

sustainable settlement

green infrastructure

INTEGRATED DESIGN



Australian Institute
of Landscape Architects

National Policy Statement

The AILA advocates an integrated, whole-of-government and multidisciplinary approach to the design, planning and development for all settlements, large and small, metropolitan, rural, regional, remote or coastal.

The key objective of the Integrated Design approach is to enhance the opportunities to achieve design excellence in the built environment through an intelligent investment approach that builds on the existing strengths of all levels of governments, the private sector and professional organisations in order to embrace global and local challenges and to bring about change.

Integrated Design is based on collaboration and highly inclusive and transparent decision-making processes. Constructive engagement through consultation with communities to raise public awareness of design should become a major part of agencies involved with urban design, planning and development. Domains and range of scales of design and the built environment include: Regions, Landscapes, Cities, Communities, Precincts, Streetscapes, Buildings, Interiors, and Products.

The Integrated Design approach is to engage and integrate all design disciplines and create a trans-disciplinary model of integration in depth and breadth, and not a hierarchy or bias of professions. Decision making processes should engender trust amongst all stakeholders, while fostering mutual respect and understanding of all disciplines. Such a model of integrated decision-making must be up-front and occur throughout the design, planning and development process; engendering values of design excellence and encouraging innovation.

Disciplines of design to be engaged in the Integrated Design approach include: Architecture, Landscape Architecture, Interior Architecture/Design, Community Development; Urban Design; Urban Planning, Heritage Conservation/Preservation/Restoration; Adaptive Reuse, Regional Planning, Rural/Suburban Communities, Industrial Design/Product Design, Lighting Design, Communication Design/Graphic Design, Exhibition and Experience Design/Way finding/Public Art.

Other areas of interest include: Developers and Property Sector, Environmental Scientists and Managers, Heritage and Conservation Specialists, Human/Social Scientists, Infrastructure Specialists, Community/Indigenous Culture Leaders, People with Disability Planners, Service Providers, Social Planners, Housing Specialists, and Social Inclusion Consultants.

The agencies overseeing Integrated Design initiatives should provide leadership and independent expert advice and strategic direction to the Premier/Chief Ministers, Ministers, and decision-makers in government on all matters relating to design and the built environment including land use, ecology, housing, urban design, green infrastructure, infrastructure, transport, and energy.

Design excellence should be achieved through leadership and recognition that solutions come from constructive partnerships between academia, government, industry, professional organisations, and the community. The Integrated Design approach is based on providing education, supporting evidence and research, professional multi-disciplinary expertise, and best practice outcomes that will improve the quality of life for all levels of society and sustainability of the environment.

More details on AILA National Policy Statements: www.aila.org.au/policies

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Australian Institute
of Landscape Architects

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National Discussion Paper

The Case for Integrated Design designing sustainable communities

ABOUT INTEGRATED DESIGN

Integrated design provides a mechanism for government, the professions and the community to:

- a. Enhance opportunities to achieve design excellence in the built environment, via a collaborative vision & strategic framework for improving life through design.
- b. Maximize efficiency and pool resources to articulate & measure progress towards common goals for urban & regional sustainability.
- c. Leverage existing strengths and capacity to proactively address new challenges and support innovation.
- d. Maximize productivity gains from previously unrealized assets – particularly design value and regenerative green infrastructure capacity.

BACKGROUND

In most states and Territories throughout Australia, the role of design has had a very limited presence in the shaping of our cities and towns. Almost without exception, planning and development activities have historically been carried out in an ad-hoc or piecemeal fashion, and cities have typically grown and evolved without reference to any overarching design strategy or guiding framework for long-term sustainability – with predictably mixed results.

However, in recent years the scale and complexity of emerging global and national challenges – including climate change, rapid population growth, increased urbanization and competition for diminishing resources - has confirmed government & community concerns that continuing to develop our primary living environments via accident or omission is neither acceptable nor rational.

We can no longer afford to develop our cities and settlements on the assumption that economic growth operates in isolation from its impact on natural resources. There has to be a better way – one which acknowledges the need to fully realize existing assets and re-imagine their role in a new future.

What is most urgently needed are new models for urban design and development which harness the value of integrated, site-based design approaches to inform broader neighbourhood, metropolitan and regional settlement patterns, and which employ regenerative landscape performance capacity as a key driver for social, economic and environmental gains.

THE ROLE OF DESIGN VALUE & LANDSCAPE PERFORMANCE

While most Australian states have some form of Planning Authority or Planning Department, some have State Architects, and there are a range of specialist Authorities set up for particular planning and development purposes – these are very much the models we have inherited from the 20th Century. And they are largely design-deficient models – that is, they fail to capitalize on the significant value of design as a key mechanism for the envisioning and delivery of more dynamic, productive, engaging and adaptable environments for current and future generations.

In addition, previous planning and urban design models have largely ignored or significantly undervalued the role of landscape in the economic future of our cities and regions. Planning and governance models for landscape capacity in urban areas, in particular, focus almost exclusively on superficial aspects of landscape performance such as visual aesthetics and beautification.

Landscape function, however, extends far beyond visual amenity. There is now significant and growing awareness of the multiple impacts of land planning, design and management decision-making at local and regional level on food production & carbon sequestration capacity, biodiversity, air & water quality, local and micro-climate regulation and the provision of a broad range of ecosystem services that influence human health and well-being.

These impacts are being felt most keenly in areas where people live, work and play - the landscapes of our daily lives. As almost 90% of the Australian population now live in urban areas, effectively addressing the broad spectrum of issues relating to urban landscape performance is now a core responsibility of urban design and sustainable settlement planning.

An integrated design approach - driven by a deeper respect for existing natural environmental capacity as well as future ecosystem services delivery potential - offers a proactive and positive way forward for ongoing city and regional development, including the intensification of existing urban areas to accommodate greater densities of population.

WAYS FORWARD - ENABLING AN INTEGRATED DESIGN APPROACH

Clearly, our historic planning models represent a huge missed opportunity, in that they have not embraced the potential for landscape architecture, architecture and urban design to play a leading role in helping government agencies to integrate planning and development activities at local, state and territory level with broader regional and national sustainability and climate adaptation objectives.

However, identifying such past weaknesses in planning and policy also reveals key opportunities for enabling a more sustainable future. By strengthening the strategic role of design for driving progress towards collaboratively defined objectives - rather than merely superficial aesthetics or add-on value - urban environments can function in a more responsive and sustainable manner to the complex and increasing pressures of human activity and development.

It is now timely for all States and Territories to follow the lead of the South Australian Government and to look to linking Design, Planning and Development into one overarching commission such as an Integrated Design Commission.

Commissions should be tasked with working directly to the heads of governments to bring about a far more integrated approach to design, planning and delivery of sustainable settlements, large and small, metropolitan, rural, regional, remote, coastal or wherever they occur.

INTEGRATED DESIGN STRATEGY – STRUCTURE & ROLE

The key objective of an Integrated Design Strategy is to advocate for the value of design and to advise on processes to achieve design excellence in the built environment through an intelligent investment approach. Such strategies should connect the existing strengths of the State, within government, the private sector and professional organisations to build on tradition, embrace global and local challenges, and bring about change.

The core role of the Integrated Design Strategy should be to use enhanced models of collaboration and highly inclusive and transparent decision-making processes to achieve key objectives. Constructive engagement through consultation with communities to raise public awareness of design is fundamental to an Integrated Design Strategy. Domains and range of scales of design and the built environment include: Regions, Landscapes, Cities, Communities, Precincts, Streetscapes, Buildings, Interiors and Products.

The Integrated Design Strategy, whether overseen by an Integrated Design Commission or other key agency, avoids the specialist approach that has been the tradition of Planning Authorities whereby one profession have been mostly in the dominant role. The integrated design strategic approach is intended to engage and integrate all design-related disciplines. Decision making processes should be structured to engender trust, respect and understanding between all disciplines and stakeholders involved. Such a model of integrated decision-making must be up-front and occur throughout the design, planning and development process – including post-occupancy monitoring and evaluation. It should aim to foster design excellence and encourage innovation.

Disciplines of design include: Architecture, Landscape Architecture, Interior Architecture/Design, Community Development; Urban Design; Urban Planning, Heritage Conservation/Preservation/Restoration; Adaptive Reuse, Regional Planning, Rural/Suburban Communities, Industrial Design/Product Design, Lighting Design, Communication Design/Graphic Design, Interaction Design, Exhibition and Experience Design/Way finding/Public Art.

Design excellence should be achieved through leadership and recognition that solutions come from constructive partnerships between academia, government, industry, professional organisations, and the community. The Integrated Design operation is based on providing education, supporting evidence and research, professional multi-disciplinary expertise, and best practice outcomes that will improve the quality of life for all levels of society and sustainability of the environment.

Other areas of interest for an Integrated Design approach include: Developers and Property Sector, Environmental Scientists and Managers, Heritage and Conservation Specialists, Human/Social Scientists, Infrastructure Specialists, Community/Indigenous Culture Leaders, People with Disability Planners, Service Providers, Social Planners, Housing Specialists, and Social Inclusion consultants.

The Integrated Design Commission

The Integrated Design Commission model is a recommended model that could be adopted across all Australian States and Territories to oversee the delivery of The Integrated Design Strategy.

The Integrated Design Commission could comprise: A Commissioner who could be appointed from any relevant profession and oversee other key positions such as the Government Architect, Chief Landscape Architect, Chief Planner, Chief Engineer and others and be advised by a multi disciplinary board of about 8 to 10 Design Professionals.

The Integrated Design Commission model should deliver a whole-of-Government approach in advocating for and advising on design, through advancing and integrating all targets defined in the Government's Strategic Planning. The Commission should bring a high level of expert knowledge to improve understanding in the design, development and delivery of the built environment.

The Integrated Design Commission should provide leadership and independent expert advice and strategic direction to the Premier/Chief Ministers, Ministers, and significant decision-makers in government on all matters relating to design and the built environment including land use, ecology, housing, urban design, green infrastructure, infrastructure, transport, energy and other related sectors.

SUMMARY: KEY PRINCIPLES & PATHWAYS FOR ACTIVATING CHANGE:

In order to strategically activate integrated design processes for improved urban sustainability, Governments, community and the professions must work together to:

- benchmark existing capacity and performance – within and across the range of planning, design and management sectors relating to the built environment.
- identify strengths and weaknesses of proposed collaborative alternatives
- set goals & targets for meaningful change, and
- prioritize actions for achieving those targets within the following key areas:

Constructive partnerships – supporting new models for governance and practice which build on tradition & shared knowledge to articulate and work towards mutually agreed objectives.

Education - supporting new models of co-operation and cross-sector learning & practice opportunities across multiple disciplines and sectors of urban design and development.

Research – supporting models for collaborative cross-sector inquiry, ‘design by experiment’ and exploration of alternative models for integrating science, technology, theory and design practice – including modelling of cost efficiency gains via co-beneficial design strategies, and innovative methods of incorporating pricing of social and environmental ‘externalities’ into urban design & development processes.

Multi-disciplinary collaboration – supporting new models for urban design and development which:

- a. engage and integrate all design disciplines to create a trans-disciplinary model in depth and breadth – rather than a hierarchy or bias of professions.
- b. engender trust, mutual respect and understanding between stakeholders, and incorporate highly inclusive and transparent decision-making processes
- c. foster constructive, ongoing engagement with communities to raise public awareness & build support for good design.
- d. incorporate design review processes to monitor and evaluate progress against stated objectives at all stages of the development process – and especially post-occupancy.

Best-practice exemplars - supporting models of urban development planning, design and management which assist governments, communities and the professions to evaluate progress towards mutually agreed objectives, highlight design innovation as a mechanism for change, and contribute to ongoing learning.

This AILA Discussion Paper acknowledges the work of the South Australian Government in establishing Australia's first Integrated Design Commission and the subsequent work of the Integrated Design Commissioners and staff.

This document used as a primary source the text as published in late 2009 by Laura Lee on the establishment of the SA Commission.

This AILA statement is part of the AILA's Sustainable Settlement suite of Policy Statements and National Discussion Papers on Australian Landscape Architecture, the profession committed to the creation of meaningful and enjoyable outdoor places and to the sustainable management of our built and natural environment.

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