State Election Campaign Statement

PRESENTED BY AILA VICTORIA CHAPTER EXECUTIVE

AILA Victoria is part of the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA), a growing national advocacy body representing more than 3,600 active and engaged landscape architects across Australia and internationally. From city shaping and policy development at State and Local government levels to the redesign of streets and parks, landscape architects are making places and spaces more sustainable and resilient. As such we are calling on all parties to make the following commitments.

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE –
Adapting to Climate Change

Green infrastructure strategies provide a framework for more holistic planning and design to enable human settlements to function as integral components of larger landscape processes affecting energy, water, carbon and biodiversity.

Governments need to fund green infrastructure projects that see water and greening outcomes that create a sustainable and more resilient urban landscape. When planning and designing major State infrastructure projects, green infrastructure assets must form part of the business case and built outcomes.

HEALTHY COMMUNITIES –
Healthy Living Landscape Solutions

There is a growing body of research which shows a connection between our health and wellbeing and the design and structure of our built environment. Policy makers and designers must now account for this evidence in their work. Policy makers must insist that all planning addresses community health by encouraging quality, well-integrated open space. It is critical to have a strategic approach across all levels of government and administration to ensure access to natural places, urban parks, and green views to bring health benefits such as: better cognitive functioning, greater self-discipline and impulse control and improved mental health and greater resilience in response to stressful life events.

Cover image: Darebin Yarra Trail Link,
VicRoads Urban Design & VicRoads Structural Design

COOLING CITIES -
Urban Heat Island effect

Over half of the surfaces within our cities are heat absorbing materials, such as darker coloured roofs, car parks, roadways and footpaths. The development and densification of urban areas has progressively contributed to the warming of cities through the urban heat island effect.

Governments should:
- ensure greater protection of existing trees within urban areas through increased value assessment of their worth to deter removal and drive responsive design outcomes.
- commitment from all tiers of government to annually increase net tree canopy cover across urban areas including streetscapes, parks and public spaces.
- deliver Metropolitan Urban Forest Strategy and promote regional partnerships such as Greening the West.

ACTIVE TRAVEL -
Transport

AILA advocates for the design of active transport systems as an integral component of a successful and healthy city.

Governments must focus on major walking, cycling and public transport improvements rather than expensive freeway systems that further entrench car dependency and diminish the quality of our neighbourhoods and precious open space corridors.

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AILA Position Statements referred in this publication can be accessed at
http://www.aila.org.au/iMIS_Prod/AILAWeb/Advocate/National_Policy_Statements

Image: Melton Pride of Place, Outlines Landscape Architecture

Image: Victorian Comprehensive Cancer Centre, Rush Wright Associates

GREEN INFRASTRUCTURE

The Issue

The term 'green infrastructure' describes the network of natural and built landscape assets which underpin the economic, socio-cultural and environmental functionality of our cities and towns - the green spaces and water systems which intersperse connect and provide vital life support for humans and other species within our urban environments.

Why is it important?

Cities and towns are complex, evolving social-ecological systems which are dependent on the health of their associated natural environments for ongoing sustainability. Our cities and towns are currently the focus of intensive efforts to reduce resource use and maximise efficiency, in response to escalating social, environmental and economic pressures from global development, urbanisation, population growth and climate change.

There is an urgent need to develop new design and management solutions for our built environments which increase their capacity to adapt and respond to change, including strategies which aim to proactively leverage landscape performance.

Green Infrastructure strategies provide a framework for more holistic planning, design and monitoring of the complex interactions between the (non-regenerative) built form and the environment within which it is situated - in order to enhance the performance of both, and to enable human settlements to function as integral components of larger landscape processes affecting energy, water, carbon and biodiversity.

WHAT GOVERNMENT CAN DO.

. Map regional and local opportunities for existing/potential green infrastructure networks in collaboration with local governments and the community.

. Design and plan green infrastructure before development and build in capacity for reconciliation and caring for country, improving environmental connection and resilience in existing urban environments.

. Prioritise the value of landscape and green infrastructure in the planning scheme.

. Continue to invest in green infrastructure management and restoration projects such as the Upper Stony Creek Transformation project in Sunshine North.

For further information refer to the AILA Position Statement for Green Infrastructure.

HEALTHY COMMUNITIES

The Issue
There is a growing body of research that shows a connection between our health and well-being and the design and structure of our built environments. Considering the current and projected levels of development and increase of population density in our cities, parks and open spaces are more important than ever before. Policy makers and designers must adjust to the new paradigm and ensure new development responds to the latest research.

Why is it important?
Research has found that access to nature, whether it is bona fide natural areas, urban parks or even green views, impacts psychological and physical health and social functioning.

Benefits include:
• better cognitive functioning
• greater self-discipline and impulse control.
• improved mental health overall and greater resilience in response to stressful life events (1).

"The provision of suitable, well planned and designed parks and open space can contribute to people meeting Australian physical activity recommendations of at least 60 minutes of moderate to vigorous activity for children and adolescents each day and 30 minutes of moderate intensity recreation activity on most days of the week for adults" (2). In consideration of this research it is critical to have a strategic approach across all levels of government and administration.

FOOTNOTES
1 Frances E. (Ming) Kuo; Parks and Other Green Environments: Essential Components of a Healthy Human Habitat 2010 p.3
2 http://www.healthyplaces.org.au/site/parks_and_open_space.php
3 Jonathan Arundel, Melanie Lowe, Paula, Hooper, Rebecca Roberts, Julianna Rozek,Carl Higgs, Billie Giles-Cort; Creating liveable cities in Australia2016 p.17
4 http://www.healthyplaces.org.au/site/design.php
Accessed: 14 Dec 2014

WHAT GOVERNMENT CAN DO.

• Policy makers must insist that all town planning addresses community health by incorporating quality, well-integrated open space. It is critical to have a strategic approach across all levels of government and administration to ensure access to natural spaces, urban parks and green views.

• Seek the inclusion of parks at a minimum size of 1.5ha in all new Precinct Structure Plans for new suburbs (3)

• Planning policy must insist upon a sustainable and quality approach to open space design and planning which integrates:
- active transport
- aesthetics
- connectivity
- environments for all people
- mixed density
- mixed land use
- parks and open space
- safety and surveillance
- social inclusion
- amenity
- usability
- control of overshadowing (current policy last update 1999 in a very different built environment)
- supporting infrastructure (4)

For further information refer to the AILA Position Statement on Healthy Living Landscape Solutions.

COOLING MELBOURNE

The Issue
As average temperatures continue to rise, and the number of extreme heat days increase annually, methods to cool our cities are becoming increasingly important. With over three quarters of Australians now living in urban areas, combating the "urban heat island effect" within our cities is becoming a major public health issue.

The State of Australian Cities 2013 reports "People living in cities, particularly those in Australia's inland cities, can be more susceptible than non-urban dwellers to the effects of heatwaves as a result of the urban heat island (UHI) effect. This is caused by the prevalence in cities of heat-absorbing materials such as dark coloured pavements and roofs, concrete, urban canyons trapping hot air, and a lack of shade and green space in dense urban environments."

Why is it important?
Melbourne averaged approximately 200 heat-related deaths in 2013, in comparison to the state road toll of 242 deaths. By 2030, the number of deaths as a result of heat is expected to increase significantly.

Over half of the surfaces within our cities are heat absorbing materials, such as darker coloured roofs, car parks, roadways and footpaths. The urban heat island effect occurs because of the capacity (thermal mass) of these darker surfaces to absorb the sun's energy, converting up to 80 per cent of sunlight into heat that is stored and then released, raising local temperatures. As development occurs, these darker, absorbent surfaces and materials are increasing, while the overall extent of vegetation, shade and open spaces is decreasing within our cities.

Cooler cities provide the following benefits:
• Better air quality and economic benefits.
• Citizens are more resistant to heat and pollution-related illnesses and death.
• Reduced peak energy demand and CO2 emissions
• Healthier, more comfortable and enjoyable urban spaces.

WHAT GOVERNMENT CAN DO.

• Greater protection of existing trees within urban areas through increased value assessment of their worth to deter removal and drive responsive design outcomes.

• Support the adoption and implementation of the Metropolitan Melbourne Urban Forest Strategy currently being prepared by the Chief Resilient Officer.

• Tree clearance guidelines from service authorities need to be revised to allow trees to reach their full capacity in streetscapes.

• Commitment from all tiers of government to annually increase net tree canopy cover across urban areas, including streetscapes, parks and public spaces.

• Planning scheme protection for all trees across Melbourne.

• Establish regional partnerships across Melbourne similar to Greening The West to enable knowledge sharing and implementation of green outcomes.

For further information refer to the AILA Position Statement for Cooling Cities.

ACTIVE TRAVEL

The Issue
Australian cities are car dominated, low in density and have some of the world's highest per-capita carbon footprints. The next government of Victoria has an opportunity to lead the nation and set a new course for our urban centres to maintain their liveability.

Melbourne is projected to reach almost eight million people by 2050, making it as populated as London and New York are today (1). But without a sophisticated public transport system to rival those great cities, Melbourne faces a future of debilitating gridlock.

Why is it important?
Vehicular transport is responsible for most urban air pollution and about 16.5% of our greenhouse gas emissions. Traffic congestion decreases productivity, increases stress levels and is estimated to cost the Australian economy up to $20 billion per annum in lost productivity. To reverse these negative aspects of metropolitan life, sustained investment in public and active (walking and cycling) transport is required.

Image credit: Google

Swanston Street is one of few streets in Australia that demonstrates the potential of active transport with high pedestrian numbers, off-road cycle facilities and integrated public transport.

WHAT GOVERNMENT CAN DO.

· Reconsider the need for new metropolitan freeway systems and further widening of existing freeways. These projects do not address congestion in the long term, entrench car dependency and increase fossil fuel emissions and air pollution. Instead, adopt the recommendations of the Infrastructure Australia Future Cities report that refer to increasing investment in public transport. The Airport Rail Link and the Suburban Rail Loop are two important projects that should have bipartisan support.

· Integrate transport, land-use and infrastructure planning to create walkable neighbourhoods as the foundation of a liveable city (2).

· Commit to removing all remaining rail level crossings. This will improve the efficiency and safety of moving around the city, whether by train, tram, bus, car, bicycle or on foot.

· Complete gaps in the walking and cycling network (in consultation with Bicycle Victoria to determine priority projects).

· Support innovative local planning policy, such as the City of Melbourne's Transport Strategy Refresh, which presents options to make the Hoddle Grid more walkable.

1 Future Cities: Planning for our growing population, Infrastructure Victoria, February 2018 (http://infrastructureaustralia.gov.au/policy-publications/publications/future-cities.aspx)
2 Creating Liveable Cities in Australia, RMIT University Centre for Urban Research , October 2017 (http://cur.org.au/project/national-liveability-report/)