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## Woods Bagot and NHArchitecture take home National Award for Public Architecture

Joint Venture Architects Woods Bagot and NHArchitecture's Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC) was honoured with the National Award for Public Architecture – one of the country's most prestigious annual architecture prize.



(Credit: Peter Bennetts)

Recognising Australia's most inspirational new architectural projects and the architects responsible for them, the Australian Institute of Architects applauded Joint Venture Architects Woods Bagot and NHArchitecture's Convention Centre design for its exceptional contribution to sustainable architecture in addition to re-activating Melbourne's Southbank larger urban fabric.

Receiving the National Award for Public Architecture, the Convention Centre has set a global benchmark in sustainable design as the first large public building of its kind in the world to be awarded a six Star Green Star rating by the Green Building Council of Australia.

"Woods Bagot and NHArchitecture are proud to accept such accolades, and it is undeniable the design sensibilities of the building speak for itself. We refused to allow the building to take on the common anonymity of the convention centre", said Nik Karalis, Woods Bagot Co-Principal Design Architect.

"[And...] with so many inputs, the architect is one of the few people on the project that actually has a command of the whole picture. We literally became the centre of a vast network of people and ideas. The whole consortium backed the holistic ambition to become the world's first six Star Green Star Convention Centre," said Hamish Lyon, NHArchitecture Co-Principal Design Architect.

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Beyond the aim to transcend traditional convention centre stereotypes, Woods Bagot and NHArchitecture sought to deliver a building which belonged to the public and cultural life of Melbourne and ensure that it was embedded within the physical and historical context of the site.

“The building became a fulcrum to stitch the city grid, the bend in the Yarra River, the existing exhibition building and everything else that surrounded it, so it all fell into place,” said Karalis.

The design philosophy was attributed to the idea of the convention centre essentially being about ‘the global connectivity of diverse people’.

“There will be clashes of great minds in the building, exchanging ideas and dynamic interacting with the building. It’s actually a new type of building where you don’t look at the static object. This is the new art, and it is a lot more interactive than prescriptive,” stated Karalis.

“This new precinct will be open to the usual array of critiques against privately manufactured public infrastructure projects; but, as architects, our obligation is to transcend the politics and endeavour to create long term public benefits. We hope that this will also be a sign of its developing place in the collective consciousness of Melburnians and all Victorians,” said Lyon.

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## ABOUT WOODS BAGOT

Woods Bagot’s commitment to global excellence has resulted in a workforce of 500 staff based in five regions, in cities such as Abu Dhabi, Bahrain, Sydney, Beijing, Hong Kong, London and most recently San Francisco, New York and Shanghai. Woods Bagot has also announced planning permission for what will be one of the world’s most luxurious hotels at 10 Trinity Square, London and unveiled plans for the Middle East’s tallest tower – at more than 1km high – in Dubai.

Woods Bagot’s Australian studios have recently completed several award-winning flagship projects, including ivy, Sydney (with collaborative partners HP&G and Merivale), Qantas International First Lounges (with collaborative partners Marc Newson and Sebastien Segers) and the University of Western Australia Business School, Perth. Woods Bagot has also designed the new \$200 million South Australian Health & Medical Research Institute (SAHMRI).

**PROJECT SUMMARY:** Melbourne Convention and Exhibition Centre (MCEC), Melbourne

**Area:** Convention Centre – 66, 000m<sup>2</sup>, Retail and Lifestyle - 60, 000m<sup>2</sup>

**Sustainability:** Certified to six Star Green Star Convention Centre Design PILOT rating

**Joint Venture Architects:** Woods Bagot and NHArchitecture, for the Plenary Group Consortium

**Client:** Plenary Group

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