

# ARCHITECT BUILDS LANDMARK EXHIBITION CENTRE AT EXPO 2020 DUBAI

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In early 2017, global architect, Woods Bagot, tendered for the contract to design one of the single largest buildings at Expo 2020: the Dubai Exhibition Centre. Today, the landmark contract is helping the company to showcase their user-focused designs to a global audience and illustrates their continued commitment to the region.

Woods Bagot is a global architectural and consulting practice, founded in Australia. With a philosophy of putting the human experience at the centre of the design process, the company is world-famous for its distinctive and artistic style. Today, its designs are gaining awards from New York and London, to Shanghai and Sydney.

Since 2001, Woods Bagot has maintained an architectural studio in the United Arab Emirates (UAE), and has helped craft a series of urban spaces, including part of the Dubai City Walk, Bluewater Island Retail and the multi award winning Jumeirah Al Naseem Hotel. According to Richard Fenne, Regional Executive Chair, Woods Bagot, Expo 2020 Dubai triggered a great architectural opportunity.

'We enjoy working in fast-evolving cities like Dubai, and Expo 2020 gave us an opportunity so show our commitment to making Dubai a global success,' he says. 'The event also enables us to project our brand to a global audience of over 25 million and to work with Dubai World Trade Centre (DWTC) on this key development.'

## Prestige construction

In early 2017, Woods Bagot tendered for the design of the Dubai Exhibition Centre. This 130,000 square-metre building will be one of the landmark Expo buildings and form the main entrance to the Expo



Expo 2020 Dubai Exhibition Centre

**'The Expo is a real opportunity to shine to a global audience. It's also a chance to forge new relationships and reinforce existing ones. There have always been strong trading ties between the UAE and Australia, and this is an opportunity to expand networks from the UAE across the wider, Middle East region.'**

Richard Fenne, Regional Executive Chair, Woods Bagot.

site from Dubai's Metro system. Consequently, it was a prestige tender that attracted bids from some of the most famous architectural practices in the world – including from Europe, North America and Asia. 'The tender was extremely well managed, and the process was transparent,' says Fenne.

## Fulfilling the UAE vision

For Woods Bagot, the Expo 2020 project exemplifies two factors that make Dubai a magnet for professional architects: speed and vision.

'When I speak to my colleagues across the world and compare clients, the one thing that stands out is the speed at which things happen here,' says Fenne. 'It's sometimes difficult to fully appreciate the scale of the Expo 2020 project. Executing this project in a developed city in Western Europe or North America could have taken decades –



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depending on the location – but the UAE is a very fast-paced environment.’

Fenne observes that the Expo project conforms to the UAE vision of a sustainable, resilient economy. Many of the buildings will become part of a permanent legacy master plan once Expo 2020 is over, and Fenne attests to the quality of construction and environmental standards that are required.

‘Expo 2020 Dubai is very high profile, and the project has brought us into contact with the leadership of the UAE,’ he says. ‘The way the project is handled has reaffirmed to us how important it is for the UAE to live out its vision of a sustainable and resilient economy.’

### **Exhilarating, fast-paced construction**

For Woods Bagot employees, the Expo 2020 construction site is a great place to work. Personnel on the various design and construction teams are international, with US, UK and Australian companies well represented. The contractor is a recognised ‘Tier-1’ firm, and construction is brisk.

‘It’s an exhilarating place to work,’ says Fenne. ‘Expo 2020 is truly different from other large projects – there is real ambition to achieve a significant event, and the energy and vision are just terrific. The project itself keeps you sharp and alert, and having to adapt.

‘What’s more there is a very strong focus on legacy,’ he adds. ‘The masterplan for Expo will see the site become a new district for Dubai after the show, with over 80 per cent of the buildings re-purposed or transformed into permanent spaces.’

### **Showcasing Australian architecture, construction & design**

The Expo 2020 project is proving a once-in-a-decade opportunity for Australian companies to showcase their unique qualities to contacts and customers in the Middle East and from around the world. This is partly because much of the Expo 2020 site will become a permanent feature of Dubai’s exhibition industry after the event.

‘There are scores of pavilions from all the participating countries, and this means there is a constant stream of open-procurement tenders’ says the Woods Bagot Regional Executive Chair. ‘Also there are lots of opportunities with suppliers.’

Australian companies can identify upcoming opportunities through the Expo 2020 Dubai procurement portal. It lists the projects that will shortly be tendered; and Fenne reports that navigation is easy and registration is straightforward.

‘The Expo is a real opportunity for Australian companies to shine in front of a global audience,’ he says. ‘It’s also a chance to forge new relationships and reinforce existing ones. There have always been strong trading ties between the UAE and Australia, and this is an opportunity to expand networks from the UAE across the wider, Middle East region.’

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