

sustainable settlement

green infrastructure

PUBLIC OPEN SPACE



Australian Institute
of Landscape Architects

National Policy Statement

The AILA endorses the greatest possible public use and benefit from public open space that is consistent with retention of long term environmental quality of the resource.

The AILA, representing Australian Landscape Architecture, promotes understanding and planning of the significant public resource of open space in order that its cultural and environmental significance may be maximised and appreciated by all sections of the community both now and in the future.

Public open space is land provided for public use, access or visual or ecological reasons. It is an important part of the community's Green Infrastructure asset and should be designed, developed and managed with adequate funding and the best professional guidance available.

Public open space makes a significant contribution to Australian culture and quality of life. Being part of the Green Infrastructure, public open space is also important to the ecological health of Australian cities and towns.

Public open space should be planned to cater for community needs and with an awareness of its contribution to the environment in its locality.

Opportunities usually exist to develop open space in a way which reinforces the natural ecology or other characteristics of a place and this aspect should be carefully considered when open space is being designed.

Public open space by implication should be freely accessible to the public, in practice it is often subject to many competing uses.

Management plans can define open space opportunities and resources and enable them to be matched to the needs of the community. Well considered design can often enable active recreation facilities like sports fields to be effectively set within a network of passive recreational space enhancing the value and quality of both active and passive space.

Parkland networks can be developed so that planting and path systems provide an accessible and continuous natural setting for people to use and to support urban ecological health.

To accomplish continuous improvements to Open Public Space:

- Management authorities should undertake open space development plans for open space systems and landscape masterplans and management plans for specific open spaces. Each of these plans should be prepared through the collaboration of suitably qualified professionals.
- Development plans should cover all open space in the locality and explore opportunities for developing a linked network of open space as part of the local Green Infrastructure.
- Open space should be sited to maximise the preservation of significant natural features and the landscape character of the locality.
- Development plans should provide, where appropriate, for future acquisitions of desirable open space extensions.
- Development plans should ensure that open space networks provide a range of recreation opportunities relevant to the entire community, and caters equally for people of all ages, educational, ethnic and economic backgrounds.
- Landscape masterplans should be prepared within the framework of broader scale open space development plans. Landscape masterplans will usually deal with on site and will indicate in some detail the proposed layout of all physical features and facilities on the site. Landscape masterplans should indicate the best sequence for implementing the proposals and should also indicate the approximate cost of each stage. The provision of staging and cost information is important for authority budgeting purposes. It also enables the community to monitor progress of the masterplan.
- Plans of management should ensure that public open spaces are adequately maintained. Management plans should identify the nature and cost of resources required so that appropriate allocation can be made by the responsible authority.
- Meaningful public participation should be encouraged as an integral part of the evolution of open space development plans, landscape masterplans and landscape management plans.
- Buildings, other structures, roads, carparking areas and infrastructure should not be contemplated except where they are necessary for the recreational enjoyment of parkland by park users generally where they will not seriously impair the value of the park for park users generally, and where they cannot be located elsewhere.
- Re-zoning, sale, leasing or other alienation of public open space to an exclusive or part exclusive recreational use should generally not be permitted. Where special circumstances apply, changes should ensure that any encroachment is deemed to be in the best interests of the community, is compensated by at least the equivalent provision of open space and is acceptable to the community.
- Any such variation to public open space will be preceded by thorough environmental investigation, public consultation and the exhibition of proposals.

Seeking integrated design solutions for national Sustainable Settlement

The Australian Institute of Landscape Architects strongly urge the Australia's Federal and State Governments to provide an integrated vision for a sustainable future and to implement a national **Sustainable Settlement** policy that will guide a consistency of approach in all settlement development across the nation.

Key Elements for a National Sustainable Settlement Policy

1. Landscape encompasses ecosystems which provide the fundamental support system for life on earth.
2. In planning for human settlement, we need to go beyond minimising damage to ecosystems and instead we should move towards proactively maximising opportunities for ecosystem enhancement and regeneration.
3. Adapting to Climate Change requires a re-assessment of how resilient human settlements are to variations in landscape function & performance.
4. The AILA endorses the greatest possible public use and benefit from public open space that is consistent with retention of long term environmental quality of the resource.

This Policy statement is part of the AILA's Sustainable Settlement suite of Policy Statements 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.

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

All queries on National Policy should be directed to the AILA's CEO.

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