



17 July 2020

***Response to the Parliament of South Australia – Natural Resources Committee:  
Inquiry into Urban Green Spaces***

***Australian Institute of Landscape Architects - SA Chapter (AILA SA)***

The Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) is the peak national body for the Landscape Architecture. AILA champions quality design for public open spaces, stronger communities and greater environmental stewardship. We provide our members with training, recognition and a community of practice to share knowledge, ideas and action.

With our members, we anticipate and develop a leading position on issues of concern in landscape architecture. Alongside government and allied professions, we work to improve the design, planning and management of the natural and built environment.

In operation since 1966, AILA represents over 3,500 landscape architects and promotes excellence in planning and designing for life outdoors. Committed to designing and creating better spaces in Australia, landscape architects have the skills and expertise to improve the nation's liveability through a unique approach to planning issues via innovative integrated solutions. In doing so, landscape architects contribute towards better environmental, social and economic outcomes for all Australians.

AILA SA extends its appreciation to the *State Government - Natural Resources Committee* for the opportunity to provide feedback and expertise to inform SA Parliamentary *Inquiry into Urban Green Spaces*.

Landscape architects work across all areas of the *Inquiry into Urban Green Spaces*. We can connect you with members who are experts and request additional information as required by the Committee. AILA SA President – Daniel Bennett is also willing to meet with the Committee if this assists the inquiry.

The Natural Resources Committee has resolved to:

***1. Inquire into urban green spaces, and in particular the benefits, opportunities, challenges associated with:***

- ***urban strategic planning,***
- ***biodiversity,***
- ***water management,***
- ***primary production,***
- ***climate change impact projections.***

There are a range of benefits, opportunities and challenges in this area.

**Green Infrastructure**

*Green infrastructure* is a catch-all term for rethinking our urban green spaces at all scales, from our networks of natural systems, parks and open spaces, streets and roads, and infrastructure elements such as pipelines, easements and water supply elements.

AILA SA advocates for the quality of design of open public open space and you will note the work detailed below with Wellbeing SA and Department for Environment and Water (DEW) detailed under *Healthy Parks Healthy People SA*.

Good design is essential at a strategic and detailed level to ensure our urban green spaces function effectively and achieve their stated aims.

The [Healthy Parks Healthy People SA partnership](#) has identified six key principles for green infrastructure in urban settings. These principles will help to keep growing our city in a way that protects and enhances our existing green spaces alongside the creation of new open space destinations.

Healthy Parks Healthy People SA has developed a document [Creating Greener Places for Healthy and Sustainable Communities: Ideas for Quality Green Public Space in South Australia](#) to explore how we can all work together to enhance our green spaces.

### **Multi-agency confusion**

There are so many agencies that work across all scales, making coordination of strategies, initiatives and projects almost impossible at times.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- DPTI – planning, design and strategy – this includes the Office of Design and Architecture, the Open Space Fund, Places for People Grants, Planning and Development Fund – AILA SA has good working relationships across many areas
- DPTI - transport areas of DPTI undertake transport and infrastructure projects and planning, and often are not coordinated with their own greening targets, often Landscape Architects are involved in the design and delivery of these projects but are unable to ensure stronger greening targets or retention of existing natural systems
- Regulation – managing the plethora of legislative requirements in regards to what Government agencies need approval for – eg Minister’s decision on many elements including tree removal
- DEW – Environment and Water – many sustainability targets, note recent establishment of Green Adelaide – which AILA SA supports as a vehicle for broader coordination
- Planning Reform – AILA SA has been involved for many years and made a submission earlier this year with key recommendations, noting that planning reform does not address private space greening, challenges of ensuring trees in private allotments are included
- State 30 Year Plan – tree canopy targets
- Significant and Regulated Tree legislation – seriously impacting and contradicts the tree canopy targets
- SA Health and Wellbeing SA - AILA SA is a partner for the [Healthy Parks Healthy People Action Plan, ‘Quality Green Public Space’](#), a strong partnership advocating for the importance of open space in our cities and communities, – Better greener campaign for community and industry (loss of open space)
- Rivers, creeks and waterways – often left to coordination of local councils, the former NRM Boards and the water utilities – not a strategic approach to the management and improvement of stormwater and waterways and their open space benefits (eg River Torrens – up to 10 different authorities involved in managing the linear park)

## Local Government

Local government is often the most effective agency to implement and manage urban green spaces, and many of Adelaide's metro and regional councils are making progress in spite of the confusing and competing policies at local, state and even federal levels.

Many of our members engage in a number of ways through HPHP SA, Resilient East, HPHP SA Citizen Science research project, HPHP SA metro council government reference group and through the individual councils. Many have good plans and strategies to increase green open spaces and canopy cover to meet State Government targets.

Local Governments approach greening in many ways, depending on local priorities:

- Greener Neighbourhood Grants
- Education of elected members on greening, and trees
- Streets and public space strategies to include green infrastructure for streets to capture open space given difficulty of finding new open space (streets could work harder)
- E.g. the Adelaide Design Manual in the City of Adelaide, a guide to creating great streets and public green spaces [www.adelaidedesignmanual.com.au](http://www.adelaidedesignmanual.com.au) (a nationally recognised award winning strategy)

## Challenges for achieving quality open space

There are many challenges with achieving quality green open spaces:

- Service and utility authorities – underground and overhead services with regulations, rules, antipathy, and lack of ways to coordinate
- Understanding the value of trees is an ongoing issue – especially existing mature trees which are often removed with limited chances to design around them or consider their wider value, general community and agency education
- Community angst on tree losses are often misinterpreted or ignored
- Inadequate maintenance budgets to maintain trees and open spaces, ongoing operational budgets inadequate
- The right trees for the right place – impacts of climate change on species selection – more research for Adelaide on more appropriate species
- Increasing species diversity of street trees in particular – to avoid disease and risks of too many of one species (eg London Plane is a great street tree, however if a disease wiped them out, the losses would be large and impactful on canopy cover)
- Bushfire risk and spread – species and type of landscapes we plan and design
- Significant and Regulated Tree legislation – this is causing significant angst in the community and must be addressed – too many mature trees are being removed without approval due to conflicts with planning policy, government targets on canopy cover, good practice and community angst

## Important Industry Partnerships

AILA SA supports a range of partnerships with industry including:

- Water Sensitive SA – CRC research
- SA Water– AILA SA in partnership with SA Water and is hosting an ambassador program and connecting them to industry
- Conservation Council – Who Speaks for the Trees
- Connections to other grass roots groups and resident group
- TreeNet

## **Recommendation 1**

### **New legislation to create a single agency to coordinate the planning, design and delivery of South Australia's Green Open Spaces**

A new single agency with responsibility to plan, manage, design, deliver and maintain South Australia's green spaces with oversight of infrastructure projects will ensure greening targets are not only initiated and delivered, but managed and protected over time.

We recommend a green infrastructure policy is developed and owned by one department with targets and reporting as well as grant funding – which will demonstrate commitment and leadership at the State Government level.

## **Recommendation 2**

### **Government Stimulus Opportunity – COVID 19**

There is a great opportunity for the State Government to lead by example in projects across government agencies including infrastructure and education projects.

AILA SA believes that the Federal and State Government economic stimulus packages provide the opportunity to embed Green infrastructure by ensuring targets are part of delivery. This includes:

- Minimum tree canopy retention and increase
- Minimum targets for new areas of quality green open space
- Minimum targets for stormwater retention, reuse and treatment
- Minimum targets for biodiversity and habitat increase

***2. To investigate to what extent of resources are allocated to urban green spaces in comparison to similar projects being undertaken interstate and internationally, in relation to:***

- ***coastal management,***
- ***water resources and wetlands,***
- ***green streets and flourishing parklands,***
- ***biodiversity sensitive and water sensitive urban design,***
- ***controlling pest plants and animals,***
- ***nature education and fauna,***
- ***flora and ecosystem health in the urban environment.***

There is no South Australian policy or strategy on green infrastructure, and AILA would strongly encourage a position is developed for the state with targets, linked to Recommendation 1.

The NSW Government recently launched a [state policy](#) which is a benchmark and worthy of analysis.

Much our commentary is included in our response to 1 above, but we would reference the [Greener Spaces Better Places 2020 Vision](#) – which outlines a range of national targets as well as a national map of Canopy Cover and Heat Mapping.

South Australia had a guide to green infrastructure in government projects that was de-funded. It was led by the Botanic Gardens, and the only evidence left of the Green Infrastructure Project is Plant Selector which many Landscape Architects continue to use: <http://plantselector.botanicgardens.sa.gov.au/home.aspx>

[Click here](#) to review AILA SA's ongoing advocacy to support the Planning Reform and other Government consultation processes in SA.

[We also encourage you to look at the AILA National Position Statements that address a number of topics relevant to this inquiry.](#)

We thank you once again for the opportunity and for your engagement during the process.

If there are any aspects of our feedback, recommendations and commentary that require clarification or further discussion please do not hesitate to contact Sally Bolton, State Chapter Manager, or myself.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'Daniel Bennett', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

Daniel Bennett  
Registered Landscape Architect 1183  
Fellow, Australian Institute of Landscape Architects  
AILA SA State President  
Chair, AILA National Advocacy Committee