

Multi-tasking for architects

Chris Herde

TOUGH times have sparked a change in the Queensland architectural landscape, according to the profession's peak lobby group.

Australian Institute of Architects Queensland president Peter Skinner said firms were broadening services and international companies were seeking work in Australia.

"It's very tough out there and I think firms are looking to where the work is and are trying to create linkages," he said.

"The overall trend is for multi-disciplinary teams that have architecture, urban design, landscaping and increasingly engineering services on offer.

"There are also a number of international firms looking for work in Queensland because there's not a lot happening in Europe at the moment and I guess there's little return from the Middle East."

Recently there have been a couple of mergers, with locals whitearchitecture and Mode Design respectively joining forces with Melbourne firms Rothelowman and Morris Partnership.

Mr Skinner said mergers and acquisitions were usually motivated by the desire to broaden services.

"Also the costs of business these days are very high in terms of the infrastructure ... such as software licences, work procurement, the tender process and quality assurances," he said.

"All of those costs make it very difficult for mid-sized firms. So I think there are general efficiencies in larger firms being



CREATING LINKS: Peter Skinner.

able to spread work across more operations."

Mr Skinner said conditions were the worst since the 1990s.

"There's a whole generation of architects out there who have been practising for 20 years and for them it's been the worst they've experienced," he said.

"But it's a global issue rather than a local one and in Queensland we have to look at where there's growth, which is the mining and resources area.

"Even though it's tough in Brisbane and very, very tough on the Gold Coast and Cairns because of the tourist industry, from Townsville down to Gladstone there is a different mood."

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