

MAR09

LAND MARK



Australian landscape principles

Value Our Landscape
Protect—Enhance—Regenerate
Design with Respect
Design for the Future
Embrace Responsive Design

01

Introducing the conference

For this issue of **LANDMARK** a focus has been placed on the chairs and organisers for the coming AILA 2009 conference. These people include those that volunteered to chair a session, some of the organisers as well as our own conference curator/convenor.

This group of conference leaders were asked to provide a few words, a postcard, a statement on current issues or any form of provocative statement to stir up the membership to participate in the conference debates. Most responded—and here are their contributions:



A Publication of the
**Australian
Institute of
Landscape
Architects**

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Is this what we wanted?

Neil Hobbs

Over many years I have been continually intrigued at public perceptions of favoured landscapes. Ask the question on Canberra, and inevitably it is the Sculpture Garden at the National Gallery of Australia. I have heard this from politicians, architects and the general public. This much-contested landscape has essentially grown itself in the intervening years following the insightful design by the landscape architects and a happy few years of close collaboration with a committed parks manager. Over that time it has continued to impress locals and visitors, and for whatever reasons holds a special place as a distinctly Australian landscape in what had become a distinctly Australian (ie bush) Capital. It would seem that the use of native planting has had an influence on this perception, and also the apparently random design of the pathways and asymmetrical disposition of the spaces. Environmentally it works, with minimal impervious materials promoting ground water infiltration, and very limited irrigation. I have to excuse the fog sculpture, which does produce a specific microclimate, if only for a couple of hours a day.

Contrast this with two recent and ongoing developments in Canberra—The Brindabella Office Park (surrounding the airport) and Childers Street/City West.

The commercial development at the airport purports to be 5–6 green star development, all well and good, (though the landscape is irrigated with bore water) but on a 'sense of place' scale it does not rate. It is the same as any other business park developed anywhere internationally over the last two decades. The only pointer to anything remotely Australian is a temporary road sign to 'Queanbeyan'—(Queanbeyan of course has a sense of place—while there are many variations on 'Kingston' around the world, there is indisputably only one Queanbeyan!). The landscape consists of deciduous trees, irrigated grassing and blocks of generally exotic shrubs and ground cover. It is from everywhere, but creates a non-place.

Childers Street/City West has been developed and promoted as an 'engaging connection of the Australian National University with the western edge of Civic' (a kind of 'Newtown meets Gown' or something like that). It is still a construction site, but is rapidly filling with student accommodation, commercial space and multi level carparks. Trouble is, someone forgot to plant trees. There is a lot of colour and movement in the buildings, (Kick it to me!) and again, they have been designed to meet Commonwealth mandated green star ratings for commercial office space, and wonderful water sensitive reed beds and stormwater management systems, but half the landscape is missing. The scale and proportion of the street corridor demands more than buildings and artworks. On a 'sense of place' scale, Childers Street would edge out Brindabella Office Park, but it is a marginal call.



The Institute has been developing a set of landscape principles, for the Commonwealth funded adaptation to climate change project. The draft principles (briefly) are:

1. **Value Our Landscape**
2. **Protect—Enhance—Regenerate**
3. **Design with Respect**
4. **Design for the Future**
5. **Embrace Responsive Design**

AILA's 'Shifting Perspective' conference will ask all of us to question our current approach to practice. Do we meet AILA's landscape principles in all our projects, or only some of them? Which ones? Do many of us work on several levels—with some projects missing out completely, while on others we may make more of an effort? Is it clients that request the environmentally, socially and economically appropriate responses, or do we try to influence our clients to implement appropriate outcomes?

I am pleased to read of the federal government's stimulus package, it will go some way to meet the long-standing need for infrastructure upgrading of schools and community facilities. The states are also rapidly ramping up worthy projects. What I don't see in all this stimulus is a landscape prism for project selection. Following the conference, the Institute will be commencing a broad-based advocacy program promoting AILA's landscape principles to all state and local governments, land managers and commonwealth departments. The goal is to turn around the basis for conceptualising and implementing development. Rather than the current practice of letting the landscape attempt to tie up loose ends, the implementation of AILA's landscape principles will underpin development decisions at all scales of project.

In closing, without wishing ill will on those people who have suffered economic loss or in some cases even been imprisoned for alleged corruption, one of the outcomes from the economic crisis is that it now seems possible to say that the Dubais (and many other Gulf developments) 'have no clothes'. I will say that I have not been there, but from what I have seen or read in various media, or been told, AILA's landscape principles do not seem to fit with what is on the ground. The world deserves better. It is not what I wanted.

Neil Hobbs, AILA National President

Completing the conversation

Professor Catherin Bull

Conferences are always about starting conversations within a topic and pushing along our thinking. This conference has some great speakers and subject themes in the offing around the future of practice and during the conference itself, speakers will push that thinking and provide opportunities for review of the material presented in the sessions.

There will also be the inevitable discussions amongst participating colleagues that occur around the ideas raised – in the corridors, over meals, over drink and on the tram. The final panel debate on Saturday night is structured to take those discussions even further, as a discussion that gives delegates access to conference speakers to debate the big questions that arise as the conference conversation evolves.

The co-chairs, Di Menzies (President of IFLA) and Catherin Bull (University of Melbourne) will seek comments and

questions from participants over the period of the conference, coordinating and pre-circulating those to panel participants who include speakers and visiting dignitaries. They will therefore come to the event ready to converse more widely and extend the topic in the light of their experience and reflections over those few days.

The goal is to produce a discussion that can be recorded, edited and published in 'Landscape Architecture Australia' as a provocative and valuable conclusion that records the conference activities and conversations—as an invaluable guide to practice itself. What will practice be? How should it see itself in this period of change? How should it position itself to address the challenges ahead?

"Come, converse and contribute."

02

You say you want a revolution...

Dr. SueAnne Ware, RMIT University

Fidel Castro once wrote, "A revolution is not a bed of roses. A revolution is a struggle between the future and the past." I can't think of a more critical point in my lifetime where the profession of landscape architecture needs to seriously reflect on where it has been and where it is yet to go. We are in the midst of global economic and environmental crisis. This in turn means that we are at a crucial point in history where we can become part of a larger movement towards change.

It is fair to state that landscape architects have in recent times remained relatively apolitical. We have exercised our right to apathy and complacency fairly well. "Political blindness is not new to architecture, nor is it rare in society. To stake a political claim is to run the risk of clashing with a divergent set of cultural values and alienating potential clients, prospects that few find enjoyable." This is demonstrated largely through the amount of really average work being churned out in relative times of economic plenty. In the 1980s and 1990s this work was referred to as 'bread and butter' projects, meaning work firms did to pay the bills leaving the really juicy speculative projects for competitions or university studios. Unfortunately, the main stream of the profession in Australia has not really come to terms with how to shift low budget, low profile projects into exceptional investigations of design richness. There are a few notable exceptions of course, like Site Office's Raglan Street Parkland in South Melbourne (2007), but by and large many of these opportunities have been

wasted. So for the first point of this article, I would like to suggest that all firms reconsider the range of projects that we currently have and regardless of budgetary constraints have a real go at advocating for something better. Fine words form an academic who does not have a team of staff to keep out of the proverbial poorhouse. I openly acknowledge that my practice in Australia is extremely limited but because I have witnessed such a lack of rigorous, lateral thinking towards the 'everyday' project... I may throw my hat in the ring sooner than anticipated. As landscape architects most of our work is in the public realm, which does not mean it is designed for blandness, or stylised, sleek fit outs. Where are the projects which take a stand about the communities' which have been displaced? Where are the projects which call attention to the privatisation of the public realm and the fact that 75% of the public realm is now under camera surveillance?

I am calling for landscape architects to become activist practitioners. For those of you who maybe reading this thinking it is a daggy, throwback to the 1960s there has been a wealth of recent discourse around the contested terrain of public space post 9/11 and design as activism. Historically, landscape architects have been very conscious of their close relationship with societal and ecological issues. But unfortunately there is now a trend to choose between the social and ecological. For example, to live in a more 'sustainable' housing situation, closer to public transport, with WSUD, and edible

landscaping means that buyers and renters must be of a certain income and stature. We design economic difference out. This mutual exclusivity is partially due to the nature of our legislative and policy devising systems. As issues in society materialise and enter into the public conscious, regulations emerge to address them. Hence, recently popularised concerns over climate change and resource scarcity currently drive us to concentrate on ecologically, sustainable, green star-rated, solutions. But this can and often does alleviate the burden of considering what the design does in terms of social justice, cultural continuation, and placemaking. Hence, we now make entire suburbs which are designed to disengage further from their existing communities, a sort of *green gentrification*. My second point is that we have to find and work through ways of advocating for design as a model of community support and empowerment where we find innovative exchanges of ecologically sensitive and socially, economically diverse models of living.¹

So far this essays reiterates much of what the Berkley School (UC Berkeley) advocated for through Randy Hester and Claire Cooper-Marcus in the beginnings of the multi-cultural, post modern 1980s. Where it departs is that it values design and aesthetics as well as social and

ecological best practices. There are too many hideous community based projects as well as a plethora of banal 'green' projects in landscape architecture today. Why is it that by privileging the social or the environmental, our aesthetics must be denied? Designers understand and work with the transformation of space, we have an amazing capacity for lateral thinking and yet we tend to problem solve rather than innovate when faced with many contemporary landscape challenges. My final point is to call on practitioners both from the academy and the *real world* to reclaim aesthetics. The poetic and ethereal role of landscape should not be dismissed or downplayed at the expense of these other two. We have a multi-valent, temporal medium, yet too often it is subsumed by our own lack of self initiative towards rendering landscape as the most amazing aspect of any design work. Finally I would like to paraphrase Leoni Sandercock in her call for action, if our political engagement is to move beyond "tiny empowerments" and toward systemic change, we must find a way to move out of the cacophony of a million voices and toward the harmony of a choir that obtains its power from collectivity. What we require is a landscape architecture of change-one which recognises the design of new processes of engagement with the political forces that shape theories, practices, academies, policies, and communities.²

¹ This is roughly adapted from GAMEZ, J. L. S. & ROGERS, S. (2008) Introduction. IN BELL, B. & WAKEFORD, K. (Eds.) *Expanding Architecture: Design as Activism*. New York, Metropolis.

² SANDERCOCK, L. (1998) *Towards Cosmopolis: Planning for Multicultural Cities*. New York, John Wiley.



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shifting perspective & practice



an interdisciplinary future AILA NATIONAL CONFERENCE 2009 MELBOURNE DOCKLANDS 7-9 MAY

Mathur / Da Cunha

Anuradha Mathur and Dilip da Cunha have focused their artistic and design expertise for the past decade on cultural and ecological issues of contentious landscapes. Their investigations have taken them to diverse terrains including the Lower Mississippi, New York, Sundarbans, Rio Grande, and Bangalore. They believe that landscapes are shifting, living material phenomena that demand an attitude of negotiation rather than unilateral control. Their mission is to create through innovative modes of visual representation the ground for this attitude in design.



Anuradha is an architect and landscape architect. She is Associate Professor, School of Design, University of Pennsylvania. She has a Masters in Landscape Architecture from the University of Pennsylvania and a Bachelors of Architecture from CEPT, Ahmedabad. Dilip is an architect and planner. He is faculty at Parsons School of Design, New York and at the University of Pennsylvania. He has a Ph.D from the University of California at Berkeley, Masters in City Planning from Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Masters in Housing from SPA, New Delhi, and Bachelors of Architecture from Bangalore University.

Built Environment Design Professionals, including landscape architects, are being challenged by the need to engage in continuous adaptation and respond to the implications of globalization, climate change and population growth. It has become increasingly evident that present design forms and approaches frequently fail to meet these challenges.

There is an urgent need to seek out new ways of responding to the effects of ecological, economic and social change on urban and landscape environments. Built environment design professions require multiple approaches and scales of engagement in order to present society with future design scenarios to respond to increasingly complex conditions.

The 2009 AILA National Conference seeks responses to these needs through showcasing various examples of professional engagement in developing contemporary community perspectives of real and imagined landscapes. The Conference sessions and speakers will explore the proposition that the built environment design professions should lead positive change in designed landscapes.

Alma Du Solier

Alma Du Solier is a landscape designer and architect with extensive experience in the practice of landscape design, urban design, architecture and planning. She has been working for more than a decade as key designer and project manager for a wide range of projects from urban parks and streetscape projects, covering the entire spectrum of tasks, from concept and master planning to detailed construction documentation and implementation. Alma employs a unique multidisciplinary design approach due to her strong background in both landscape design and architecture, and her interest on collaboration and on the meaningful integration of design with site and culture. Her experience includes significant projects in the US and in Mexico, where she is a licensed architect.



Leon Van Schaik AO

Leon van Schaik studied at the Architectural Association (AA) in London and is professor of architecture at the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT) where he holds an innovation chair. From his base in Melbourne, he has promoted local and international architectural culture through practice-based research. In 2005, at the 75th anniversary awards of the RAIA he was awarded the inaugural Neville Quarry Prize for Architectural Education.

On 26 January 2006 Leon van Schaik was awarded an Order of Australia, Officer (AO) in the General Division, for service to architecture as an academic, practitioner and educator, and to the community through involvement with a wide range of boards and organisations related to architecture, culture and the arts.

He is the author of *Mastering Architecture: Becoming a Creative Innovator in Practice* (Wiley-Academy, 2005), and *Design City Melbourne*, (Wiley-Academy, 2006). He provided editorial advice and an essay the monograph on John Wardall Architects Volume (Thames & Hudson 2008) and *Denton Corker Marshall: Non-fictional Narratives* (Birkhauser 2008). His latest book, *Spatial Intelligence*, was released in September 2008.





Francesca Galeazzi

Francesca Galeazzi is an architect and engineer working as an environmental sustainability specialist.

Before joining Arup Associates in 2004, she worked for Arup in London as low-energy building services engineer, gaining experience in environmental design at both an urban and individual building scale, on a variety of projects in the UK and abroad.

In her profession she has developed a thorough understanding of environmental policies and strategies relating to sustainable development in London and UK, broad environmental issues, sustainability and energy conservation.

Francesca is Arup Associates representative in the Building Sector Sustainability Strategy.

Since 2002 she has regularly lectured on sustainable development and environmental strategies in architecture at London Metropolitan University and is active in promoting sustainable design to engineers, architects and construction professionals in UK and abroad.



Beth Meyer

Sustainable landscape design is generally understood in relation to three principles—ecological health, social justice and economic prosperity. Rarely do aesthetics factor into sustainability discourse, except in negative asides conflating the visible with the aesthetic and rendering both superfluous.

This presentation examines the role of beauty and aesthetics in a sustainability agenda. It argues that it will take more than ecologically regenerative designs for culture to be sustainable, that what is needed are designed landscapes that provoke those who experience them to become more aware of how their actions affect the environment, and to care enough to make changes. This involves considering the role of aesthetic environmental experiences, such as beauty, in re-centering human consciousness from an egocentric to a more bio-centric perspective. This argument in the form of a manifesto is inspired by American landscape architects whose work is not usually understood as contributing to sustainable design.



Jason Prior

President / Principal,
Landscape Architecture

As a practising landscape architect and urban designer, Jason is president of EDAW and has been a principal and director of the firm for 14 years. He leads teams delivering integrated, broad based solutions for a variety of complex design and planning projects for both public and private sector clients.

His experience includes the design and implementation of a number of high profile landscape, urban design and regeneration projects. Jason was one of the key consultants responsible for the development framework, detailed masterplan, and public realm strategy for Manchester City Centre following the 1996 IRA bombing. He led the team providing the Lower Lea Valley Regeneration Framework and Olympic and Legacy Masterplans that underpinned London's bid for hosting the 2012 Olympic Games and Paralympic Games. He led the EDAW team to develop the Olympic Park masterplan and initiate the design of the infrastructure elements, and is now leading the EDAW, Allies and Morrison and KCAP team developing the Olympic Legacy Masterplan Framework.

Jason is a member of the UK Landscape Institute and also a Commissioner for the UK Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment.



Walter Hood

Walter Hood is Professor and former Chair of the Landscape Architecture Department at the University of California, Berkeley, and principal of Hood Design in Oakland, CA. Hood has worked in a variety of settings including architecture, urban design, community planning, environmental art, and research.

He was a fellow at the American Academy in Rome in Landscape Architecture, 1997. He has exhibited and lectured on his professional projects and theoretical works nationally and abroad. His work was recently featured in the exhibition and publication, "Open" New Designs For Public Spaces, Van Allen Institute, NY, Metropolis Magazine, the New York Times, and Dwell Magazine. His firm designed the gardens and landscape for the New De Young Museum, San Francisco with Swiss architects Herzog and de Meuron.

Walter Hood's published monographs: *Urban Diaries* and *Blues & Jazz Landscape Improvisations* illuminate his unique approach to the design of urban landscapes. These works won an ASLA Research award in 1996. His essay "Macon Memories" is featured in *Sites of Memory*, Princeton Press, 2001. Hood participated in the San Francisco Museum of Modern Art's "Revelatory Landscapes" Exhibition 2000–2001. He is currently researching and writing a book entitled *Urban Landscapes; American Landscape Typologies*. His area of teaching, the American Urban Landscape, is intertwined with his design work creating a didactic approach to the design of urban landscapes.



Supporting the national conference

Rob Cooper

There are some simple professional reasons for Coomes Consulting Group's support of the 2009 AILA National Conference and there are other reasons aligned to the spirit of the Conference Curator's provocative Statement¹.

Coomes is a 25 years young integrated services Company and so the Conference themes are very relevant to our structure, work and future. In addition the Conference Presenters offer attendees a depth of intellect and experience that guarantees worthy scrutiny of established and emerging practice.

By choice, Coomes will be chairing the Session featuring Anuradha Mathur and Dilip da Cunha. These speakers will talk about down to earth responses to understanding and achieving our obligations to landscape and culture—a daily debate for us. Anuradha Mathur / Dilip da Cunha, in their work on revealing and celebrating the 'layers of meaning' in the Bangalore cityscape, relate that colonial surveyors described the Indian landscape as 'naked country', an echoing of our own inheritance of a supposed 'terra nullis'.

Has this perspective really shifted? Our profession purports to understand culture and landscape but so often inadequately appreciates the past on which the present is based. For example, we in Melbourne have just been treated to a natural and cultural historian's view of the City that I'm sure many local landscape architects remain unexposed to and would regard as irrelevant².

No doubt other sentiments similar to this, about skills, deficiencies, training and expertise will be discussed at the Conference and it is valid to do so but the Presenters and audience will need to participate in higher levels of debate in order to respond to the Curator's plea to 'challenge landscape architectural practice in Australia and in so doing question its future directions, within an international context.'

Yes, that is what is required of attendees and three big challenges come to mind.

Challenge 1—training for the interdisciplinary future

The Conference theme is subtitled 'an interdisciplinary future'. Although we pride ourselves as being good communicators how prepared are we to take full accountability for heading the intense multi-disciplinary team collaborations needed to confront the environmental design issues we identify? This requires a more profound discussion than one simply about 'project management'—it is about a future focus on people and community management.

1 AILA 2009 National Conference, Curator Statement, Dr SueAnne Ware, Conference Convenor. (provocations include, for example, we are 'inundated with rhetoric, often self-generated' about now being the time for landscape architects to take the lead).

2 Presland, Gary (2008), The Place for a Village, how nature has shaped the city of Melbourne, Museum Victoria.

Peter Rice, an accomplished structural engineer, in writing about the satisfaction of successful interdisciplinary collaboration, noted the need to appreciate the differing psychologies at work as each part of the team approached the problem in its own way, with engineers typifying their work as 'inventing' solutions, architects speaking of 'conceiving' solutions and managers having to learn to interpret and speak these languages³.

Challenge 2—establishing the businesses and business plans

Will we need to restructure our service delivery to meet our changing role, one that will inevitably remain within a capitalist democracy that requires financial systems, insurance, loans, profit and so on? We have government, research, education and company based practices and are indeed diverse in terms of how our 'businesses' are structured.

Is the future merely one in which there will still be a range of 'practices' but with bigger ones becoming landscape architect dominated versions of current ASX listed engineering or architectural practices? Or does the nature of our future work suggest we need more unique 'businesses' and plans that we have yet to devise?

Challenge 3—AILA directions—the right way for the future?

What is the future role of a national professional body that consistently fails to attract the involvement of key practitioners and key practices? Is this a result of the AILA lacking the energy raise its profile to national significance?

The Curator's Statement notes the 2008 AILA Directions Paper as evidence of the organisation developing a range of 'practices'—urban design, landscape planning, management and academia. But is this 'horizontal' enhancement, the capture of like-minded professionals, the best use for the limited energies of a small association when arguably what is needed is to drive a 'vertical' expansion, that is, towards an attainment of a perceived higher competence in more complex work, displacing other professions and grabbing the political patronage due?

A place for resolutions?

There is certainly no shortage of things to talk about – as ever, actions will be more important and it would be relevant for the Conference to set aside a session to distil discussion into Resolutions to be put to National Council.

Robert Cooper, General Manager Landscape Architecture and Urban Design

3 Rice, Peter (1994), An Engineer Imagines, Ellipsis.

Landscape Architects – as the 'connectivists' in the natural and built environments

Scott Graham

How can it be that in 2009 that Landscape Architecture as a profession still struggles to play the pivotal or decisive roles that we know it should?

We have more than emerged from our past recognition as a 'subordinate field of superficial embellishment'¹ but, as a key discipline, dealing with the natural and built environments, we have not grown to be locally, regionally, or globally visible enough. What should we be concentrating on in order to heighten our prominence?

There are examples of landscape architects engaging in a significant way within multidisciplinary consultancies. GHD is a current example of how landscape architectural and urban design teams are charting a course of prominence within big practice. Our landscape architects are proving we are valuable practitioners that can act as a link across a range of disciplines. This is particularly emphasised with changes to multidisciplinary practice and service due to the increasing scale and complexity water, rail, and road infrastructure projects undertaken by alliances, or larger city scale master planning work within Australia and abroad.

Two current case studies:

Bulk Water Alliance, Canberra

The Bulk Water Alliance is currently planning the enlargement of the Cotter Dam as part of Canberra's water security program. The Dam is sited in a natural environment that is also one of Canberra's oldest and most loved recreational precincts. As Canberra's largest project since New Parliament House it must be contextually sensitive to deliver the environmental and social results that the client and the community expect in concert with delivery of the dam. This has turned into a significant challenge for our Landscape Architects on the Bulk Water Alliance to champion considerations of a broader ecological and social legacy once construction is complete.

1 Professor Kongjian Yu at the International Federation of Landscape Architects Eastern Region Conference (IFLA), May 2006, Darling Harbour, Sydney Australia

05

The Australian Institute of Landscape Architects welcomes the support of CEMENT CONCRETE & AGGREGATES Australia for the 2009 AILA National Conference



Long Hung, Vietnam

The GHD Landscape Architecture and Urban Design group has overseen the coordination of a master plan for a new city of 40 000 people on a 1000ha site twenty kilometres east of Ho Chi Minh City. Landscape architects worked with civil and hydraulic engineers to utilise the existing network of agricultural canals in order to allow alternative traffic routes and augment any future drainage infrastructure. Investigation into the statutory requirements affecting setback from the waters edge allowed the opportunity to implement a complementary, linked open space network.

These two project examples demonstrate the emergence of landscape architects and urban designers as key planning and design managers and ultimately the most effective profession in connecting a range of associated disciplines.

Specifically GHD Landscape Architecture teams are proving:

- we make more willing collaborators than other professionals;
- we are willingly to engage with other agendas—not just the landscape components;
- we are good at creating a collaborative atmosphere around complex projects that lead to easing more silo-ed professionals out of their comfort zones and become willing to engage with the broader picture;
- we command the interstitial spaces that allow us as a profession to ‘join the dots’ on complex projects; and
- that we can regard contemporary societal problems as our own to deal with; issues including living in fire prone regions, sprawl, water management, climate change, urban renewal and contemporary urbanism. Ultimately we are the profession that displays the full buy in to the sustainability agenda.

If there was to be a new slogan or bi line for Landscape Architecture perhaps it could be: ‘the connectivists shaping our natural and built environments’

Scott Graham—GHD—Leader Landscape Architecture and Urban Design

With input from GHD Canberra and Melbourne Landscape Architecture and Urban Design Teams



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Empowerment

Mark Frisby

Over the past few years the landscape architecture profession has been in the fortunate position of being overloaded with work. Too much work for too few people. The 2009 national conference will occur at a time when countries are reassessing economic policies and practices whilst also grappling with environmental values and actions around climate change. It is an opportune time to reassess the role our profession. Are we part of the problem or do we offer solutions to problems we face?

The practice of landscape architecture is increasingly diverse. It is hard to describe the role of a 'typical' landscape architect with practitioners with working in private consulting, the private sector (such as project management and in house design teams), education, all levels of government and within government agencies (such as water and roads). Our areas of practice are further broadened by project scale and project type which includes all aspects of site planning, design and management. Through a diversity of practice landscape architects are well equipped with the skills necessary to deal with complex tasks that face communities as they change, expand and renew. At the same time the role of the landscape architect has expanded from the open space to the broader public realm. This is possibly as a result of the values our profession holds and the desire to engage with the public and collaborate with other professionals to deliver realistic yet progressive project outcomes.

Leadership and advocacy has been central to the development of the profession in Australia (and overseas) and it will be a key component to the role our profession plays in addressing the challenges of making our communities more sustainable. I believe we remain a profession that seeks to continue to grow our sphere of influence. In the past our fortunes have often been linked to the trajectory of other, related professions. I would like to think we have confidence in the capabilities of our own profession and the need for our profession to take on greater responsibility for the decisions that shape our society. In the same way an architect brings together a team of specialists to deliver a vision for a building we need apply a similar approach to the design and implementation of a broader range of public spaces projects—these include the design of cities, streetscapes, infrastructure and parks. Our design capabilities need to be matched by our ability to collaborate then focused on providing leadership. Our leadership is not dependant on project briefs. Instead we should be working more broadly to influence the culture of our workplaces, driving the priorities for projects and participating within our local and business community. The ambitions for our profession have been around for a long time but more recently they seem more capable of being realised and empowerment of landscape architects in some areas is extremely encouraging.

The focus of the conference on practice is timely. Rather than focus on a specific, current issue it focuses on ourselves our approach to issues. All professions need to critically assess recent areas of practice and how they correlate with the values of their profession and the broader community. Rather than sitting, listening and absorbing the venue and conference structure provide a chance to question, challenge and hopefully progress thinking around contemporary issues. This is not an easy task and it will be depend on the voice of delegates to present opinions and experiences of their own areas of practice. Conferences often provide a time capsule of the issues a profession believe are important and how they seek to respond to them. I am looking forward to Melbourne and hope the legacy is a profession that continues to evolve and feels empowered by the contribution it can make to all aspects of everyday life including the current global crisis (however you chose to define it).

Mark Frisby,
AILA Victoria State President



Cover: Artwork by Neil Hobbs



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