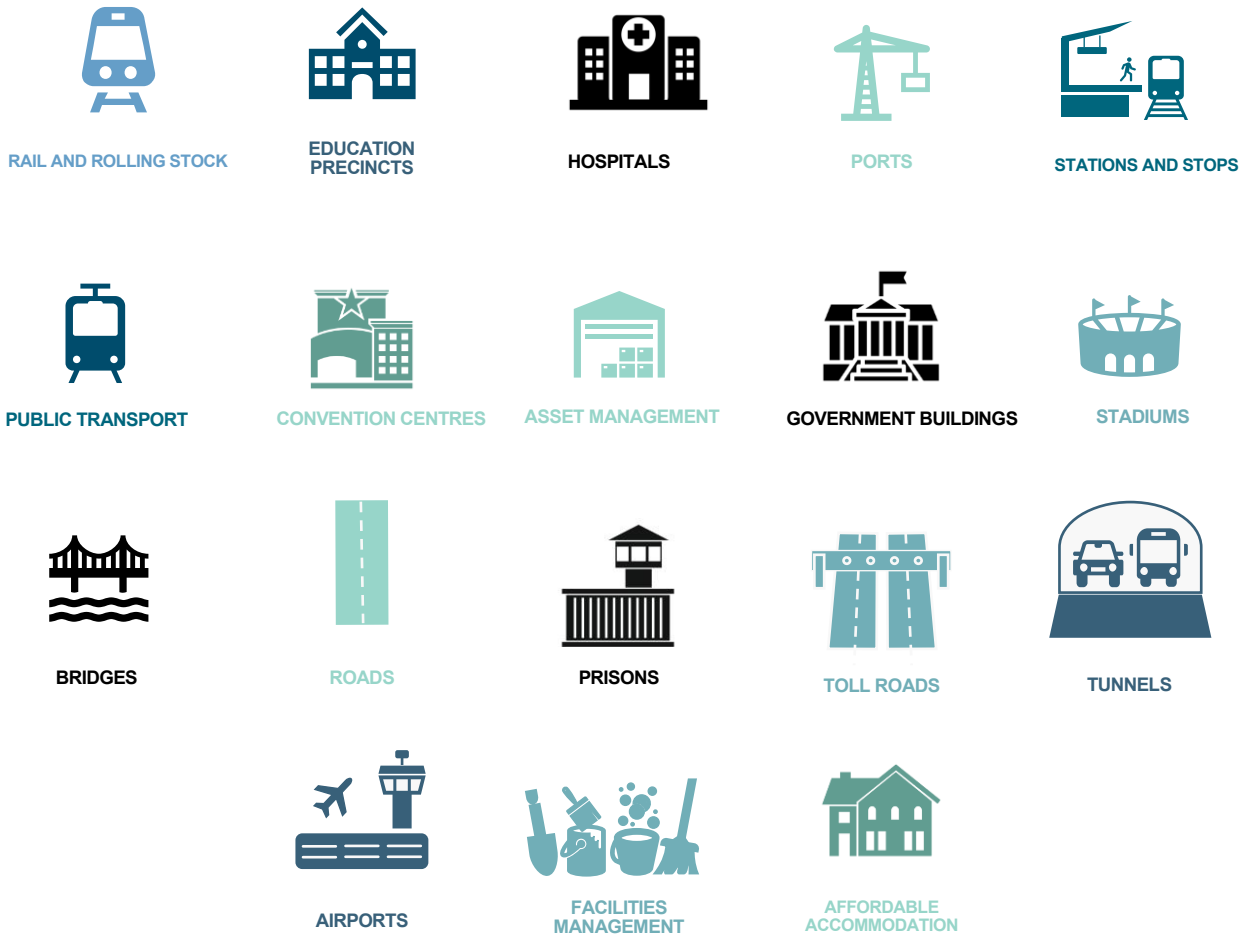
Since cutting our teeth on back-to-back mega projects around Australia over 20 years ago, we've embraced this exciting, challenging, and dynamic sector. We are members of the Australasian Rail Association, Property Council of Australia, Women Chiefs of Enterprises International (WCEI) and Committee for Brisbane and regular participants at major industry events in Australia.

We're also active participants in infrastructure 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.

Furthermore, since 2019 we have been driving a behind-the-scenes investigation of the tender evaluation process to broaden our understanding of how evaluation panels score tenders, what they are really looking for, and what the common shortfalls are. **Our latest Behind Closed Doors program was completed in 2022 and focussed specifically on the rail sector in Australia and New Zealand.** The full report can be viewed and downloaded from our website [www.auroramarketing.com.au](http://www.auroramarketing.com.au).

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

Table 4: Aurora Marketing has experience that spans the full breadth of the infrastructure industry.







# 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:

- Southbank Education and Training Precinct PPP
- Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre
- Brisbane Airport Link and Northern Busway PPP
- Sydney North West Rail Tunnelling Package
- Sydney Gateway Extension RFT
- NSW Country Regional Network
- Darra to Springfield Transport Corridor Alliance
- West Gate Bridge Strengthening VIC
- Perth CBD Courts PPP
- NSW Schools PPP
- Port of Melbourne
- Darwin Convention Centre PPP
- Defence Base Services Contract
- Sugarloaf Pipeline Alliance in Victoria
- ARTC's Southern Improvement Alliance
- Queensland Train Manufacturing Program
- Melbourne High Capacity Metro Trains PPP
- Sydney Growth Trains Project
- NSW Rolling Stock Procurement PPP
- Gold Coast Light Rail PPP
- QR New Generation Rolling Stock PPP
- Adelaide EMU Rolling Stock
- Melbourne Metropolitan Train Franchise (MR3)
- Melbourne Tram Franchise (MR4)
- Melbourne Bus Franchise
- Sydney Ferries Franchise
- RailCorp's Trackwork Services Alliance NSW
- South Road Superway SA
- Tiger Brennan Drive NT
- Facilities management contracts for hard and soft services.



**1500**  
PROJECTS



**\$160 B+**  
SUCCESSFUL  
PROJECTS



**98.5%**  
SUCCESS RATE



Offices  
 Teams  
 Major Projects  
 Projects

Figure 9: The Aurora Marketing presence continues to grow in stride with our success.



# Trusted by the leaders in infrastructure

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

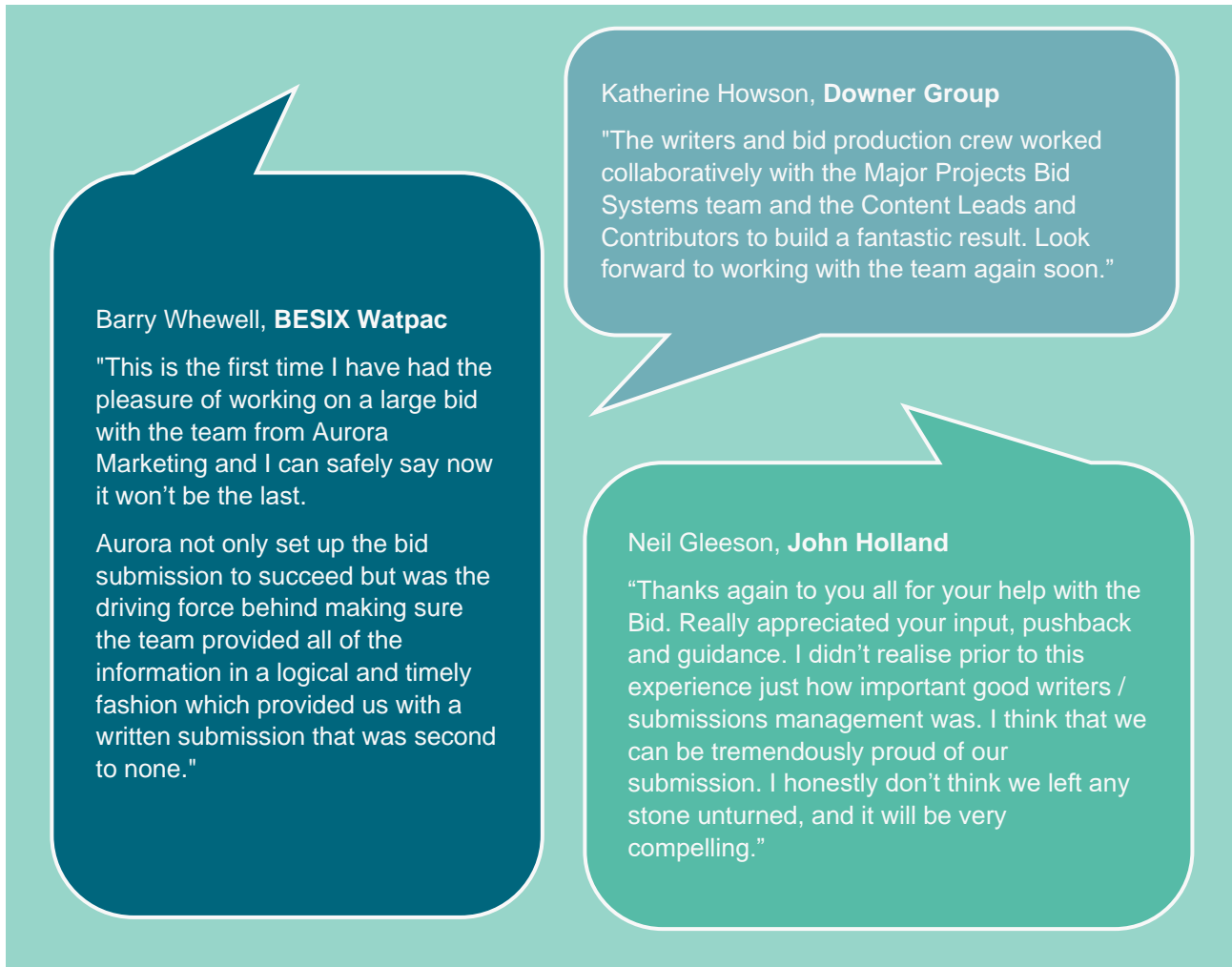
*Table 5: Our clients are as diverse as the industry itself.*





# Delivering exceptional results

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



**Barry Whewell, BESIX Watpac**

"This is the first time I have had the pleasure of working on a large bid with the team from Aurora Marketing and I can safely say now it won't be the last.

Aurora not only set up the bid submission to succeed but was the driving force behind making sure the team provided all of the information in a logical and timely fashion which provided us with a written submission that was second to none."

**Katherine Howson, Downer Group**

"The writers and bid production crew worked collaboratively with the Major Projects Bid Systems team and the Content Leads and Contributors to build a fantastic result. Look forward to working with the team again soon."

**Neil Gleeson, John Holland**

"Thanks again to you all for your help with the Bid. Really appreciated your input, pushback and guidance. I didn't realise prior to this experience just how important good writers / submissions management was. I think that we can be tremendously proud of our submission. I honestly don't think we left any stone unturned, and it will be very compelling."

Figure 10: Client testimonials.

## 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

**Phone: 1300 976 312**

**Email: [info@auroramarketing.com.au](mailto:info@auroramarketing.com.au)**

**[www.auroramarketing.com.au](http://www.auroramarketing.com.au)**