



Australian Institute  
of Landscape Architects  
1966/2016

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Submission by:

**AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS**

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To whom it may concern

**Re: Draft Urban Ecology and Biodiversity Strategy (July 2016)**

The Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) Victorian Chapter provides the following submission in response to the draft Biodiversity Strategy (July 2016) from the City of Melbourne.

AILA is the peak body for the landscape architecture profession in Australia. Representing over 2500 members, we champion a landscape of liveability and quality design for our public realm, open spaces, communities and greater environmental stewardship. Our membership covers a diverse range of professional and creative services including strategic planning, urban design, open space design and natural resource management working across all levels of government and within the private sector. AILA's Charter stresses that urban and rural landscapes contribute to the Australian quality of life and that the condition of the landscape influences the economic, social and environmental health of the nation.

The City of Melbourne is to be commended for a very thorough high-level strategy for improving the biodiversity within the city. The document's language and conceptual basis move the debate firmly away from the remnant-focused framework that has dominated urban conservation to date. It is clearly future-oriented, and understands the complexities ahead. The stakeholder engagement process has been thorough, and we know many landscape architects have individually added their voices to the many that have been considered in the process to date.

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AILA is looking forward to the next phases in the development of the strategy, where the realities of intervention at a finer grain are addressed. Landscape architects, as a general rule, do biodiversity accidentally. Our actions are most often aimed at human amenity, and may well entail creating green, and ecologically complex, environments, but the biodiversity benefits that result may be only a secondary consideration, albeit fortuitous outcomes. That reality of practice will likely continue to be the case until future iterations of strategies such as the City of Melbourne strategy are developed to the point where they can give meaningful advice about genuine place-specific action that goes beyond piggybacking on whatever parallel program – e.g. walkability, or street cleaning – can be leveraged to introduce biodiversity.

It may too be that the complexities of urban ecology in the shifting urban environment make designing for outcomes too difficult, so rather *processes* must become the means to achieving indeterminate, but hopefully improved, outcomes.

The City of Melbourne's Urban Forest Strategy has its next level of Tree Precinct Plans: what will be the equivalent for the Biodiversity Strategy? We wonder if the complexities of urban ecology will be too great to distil into meaningful, place-specific guidelines. We hope the City of Melbourne can rise to the challenge, and continue its exemplary work evident in this draft strategy.

Yours sincerely,

  
Felicity McGahan

AILA Victoria Chapter Manager