



Australian Institute of  
Landscape Architects

## ***AILA SA Response to the Accredited Professionals Scheme – Discussion Paper***

**30 April 2018**

The Australian Institute of Landscape Architects – South Australian Chapter (AILA SA) is pleased to provide a response to *Accredited Professionals Scheme – Discussion Paper*. AILA SA continues to engage collaboratively with the State Government and its agencies to build stronger communities and promote a more prosperous and sustainable future for South Australia.

The Australian Institute of Landscape Architects SA Chapter (AILA SA) is again pleased to provide feedback on the Accredited Professionals Scheme Discussion Paper and have valued the opportunity to participate in the Accredited Professionals Workshops on 14th March and on Wednesday 11 April.

### **Overview**

AILA SA has been involved in previous discussions on the Scheme and we continue to offer our support in the development and implementation of an initiative which will raise the standard of expertise and provide more consistency in planning approvals across the State.

AILA SA has previously provided industry contribution towards the Planning Reform, Planning Development and Infrastructure (PDI) Bill, 30 Year Plan for Greater Adelaide Update, Design Guidelines, Stage 1 and Stage 2 Draft of the Community Engagement Charter and most recently the Introduction to Technical Discussion Paper - Future land use definitions and classes.

AILA SA remains keen to engage collaboratively with the State Government and its agencies to build stronger communities and promote a more prosperous and sustainable future for South Australia.

AILA SA supports the aim of the Accreditation Scheme to lift the performance of, and improve confidence in, professionals undertaking functions across the planning systems. AILA SA supports the opportunity through the PDI Act to improve the professionalism in decision making functions, and believe it is critical that Landscape Architects be considered as 'Accredited Professionals'.

AILA SA believes that our members' training and experience can add greater value in having a more active role in the proposed Assessment Panels. We support the core planning functions of the Assessment Manager role, and believe that the expertise of Registered Landscape Architects can add value to the assessment process, and assist in ensuring informed decision making towards the strategic ambitions of the State is reflected in local developments.

AILA SA has reviewed the Draft and Final Discussion Paper, has been involved in preliminary and formal Accredited Professionals Workshops and raises the following items for consideration by the Department in the next iteration of the formation of the Scheme. We provide the following comments in response to the questions raised through the Discussion Paper:



## SECTION 1 AND 2

### How Could the Accreditation Scheme affect you?

AILA SA members have an important role to play as Accredited Professionals participating in Assessment Panels. Landscape Architects would provide expert knowledge to support an informed assessment process and would complement the knowledge of other allied planning and design professionals.

Landscape Architects conceive, reimagine and transform the outside world from streetscapes to parks and playgrounds, transport solutions to tourism strategies, new suburbs and even cities. Landscape architects shape project outcomes in a variety of ways by bringing a critical eye to the potential opportunities and constraints of a place, site, or landscape. The vegetation, soils, watercourses often navigated by infrastructure projects are but some of the technical issues we bring expertise to.

Landscape Architects bring together other disciplines, in an integrated way to generate improved confidence in decision making relating to the built environment and planning. Landscape Architects are active on infrastructure development teams of all types, often leading, connecting, facilitating and navigating to help achieve shared outcomes. Landscape Architects lead design for the environment and people of all ages and cultures.

In relation to the Accredited Professionals Scheme Discussion Paper, AILA SA believes it is imperative to include AILA alongside AIA, Engineers Australia and others in the list of **Existing Industry Schemes (Page 6)** offered by other industry bodies in allied fields. We share a similar national platform to accreditation of our members with these bodies and believe that Registered Landscape Architects deserve specific acknowledgement and equal footing with these other built environment professionals.

Increasingly we are seeing an overlap in the skillsets of “built environment” professionals, and this is now being formalised across the country through universities that offer Post Graduate courses for allied professions. In South Australia the University of Adelaide now offers a Masters of Landscape Architecture course, which is open to people with a Bachelor degree in a related field—including the Bachelor of Town Planning. The integrated nature of the Planning and Design professions is now widely understood, and as this new cohort of graduates begin their working lives, we should see in the next decade a profound difference in the way in which the professions work together.

### How might private entities support the scheme?

AILA SA supports the intention of a hierarchical approach towards Accreditation based on more experienced and accredited professionals undertaking higher order duties and responsibilities in the planning system. AILA and PIA share a very similar membership structure, both are nationally managed and have their own accreditation systems to ensure that members meet essential key criteria and abide by a central code of conduct. With this in mind, AILA SA proposes that AILA members seeking to be Accredited Professionals in this scheme should be Registered Landscape Architects - the highest level of accreditation for Landscape Architects in the country.



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AILA's own national membership structure and rigorous and robust registration program has been designed to: 1) meet community and industry expectations, 2) create a membership structure that supports growth and diversity, and 3) position the organisation for the future.

Our National Membership structure and registration process would strengthen the suitability of Registered Landscape Architects in support of the Department's aims for Accredited Professionals.

### SECTION 3

**Should professionals from allied fields that are accredited as Assessment Panel Members (such as architects, engineers, environmental managers and so on) have the same requirements for continued professional development and training as planning professionals? Please discuss...**

AILA Registered Landscape Architects are required to undertake an annual commitment to continued professional development to maintain their registration (30 CPD Points per year). The accounting for this work is able to be audited by the institute to ensure appropriate standards are being maintained. It could be assumed that much of this work would be relevant for Landscape Architects who are accredited Assessment Panel Members.

AILA would recommend that CPD requirements are tailored to the requirements of the different roles and responsibilities of the proposed accreditation levels.

**How might the scheme vary between urban and regional contexts?**

AILA would advocate for a common approach to urban and regional contexts, allowing the professional insights of individual accredited professionals to appropriately address local context. In relation to the accessibility of professionals in regional areas, AILA SA would encourage DPTI to make greater use of digital and online technology to facilitate the assessment processes, in parallel to the electronic planning system. The opportunity to use video conferencing and similar technology to facilitate Country Panels should be encouraged to maintain a minimum standard of professionalism across the State.

**In addition to design, performance, good decision making and engagement, what other types of continued professional development and training should be required to retain accreditation?**

Once the new planning systems is effectively implemented, it could be reasonably assumed that the annual CPD requirements of AILA members would be appropriate for their role of Accredited Professional for Assessment Panels. An approach to reporting the CPD and training undertaken, and demonstrating its relevance to the requirements of the Scheme and role could be considered, as opposed to initiating a duplicate CPD process.

In the initial stages of establishing the Assessment Panels, training may be required to define the expectations of the panel, behaviours of individuals and detailed understanding of the code.

We understand that DPTI will establish an accreditation authority / body to establish and manage the Accredited Professional Scheme (including training / CPD) and there will opportunity for industry representatives to sit on this authority. Subject to AILA members participation, AILA would be pleased to contribute to this authority.



**Do you agree that the processes undertaken by accredited professionals to arrive at particular decisions should be audited under the scheme?**

AILA would support the auditing of decisions if it was managed in an open, independent means with transparent reporting that considered all stages of the development assessment process, as well as the outcomes (decisions).

Auditing could provide DPTI, as well as the State Planning Commission with an opportunity (in particular during the early years of the new systems) to examine the impacts, affects and efficiencies of the new system as well as review the effectiveness of the panels, including the diversity of skills and experience required to promote good decision making.

**Are there areas where the proposed scheme can be improved?**

As per discussions during the workshop held in March, AILA SA shares the broader concern of the relatively low levels of experience suggested to perform the Level 2 Assessment Panel Member role (requiring relevant qualifications – ie a degree and, a minimum of 2 years' experience). As detailed above, AILA SA recommends that Landscape Architects seeking to be on Assessment Panels should be AILA accredited Registered Landscape Architects to provide increased professionalism on the Panels. The AILA registration process enables a qualitative assessment of members through an examination interview process, as well as recognising the quantitative (minimum years' experience) factor. AILA SA would suggest this as a means of better analysing candidates and genuinely enabling the standard of panel members to be lifted.

**Referral Advice**

AILA SA supports greater recognition of the role and value of design in the understanding and decision making process. AILA members are frequently contributing to integrated design proposals as project team members on complex, multidisciplinary development applications (including architects, landscape architects, civil and structural engineers and others). AILA SA supports an assessment approach that reflects the equity of professionals. AILA SA sees this as by far the best way of achieving better design outcomes across SA, which is called for in the Planning, Development and Infrastructure Act 2016.

As well as participation in Assessment Panels, AILA would strongly urge DPTI to consider formalising the role of specialist, such as Registered Landscape Architects to provide referral advice to Assessment Managers (Level 1), Accredited Planning Professionals (Level 3) and Land Division Accredited Professionals (Level 4).

For example, referral advice could provide more informed assessment of local land division (up to 4 lots) to better balance a quantitative approach, land can be subdivided down to minimum lot sizes with assessment of the qualitative implications (neighbourhood character, existing trees, streetscape, heritage, open space etc).



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### **Scheme administration and management**

AILA SA recommends further liaison with the Office for Design and Architecture (ODASA) for insight into the workings of their established Design Review Panels; for example, the hurdles they overcame in appointing panel members without insurance, the creation of a terms of reference and code of conduct for panel members, and the training and education provided for panel members. This Panel was benchmarked nationally when it was conceived by the Integrated Design Commission in 2012.

AILA SA believes that ODASA should be approached to assist with the education and training process for Accredited Professionals, based on the system in place for their Design Review Panel. In addition, AILA SA believes that ODASA could play a valuable role in the ongoing auditing of the new Planning system, and furthermore in the setting of key performance indicators to measure the success of the Panels established, noting that the aspirations of both agencies are aligned around improving the quality of development across SA (ie qualitative and quantitative indicators).

AILA SA encourages DPTI to further review the requirements for accreditation fees and insurance for Assessment Panel Members. Professionals in all allied fields are already required to pay an annual fee to maintain their registration as well as continuing professional development (which usually incurs further costs). If too many additional costs, or process requirements are implemented for Assessment Panel members, the ability for DPTI to attract the best candidates for panel membership across the state may be diminished. AILA SA encourages DPTI to discuss further with ODASA the requirement for insurance of Design Panel participants, including the need for individual cover.

AILA SA suggests the registration for renewal for Accredited Professionals could be extended to a 2 year renewal for greater longevity of Panels and for less onerous administration.

We trust these comments are taken in good faith and look forward to further engagement and input on the new Planning system for South Australia.

Yours Sincerely,

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