



19 January 2017

Cities Division  
Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet  
1 National Circuit  
Barton ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam,

**RE: SMART CITIES AND SUBURBS PROGRAM DRAFT GUIDELINES**

The Australian Institute of Landscape Architects is the growing national advocacy body representing 3,000 active and engaged landscape architects, and promoting their crucial role in shaping the world around us. Committed to designing and creating a better Australia, landscape architects have the skills and expertise to solve macro issues with innovative integrated solutions. Landscape architects contribute leadership, creativity and innovation as they strive to collaborate to achieve better health, environmental, social and economic outcomes.

From citywide strategies to the redesign of local parks, landscape architects are making places and spaces more sustainable and productive. Communities are demanding more from government and landscape architects are increasingly collaborating with the public and other stakeholders to achieve project outcomes.

In addition to our earlier submission on the Smart Cities Plan released in 2016, the Institute welcomes the opportunity to provide input to the Draft Guidelines for the Smart Cities and Suburbs program.

**A Comprehensive Foundation**

We believe that the most sustainable, productive, and healthy cities embrace the benefits of green infrastructure – those ecological services that help maintain the natural systems that provide our cities with clean air and water, as well as building resilience within our urban environments and helping us adapt to a changing climate. These are truly smart cities.

We acknowledge that the Smart Cities agenda is one of city-shaping, where the intersection between technology and the built and natural environments becomes one where new opportunities are identified, where innovation can be accelerated, and sustainable places for people are created.

However, this requires some fundamental principles to be adopted regarding innovation within our cities and landscapes, including:

- The recognition that cities are made for people, by people, and that the Smart Cities agenda needs to be a people-focussed one.
- The recognition that our cities and suburbs sit within landscapes, and are shaped by landscapes and productive systems that provide fundamental services such as clean water, clean air, and human connection to the environment which enhances physical and mental health.
- The recognition that innovation is not always the application of a new solution, or finding new ways to apply old solutions, but also finding the connections between systems and services which can extract value-add outcomes.



### **Our Position on the Draft Guidelines**

The Institute notes that the objective of the program is to help local government and communities become more liveable and for urban service delivery to become more efficient and effective, as well as support projects that are citizen-centric and link closely with strategic plans. This is a solid foundation for the program and is in strong alignment with our values.

We believe that there are some extensive opportunities to connect the Smart Cities and Suburbs program to the wider 'cities agenda' being advanced by the government. For example, the performance based City Deals framework is one that the Institute strongly supports, with the condition that clear metrics are developed to embed in the investment decision making process. We have been a strong advocate for government recognition of green infrastructure as a formal asset class, and we share that position with the Smart Cities and Suburbs program. Further, we strongly recommend that acknowledgement be made to the active investment in building greater resilience in our communities, and the role that increasing urban tree canopy coverage and converting grey infrastructure into green infrastructure can, for example, help regulate micro-climate, provide protection from flooding, and enhance biodiversity.

The Institute watches with great interest the many innovative ways in which technology and data collection and analysis is helping local governments around the world enhance their efficiency in managing vegetation, water assets, and other environmental systems. This application of smart cities solutions in our landscapes is an exciting one, and we encourage the Department to look favourably on those submissions for funding that can help green infrastructure in our cities thrive.

To this end, the draft guidelines could be enhanced in the following specific ways:

- Make reference in the eligibility requirements to support projects that not only apply smart technologies to transform urban communities, but also rural and regional communities where greater productivity of natural systems can be catalysed.
- Where there is reference to solutions being aligned with existing Smart Cities Strategies and Digital Plan's, that reference is also made to urban design frameworks, landscape strategies, and other similar plans that see to enhance sustainable landscape stewardship.
- With respect to the project priority areas, it is critical that the Smart Infrastructure category include other green infrastructure assets, such as parks, streets scapes, and public places.
- In addition, the Smart Planning category should reference the 'enhancement of landscape and green infrastructure assets' in its description.
- Merit Criterion 2 should include the requirement for applicants to describe the impact of the challenge on the environment, and not just the community.
- Merit Criterion 3 requires a re-write, to more clearly articulate the environmental and social benefits the proposal provides. This could include reference to enhancing green infrastructure assets, building greater urban resilience through natural systems, and improving access to nature to promote greater physical and mental health. In addition, it could seek for the project to articulate how it might create or enhance social equity/access for all to new technologies/methods/data within the community
- Merit Criterion 5, Effective Integration with Urban and Landscape Fabric. Outline how the proposal integrates effectively into the established urban and landscape fabric without



Australian Institute of  
Landscape Architects

inappropriate disruption to valued character, natural attributes and/ or established infrastructure including pavements, gardens areas and services. Outline how the proposal will contribute aesthetically to the urban fabric to ensure other amenities are not adversely impacted by this new technology.

Whilst we acknowledge the focus, and importance, of innovation, this needs to be approached in a way that doesn't potentially result in highly sustainable and impactful projects being denied funding because it doesn't use a new technology, or an old one in a new way. The Institute is an advocate for innovation, however for the purposes of the Program, we would be disappointed to see a transformative and sustainable Smart Cities project that is 'shovel ready' and replicable, that meets all the other eligibility requirements, denied funding.

We would be happy to discuss further any of the information contained in this submission, and look forward to our ongoing relationship with the Department in catalysing the Smart Cities movement in Australia.

Sincerely

**Shahana McKenzie**  
Chief Executive Officer  
Australian Institute of Landscape Architects