

WRITTEN BRIEFING

EDUCATION, ARTS AND COMMUNITIES COMMITTEE

The Glasshouse Theatre

Scope

The Queensland Government, through Arts Queensland (AQ), invested in the delivery of the new 1,500 capacity Glasshouse Theatre at the Queensland Performing Arts Centre (QPAC).

The Queensland Government announced the project in May 2018. The Glasshouse Theatre, co-located with and operated by QPAC as part of the heritage listed Queensland Cultural Centre, was targeted to be operational by 2022.

In 2019, Blight Rayner + Snøhetta was announced as the successful Principal Consultant for the new Glasshouse Theatre, with Lendlease as the Managing Contractor.

Planning approvals were secured in April 2020 with construction commencing later that year.

On 20 July 2025, after a public consultation process, the Minister for the Arts publicly announced Glasshouse Theatre as the name.

The addition of the Glasshouse Theatre creates the largest performing arts centre in Australia under one roof with potential for QPAC to welcome an additional 300,000 visitors per year.

Purpose

Investing in arts infrastructure and presenting exceptional events that promote Queensland as a dynamic cultural destination are key priorities of *Queensland's Time to Shine: a 10-year strategy for arts and culture 2025–2035*.

Since opening in April 1985, QPAC has delivered exceptional arts experiences for more than 30 million people, playing a significant role in showcasing Queensland as a cultural

tourism destination and elevating live performance experiences for Queenslanders and visitors.

The Queensland Government determined there was a need for a mid-size theatre at QPAC to meet the demand for greater access to Brisbane venues and to accommodate the growth of local arts companies. In 2017, QPAC was nearing full capacity, achieving 90% venue utilisation and missing out on national tours of major productions due to a lack of access and available venues.

Cost

In May 2018, the Queensland Government announced a new \$150 million theatre at QPAC, with investment of \$125 million and QPAC investment of \$25 million.

In August 2020, the Queensland Government approved additional funding of \$25 million, for a project cost of \$175 million. Lendlease is contractually committed to deliver the project within the \$175 million envelope.

The project was impacted by the COVID-19 health pandemic, critical supply chain issues, flooding and wet weather events and insolvency of key sub-contractors.

Due to these impacts, an additional \$9 million was allocated in the 2024–25 State Budget to deliver the project and cover fees for statutory requirements, project management and expert consultation costs.

The total project budget is \$184 million with the Queensland Government contributing \$159 million and QPAC contributing \$25 million.

Delivery

The project was delivered by the Department of Housing and Public Works (DHPW), including the management of the contract with Lendlease.

Lendlease has been responsible for the construction of the new Glasshouse Theatre and the coordination of activities for architects, engineers, inspectors, sub-contractors and other specialists.

The Glasshouse Theatre reached Practical Completion on 23 January 2026 and will commence presenting productions in March.

Opening program

The program of events will kick-off with a free Community Day on 7 March 2026. The first production, *Messa da Requiem*, commences on 27 March 2026 featuring the Queensland

Ballet, Queensland Symphony Orchestra and Opera Queensland, followed by an Australian exclusive production of *The Last Ship* from 9 April to 3 May 2026 written by and starring international icon, Sting, and the world premiere of *The Drover's Wife – The Opera*, based on the work of Queensland artist, Leah Purcell AM.

Public art

The external entry forecourt of the Glasshouse Theatre features a new Queensland Government-commissioned public artwork by internationally-recognised Torres Strait Islander artist Brian Robinson.

The four-metre-high bronze sculpture titled *Floriante* is inspired by Queensland's native flora and its connection to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Installed in February 2026, the sculpture features flowering plants and an elongated ribbon form, referencing key river systems that connect to QPAC's home in South Brisbane.

Mr Robinson was selected to develop and deliver *Floriante* by an independent Public Artwork First Nations Selection Panel in 2023, following an Expression of Interest process seeking First Nations artists with a cultural connection to Queensland.

Fast facts

Design

- Wraparound seating provides close proximity of every seat to the stage ensuring an intimate performance experience.
- The orchestra pit is engineered for maximum flexibility and sound design and can be raised and lowered to accommodate orchestras of up to 60 members.
- Retractable acoustic curtains, curved walls and ceiling and the use of wood throughout the auditorium deliver outstanding acoustics.
- State-of-the-art technology including advanced lighting technology, a digital broadcast suite and a digital fly system.
- Displacement air conditioning (flowing from under seats rather than overhead) to allow for greater efficiency and control.
- Foyers are fitted out with furniture by Australian companies, including Brisbane-based brand Derlot.

Construction

- Over 6,300m³ of concrete has been poured into the foundations and structure of the Glasshouse Theatre, while over 1,500 tonnes of steel provide a robust framework for the building's structure.
- Construction has involved more than one million work hours, with 2,478 workers inducted on-site. Among them are 161 apprentices and 23 trainees who have had the invaluable opportunity to gain hands-on experience.

Glass façade

- The curved glass façade consisting of 217 panels draws inspiration from the twists and turns of the Brisbane River.
- The façade is fully suspended from the roof and extends along Russell and Grey Streets, spanning two storeys with the largest glass panel weighing nearly 2.4 tonnes.
- The glass includes thermal properties to ensure the energy efficiency requirements of the building.

Auditorium

- The auditorium is clad in 90 tonnes of sustainable Queensland ironbark timber, chosen not only for creating a warm and inviting environment, but also for its superior acoustic qualities.
- The 1,500 seats are arranged across two levels, with a gradual elevation in the stalls on the main floor to enhance audience sight lines.
- With the distance from the stage to the back row measuring just 28 metres, the auditorium offers an intimate and engaging experience for theatregoers.

Stage

- Glasshouse Theatre's stage measures 15x15 metres.
- Nearly 70 kilometres of cabling supports the venue's sophisticated equipment, including its control systems, power and communications.
- Rising 24 metres above the stage, the fly tower provides vertical space needed for sets to seamlessly 'fly' up and out of sight. The Glasshouse Theatre is QPAC's first venue to feature a fully digital fly system, enabling sets to be moved at the touch of a button.
- The orchestra pit has been engineered for maximum flexibility, enabling musicians to perform in multiple variations including in full view of the audience, as is common in musicals, or below stage level for productions that require an unseen orchestra.