



AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE  
OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS  
(AILA)

EMPLOYMENT STATEMENT  
2011

the employment environment  
for landscape architects  
within australia

## Overview of the Profession

The 21<sup>st</sup> Century has turned out to be a time whereby people are awakening to the fact that our urban and natural landscapes are key to dealing with this planet's climate change and environmental issues.

People are very much more tuned into thinking about their urban environments, their landscapes, the ecology – the spirit of the place.

It is indeed a great time to be dealing with Place Making\*. It is the right time to be a Landscape Architect.

Climate Change has provided a much overdue wake up call to all professions dealing with the built environment. Communities have become frustrated by their local, regional and national agencies who have had responsibilities for the urban environments in which we all live.

The general public have become much more aware that traditional answers and past planning practices are not delivering the environmental solutions that society now expects within their built communities. Too much emphasis in the past has been on the provisions of the buildings with scant regard for the landscape. It is timely to reverse the way we think about our urban environments and to think first and foremost about the landscape and then to address how we place buildings and developments within these landscapes.

We should now be measuring all developments against criteria that indicates how such developments will enhance the Green Infrastructure\* of the urban spaces and associated natural environments.

Achieving effective and sustainable outcomes in the built and natural environment requires an integrated response. It is timely to think of doing away with the 20<sup>th</sup> Century models of planning and development and to begin with an Integrated Design\* approach to all future developments and re-developments.

The public domain, in which the majority of landscape architects operate, plays an increasingly important role as the venue for social interaction, celebration and human endeavour. Consequently it is essential that the public domain incorporate places that are meaningful, enjoyable, and equitable for the people who use them.

Landscape architects have a leading role to play in defining and implementing such integrated solutions. To fulfil their leadership role, landscape architects need to be not only creative in planning and design but also effective in influencing policy, priorities, allocation of resources and public perceptions and expectations.

As the roles of landscape architects are becoming more understood, the more aspects of planning, design, management and stewardship of the landscape, urban spaces and all built environments are being identified as requiring the collaborative and integrated solutions as provided by Registered Landscape Architects.

The contribution that Registered Landscape Architects can make at this point in time – here in the early stages of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century - is both immense and pivotal

\* see AILA policies: [www.aila.org.au/policies](http://www.aila.org.au/policies)

## Employment

In later 2008 the situation changed for all built environment design professions as a result of the onslaught of the Global Financial Crisis.

However, while other allied professions were suffering layoffs, the Landscape Architecture profession continued to grow and this has been the situation through 2009 and 2010.

What employers reported was that while certain sectors of practice initially slowed during the Global Financial Crisis, especially those where practices were linked to architecture and property development, there was continued growth in other most other areas such as those working on local government initiatives.

Governments and agencies even more now seek out landscape architects to provide creative design solutions in landscape planning, landscape management, urban design as well as in other areas such as heritage management and environmental planning.

Many vacancies during the former years of the 21<sup>st</sup> Century were filled by desperate employers through the employment of non registered professionals and other para-professionals. Fortunately landscape architects are now reclaiming these positions and agencies are now benefitting from employing registered landscape architects with recognised professional expertise and experience.

## the Increasing Diversity within the Profession

The demands on landscape architects have required an increase in the diversity of skills required. Landscape Architecture now encompasses professionals with increasingly diverse backgrounds including environmental science, landscape planning, landscape management, urban design, planning, graphic arts, arboriculture, horticulture, and project management.

Many practices have experienced problems with finding landscape architects with CAD skills to carry out documentation. Consequently a number of these firms have been employing personnel from other disciplines and are training them in-house to cope with other aspects of the profession.

Given the diversity of the disciplines involved within the profession and the increased recognition of employing a recognised professional, the demand continues to increase for landscape architects both in private and public practice.

## How many Landscape Architects in Australia?

It is estimated that there are currently well over three and half thousand landscape architects employed across a diverse range of disciplines in Australia.

It is also estimated that over a thousand of these could be in the public sector.

The latter are hard to identify as many are employed under other public sector titles as well as may have adopted the titles of urban planners or urban designers.

## Immigration

The profession of landscape architect has maintained a position on the listings for immigration as published by the Commonwealth as being a profession with shortages that could be filled through immigration.

## The Future

At present there is a consistent demand for landscape architects across the all areas of practice in both private and public practice.

It is a time whereby landscape architects are able to diversify into a wide range of areas of practice and to be able to choose in which areas of practice they wish to delivery design solutions.

Most layers of government and other clients have recognised the benefits of engaging with this multi disciplinary and creative science based design profession.

The future employment prospects for landscape architects in Australia remains very positive because of the employment demands and because of the diversity of expertise that underpins the profession.

Landscape Architecture in Australia has a very positive future – the demands for more landscape architects continues to grow and this situation has shown no sign of changing.

## Dealing with the future employment needs

For the profession to meet the constantly growing demands, attention is being focussed by the AILA on increasing the quality and the number of graduates entering the field as well as the provision of continuing professional development available to present landscape architects and those transferring from other disciplines.

National strategies are in place to address the following:

- To maintain as a minimum the present number of AILA Accredited University programs.

- To examine if any of the present programs can increase their student enrolments.

- To examine the options for new AILA accredited programs with an emphasis design practice in the areas of land management, landscape planning and urban design.

- To ensure that new AILA accredited programs have a focus in niche areas different to the present suite of AILA accredited programs.

- As a priority, to explore options for new AILA accredited programs in NSW and Queensland.

- To encourage new AILA accredited programs outside the inner metropolitan areas.

- To advocate for increased resources to be allocated to the AILA recognised programs in order that graduates are prepared for the ever-changing and expanding working environment and the complexity of skills required to practice in Landscape Architecture.

- To seek a significant increase in the resources for the provision of on-going professional development following graduation.

- To offer the extra AILA National Registration to Registered Landscape Architects who wish to be also titled as AILA Registered Urban Designers - or AILA Registered Landscape Planners and Managers.

## Definition of the landscape architect

Landscape Architects research, plan, design and advise on the stewardship, conservation and sustainability of development of the environment and spaces, both within and beyond the built environment.

To become a recognised professional landscape architect in Australia, the first requirement is to obtain a degree in landscape architecture accredited by the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA).

After at least two years of recognised professional practice, graduates may submit for further assessment to obtain full professional recognition by the AILA.

The scope of work for landscape architects may include:

- Developing new or improved theories, policy and methods for landscape planning, design and management at local, regional, national and multinational levels.
- Developing policies and plans and implementing and monitoring proposals for conservation and recreation areas such as national parks.
- Developing new or improved theories and methods to promote environmental awareness and undertaking planning, design, restoration, management and maintenance of cultural and/or historic landscapes, parks, sites and gardens.
- Planning, design, management, maintenance and monitoring functional and aesthetic layouts of built environment in urban, suburban, and rural areas including private and public open spaces, parks, gardens, streetscapes, plazas, housing developments, burial grounds, memorials; tourist, commercial, industrial and educational complexes; sports grounds, zoos, botanic gardens, recreation areas and farms.
- Contributing to the planning, aesthetic and functional design, location, management and maintenance of infrastructure such as roads, dams, wind farms and other energy and major development projects.
- Undertaking landscape assessments including environmental and visual impact assessments to prepare policies or inform new developments.
- Inspecting sites, analysing factors such as climate, soil, flora, fauna, surface and subsurface water and drainage; and consulting with clients and making recommendations regarding methods of work and sequences of operations for projects related to the landscape and built environment.
- Identifying and developing appropriate solutions regarding the quality and use of the built environment in urban, suburban and rural areas and making designs, plans and working drawings, specifications of work, cost estimates and time schedules.
- Monitoring the realisation and inspecting the construction of proposals to ensure compliance with plans, specifications of work, cost estimates and time schedules.
- Conducting research, preparing scientific papers and technical reports, developing policy, teaching, and advising on aspects regarding landscape architecture such as the application of geographic information systems, remote sensing, law, landscape communication, interpretation and landscape ecology.
- Project management of large scale landscape planning and design projects including management of other consultants such as engineers, architects and planners.
- Acting as an expert witness in Development and Environment Courts

This definition of the profession of landscape architect is based on the International Standard Classification of Occupations, International Labour Office, Geneva.