

# Design Competition Guidelines 2023

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Information about new design competition guidelines that replace the Director General's Design Excellence Guidelines 2011

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## Background

Design competitions in NSW are often a part of state and local government planning and development processes. The competitions are a way of getting the best from significant built-environment projects. But there is inconsistency across jurisdictions and tiers of government in how competitions are managed and governed.

The Director General's Design Excellence Guidelines 2011 have been in use for 11 years but are outdated and provide limited detail on key aspects of required processes. In 2018, the Government Architect NSW developed draft guidelines that were formally exhibited and have since been tested by industry, councils and state agencies in more than 50 design competitions.

## Design Competition Guidelines 2023

The new Design Competition Guidelines 2023 have been developed following extensive testing and stakeholder engagement and replaces the 2011 and draft 2018 guideline documents. The 2023 guidelines provide practical, consistent and fair advice on how to plan, deliver and participate in competitive design processes that are required by an environmental planning instrument (EPI) in NSW.

## Role of the guidelines

The Design Competition Guidelines 2023 provides clear advice to all participants in a competition process including consent authorities, local councils, applicants, competition managers and design teams. The Design Competition Guidelines 2023 clearly explains the key steps to run a successful competition that meets the requirements contained within a relevant environmental planning instrument. The guidelines provide plain language guidance on:

- how to establish a design competition
- the roles and responsibilities of participants
- the key steps in running a design competition
- the relationship between competitions and the NSW planning system
- governance and commercial considerations.

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## Where the guidelines apply

These guidelines apply in areas where a competitive design process is required under an environmental planning instrument and the relevant instrument requires ‘a competitive design process to be carried out in accordance with the 2023 Design Competition Guidelines’.

The Design Competition Guidelines 2023 will not apply in the City of Sydney, where the current Competitive Design Policy will remain active.

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## Amending state environmental planning policy

In order to give legal effect to the Design Competition Guidelines 2023 and remove outdated references, state environmental planning policy was amended to revise the definition of a competitive design process in 17 environmental planning instruments to be:

‘a design competition held in accordance with the 2023 Design Competition Guidelines published by the Department in September 2023’

The authority for granting an exemption to a competitive design process was also amended to nominate the consent authority in all relevant environmental planning instruments.

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## Consultation on the draft guidelines

The draft Government Architect NSW Design Excellence Competition Guidelines were exhibited in May 2018. We received feedback from peak bodies, design industry professionals, local councils, NSW government agencies and property industry representatives.

Key themes in the stakeholder feedback included jury composition, fees to competitors, competition exemptions and correct processes for when a local government authority has its own competition policy.

Since 2018, the draft guidelines and exhibition feedback have informed over 50 competitions. This allowed us to trial and refine our responses to the issues raised in the consultation and helped us develop the Design Competition Guidelines 2023.

The Government Architect NSW established the Design Competition Round Table to inform and update local government regarding the status and content of the new guidelines while they were under development. This forum will continue to meet, allowing us to actively engage with local government areas through the implementation and early application of the Design Competition Guidelines 2023.

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## Find out more

For further information, please contact

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## Frequently asked questions

### What is the purpose of the Design Competition Guidelines 2023?

The guidelines were created to improve clarity and consistency across jurisdictions in NSW by providing practical advice on how to plan and deliver a fair and successful design competition that meets the requirements contained within an environmental planning instrument.

### Where will the Design Competition Guidelines 2023 apply?

The Design Competition Guidelines 2023 will apply to development requiring a competitive design process under the following environmental planning instruments:

- Bayside Local Environmental Plan 2021
- Blacktown Local Environmental Plan 2015
- Blacktown Local Environmental Plan 2015 (Amendment 33)
- Canada Bay Local Environmental Plan 2013
- Newcastle Local Environmental Plan 2012
- Parramatta Local Environmental Plan 2023
- Penrith Local Environmental Plan 2010
- Randwick Local Environmental Plan 2012
- Ryde Local Environmental Plan 2014
- Strathfield Local Environmental Plan 2012
- The Hills Local Environmental Plan 2019
- Tweed City Centre Local Environmental Plan 2012
- Waverley Local Environmental Plan 2012
- Willoughby Local Environmental Plan 2012
- State Environmental Planning Policy (Precincts – Central River City) 2021
- State Environmental Planning Policy (Precincts – Eastern Harbour City) 2021
- State Environmental Planning Policy (Precincts – Regional) 2021

### When should the Design Competition Guidelines 2023 be used?

You must use the guidelines for developments where the relevant environmental planning instrument calls for a competitive design process under the Design Competition Guidelines 2023. The Design Competition Guidelines 2023 can also be used as a reference to inform voluntary and non-statutory competition processes.

### What impact does the Design Competition Guidelines 2023 have on floor space ratio and height bonuses?

The Design Competition Guidelines 2023 has no impact on when development bonuses apply because that information is specified within environmental planning instruments. In some

instruments, you must carry out a competitive design process in accordance with the Design Competition Guidelines 2023 before the consent authority can grant a bonus.

### **Will the Design Competition Guidelines 2023 impact when a competition is required?**

No. Triggers for when a competition is required are contained within environmental planning instruments.

### **What role does the Design Competition Guidelines 2023 play in exemption requests?**

Exemption provisions are contained within environmental planning instruments. The Design Competition Guidelines 2023 provides guidance on a clear and consistent process for the consent authority and applicant when considering a request for an exemption.

### **Will local design competition guidelines remain in force?**

All local government areas with a competition provision in their environmental planning instruments have adopted the Design Competition Guidelines 2023, except for City of Sydney.

### **Why do the Design Competition Guidelines 2023 not apply in City of Sydney?**

The City of Sydney's Competitive Design Policy will remain active as it has been in use since 2012 and is a well-tested and effective policy.

### **What are the key changes since the draft 2018 guidelines were exhibited?**

The Design Competition Guidelines 2023 has established clear responses to stakeholder feedback received in 2018, including:

- revising competition types – there is a clear 5 step process for all project scales
- clearly describing the roles and responsibilities of participants
- explaining endorsement authorities for key elements of process
- allowing an employee of the applicant organisation on a 5-person jury
- clarifying the role of reference designs
- further explaining and defining design Integrity processes
- clarifying the role of design integrity panels and their relationship to planning assessment.