



Australian Institute  
of Landscape Architects  
**1966/2016**

Meegan Fitzharris

Member for Molonglo, Australian Labor Party

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Dear Ms Fitzharris

### **Advocacy for the ACT election**

The values our elected Legislative Assembly members hold, and the political party policies at the local level, are vitally important to the future of our city. The Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA), the peak body for landscape professionals, is a key player in the design and stewardship of the built environment and we care what you will do for Canberra's landscape.

We understand your party has yet to fully announce its policy platform for the ACT election this year, so we would welcome an opportunity to share our views with you and hear yours, on the short and longer term vision for our city and its surrounds. An outline of our issues for your consideration is as follows.

#### *Understanding what is at stake*

Canberra is renowned as the bush capital and we benefit socially, environmentally and economically from being 'a city in the landscape'. The creation of the bush capital has taken a century, but we risk losing it in a much shorter timeframe unless we identify, conserve and properly manage not just our parks and reserves, but the components of living infrastructure (the water, soils and plants) that sustains all life within the city and in surrounding farmland. To enable more liveable and sustainable cities, resilient to shocks and stresses, AILA advocates for increasing the quantity and quality of living infrastructure throughout the city.

Landscape Architects are the leading profession in this mission. In February this year, AILA invited thought leaders from around Australia in the public and private sectors to the *Living Cities Workshop* at Parliament House. The report is [available here](#).

#### *Valuing landscape as an asset class*

Our city's living infrastructure contributes directly and indirectly to our economy, from attracting tourism to keeping children healthy, these benefits can be given a dollar value in revenue raised or costs avoided. Living infrastructure should be recognised as an asset class, with inclusion in cost benefit analysis (CBA) to prioritise budget expenditure. Currently the ACT government's CBA and triple bottom line assessments do not do this well.

Like every other asset, there needs to be continued investment to keep pace with change. Importantly, living infrastructure is a low cost way to mitigate climate change impacts that will become more critical with urban intensification.

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*Making good policy happen*

The ACT's achievements in renewable energy is a leading light for Australia, and shows what can be achieved when there is political support for a stretch target that is not over-ruled by a risk averse public service. AILA ACT advocates for landscape focused policies and improved land management practices – to make Canberra a more sustainable and liveable city. However, without Government adopted targets and outcomes reporting, good policies sit on the shelf gathering dust. Solutions to this include introducing living infrastructure targets. For example; 40 per cent summer shade from trees to residential streets and parks; or introducing a sustainability rating tool, such as SITES (<http://www.sustainablesites.org/about>) that address necessary issues.

*Quality of the public sector*

The key to achieving quality outcomes is having sufficient skills and knowledge. Attracting and retaining top professionals is challenging for a small city. Peak bodies such as AILA provide continuing professional development (CPD) to members to ensure currency, competency and high standards. Just as people expect this of their doctors, AILA advocates the ACT public sector be at least as well qualified as private sector consultants. Keeping up to date with CPD is not a requirement in key directorates such as Transport Canberra and City Services, Environment and Planning Directorate and Land Development Agency.

Currently you hold the portfolio of Transport and City Services, a critical Directorate for the work of landscape architects. AILA has and will continue to work for our community by collaborating 'behind the scenes' with ACT government agencies. But we want you to know that frequently our advocacy falls on deaf ears in the absence of the imperative of 'the Minister says....'. Therefore I would welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss your election platform.

I look forward to hearing from your office in the near future, to arrange a meeting I can be contacted by email at [act@aila.org.au](mailto:act@aila.org.au) or mobile phone 0412 788 174.

Yours sincerely

Catherine Keirnan

AILA ACT President