



Australian Institute of
Landscape Architects

Hon Rita Saffioti MLA
Minister for Planning
9th Floor, Dumas House
2 Havelock Street
West Perth
WA 6005

20 June 2018

Dear Ms Saffioti,

Further to recent conversations with our members please find below our thoughts and concerns about the direction we understand Design WA is potentially heading:

- The Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) interests range across the full gamut of the built and natural environments, particularly where this concerns our quality of life, the design of built form and protection of the natural environment.
- AILA has been grateful for its members having the opportunity to participate in development of the Design WA policy suite (Draft State Planning Policy for Design of the Built Environment) over the last 2/3 years.
- We are concerned about the delayed release of the policy, specifically the Apartment Design Guidelines as we understood they were to be considered by the Western Australian Planning Commission (WAPC) in May 2018.
- With interests of the broader community in mind, AILA members have participated in design review panels relating to multi storey apartment developments for the past 15 to 20 years.
- It is clear from this involvement that the success, or otherwise, of these panels substantially relies upon the quality of the policy documents that sit behind them.
- However, we have also noted that it is beyond the expertise of most local government authorities to develop effective policies to deal with this topical issue, particularly as few, if any of them (apart from the City of Perth), employ architects on their staff.
- Urban infill is a major issue concerning the Perth metropolitan area. However incremental increases in density, e.g. just doubling or trebling the current very low densities (which is how the issue is typically being dealt with by many Local Government Authorities (LGA)'s), is resulting in a very poor environmental and urban design outcome which will leave a sorry legacy in those affected areas.

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Rather, the better solution to the issue is proving to be more limited, selective development at somewhat higher densities, e.g. in the form of apartments.

- For this reason, AILA has been a strong supporter and stakeholder in the whole Design WA initiative and we have been closely involved in the development of Apartment Design Guidelines which has already proven to be very useful as a reference when assessing multi-storey apartment developments.
- The process for development of these Guidelines has been rigorous and highly consultative. AILA, and many other stakeholders, have valued the ability to contribute meaningfully throughout that process. Notably, the Guidelines contain flexible qualitative guidance which designers and developers seek. This approach encourages design innovation rather than mere compliance. A compliance-based system inevitably results in many, if not most, developers pursuing the minimum standards they are required to comply with in order to get a DA. For this reason we support the Design WA approach.
- Design WA harnesses the benefits of a pre-DA design review process enabling early design feedback through an independent expert design review panel. This process has been in place in numerous LGA areas for 15-20 years and has proven to be highly beneficial, not only to the planners on the LGA's who are responsible for assessing these approvals, but also for the proponents and ultimately for the owners and residents in these apartments, as well as the local community in general. It should be noted that officers who are currently charged with assessment of such DA's seldom have architectural training and hence benefit greatly with design review from expert panels. Conversely those LGA's who have already instigated this review process have found it highly beneficial in helping staff to better understand broader implications of their decisions within the community they are responsible for.
- AILA and many LGA's have been eagerly awaiting the release of the updated version of the Apartment Design Guidelines so they can be utilised in a consistent fashion and with the full force of the law. Furthermore, we have been eagerly awaiting development of the Precinct Design Guidelines. A state-wide approach is essential for these policies to be effective.
- AILA is concerned that any further delay to the release of these documents will have a long-term negative impact, not only in relation to these buildings but also the local urban environments within which they sit. We fear this will leave a very poor legacy for our children and grandchildren as any such strata titled apartment buildings are here for the long-term.
- We are keen to support endeavours that aid in a speedy release of the Design WA suite of documents and the updated Apartment Design Guidelines in particular.



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We welcome the opportunity to discuss the issue with you in further detail.

Yours sincerely,

Andrew Thomas
AILA WA Chapter President