



Australian Institute
of Landscape Architects
1966/2016

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Melbourne Metro EES Submissions
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Submission by:

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To whom it may concern

RE: AILA Submission regarding the Melbourne Metro Rail Project

The Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) Victorian Chapter provides the following submission in response to consultation on the **Melbourne Metro Rail Project (MMRP) Environmental Effects Statement (EES)**.

AILA is the peak organization for the landscape architecture profession in Australia and is a growing national advocacy body that promotes over 2,500 active and engaged landscape architects and their crucial role in shaping the world around us. Our membership covers a diverse range of professional services including strategic planning, urban design, building settings, open space design and natural resource management. Landscape architects work across all levels of government and within the private sector. Our profession is at the forefront of the planning, design, construction and management of quality open spaces and the public realm. We champion a landscape of liveability, quality design for our streetscapes and public open spaces, stronger communities, and greater environmental stewardship.

AILA acknowledges that the Melbourne Metro Rail Project represents a significant investment in Melbourne's future and we do not underestimate the importance of the legacy it will leave for the liveability of the city. As stated in our National Position Statement:

"AILA supports effective and well-considered investment in public transport by governments, and the private sector, for all people.

*AILA advocates for the good design of public transport systems as part of the city and urban structure, ensuring a fully integrated approach to networks of travel modes to efficiently meet the needs of the community."*¹

¹ AILA Position Statement, Liveable Cities, Public Transport, Published April 2016. www.aila.org.au



Following a review of the EES Reports and the supporting Technical Reports, we provide the following comments to ensure the benefits of the project's construction phase and the ongoing urban design and landscape outcomes are fully realised. Our submission is in two parts:

- Part 1:** A general overview of AILA's position regarding infrastructure projects and open space provision.
- Part 2:** A review of the **Landscape and Visual EES report** (Section 16) and associated technical reports.

Part 1: General comments

AILA encourages city leaders and decision makers to join us in anticipating a different future.

In planning for Melbourne's future, we must preference the delivery of public transport over roads for private vehicles in anticipation and encouragement of long term behaviour change. This is essential if we are to protect the qualities that make our city so liveable today.

This project has the potential to significantly change the way people access and use Melbourne's urban environment, and as such, careful consideration and inclusion of measures that may not be of immediate benefit, but will be over time.

AILA National Policy Statements advocate the urgent prioritisation of integrated and innovative design, planning and development for more liveable urban environments.

AILA values public open space and encourages the delivery of projects that aim for a high quality, well-connected public realm.

Parks and green space are critical city infrastructure and their protection and development is increasingly important in a densifying urban environment. Public open space is not 'unoccupied' land and should not be considered less valuable than other types of infrastructure. Added to the challenge of preserving the quantity of public open space, and possibly even more important in an urban context, is the maintenance and enhancement of the quality of public open space. AILA National Policy Statements advocate the prioritisation of integrated and innovative design, planning and development for urban spaces as key pathways to more liveable urban environments. We emphasise the importance of creating a sense of place, promoting a sense of community as well as integrating the new precinct with the surrounding existing environment.

We note that the selection of the tunnelling and cut & cover construction option does not necessarily guarantee this. Even in this option, qualified designers must actively pursue the delivery of high quality public open space through careful design. Quality public open space is useable, accessible, safe and comfortable for users of different ages, abilities and interests. To ensure success, tangible investment must be made in the establishment as well as the ongoing maintenance of public open space.



AILA supports the engagement of integrated design teams to tackle the critical issue of how connections are made within and around the project and across the city.

The continuity of pedestrian and cyclist networks within a high amenity public realm is critical if the project is to be judged a success for all user groups. A skilled design team that includes urban designers and landscape architects should be engaged from the early stages of the project to seek out all opportunities for enhanced public realm outcomes within the project boundaries and ensure that networks are maintained in the broader city context.

AILA advocates for elevating the importance of design and empowering designers within infrastructure project teams and processes.

The project design team, particularly the landscape architects and architects, need to be given the space, time and leverage so that the design solution is not limited to resolving the engineering requirements and minimising the negative impact on the urban places and open spaces. Rather, any solution must instead actively uplift the quality of the established, community-loved pieces of the existing open space network.

We believe the MMR Project must dedicate resources to independent multi-disciplinary design review to ensure all opportunities are realised. AILA strongly advocates for an independent design review process to review of design proposals such as via The Office of Victorian Government Architect's Victorian Design Review Panel (VDRP), The VDRP has an established process, which brings highly expert and critical review to projects and should be mandated in this process to support government in the delivery of its ambition for integrated infrastructure.

AILA promotes green infrastructure as an asset class.

Green Infrastructure is defined as:

"The network of natural and built landscape assets, including green spaces and water systems within and between settlements. Individual components of this environmental network, such as gardens, parks, recreation areas, highway verges and waterways, are sometimes referred to as 'green infrastructure assets'".²

AILA has highlighted "green infrastructure" policy issues to be incorporated into the planning and funding of major infrastructure projects. This includes the recognition of green infrastructure as we do grey infrastructure, so it is considered as an asset class that is properly valued and managed as a capital asset. Melbourne City Council has policies in place that recognise the economic value of trees and implements compensation measures for their removal to fund the future development of green infrastructure. The Council is also in the process of implementing an urban forest strategy that recognises the intrinsic values of trees and green infrastructure in the urban environment. These measures are intended to address a changing future environment and the importance of green infrastructure within the urban context.

² Australian Standard 5334-2013 : Climate change adaptation for settlements and infrastructure - A risk based approach



This project provides an ideal opportunity to fully integrate this approach into the planning, design, construction and operation of the MMR. We see great possibilities for the active retrofit of streets around stations to include green infrastructure that encourages people to reflect on the way we use them as community assets.

AILA supports community and stakeholder engagement.

AILA supports the Authority's commitment to community consultation in regard to what form the open spaces should take to engender a sense of community pride and ownership. We urge the Authority to commit to realistic consultation timescales and an expert process to define a true and detailed brief that will inform the design of these public spaces. The type, quality, and maintainability of the open spaces are critical to the long-term success of the project. Qualified landscape architects and urban designers must be engaged at all times to provide critical rigor to this process.

Part 2: The Environmental Effects Statement - Landscape and Visual

The EES outlines the potential impact of the proposed construction works and the completed structures, plus an evaluation of their risks on the urban landscape. These include significant visual impacts caused by:

- the various underground construction sites
- the removal of street trees to facilitate the construction program
- the required infrastructure for the underground stations (such as above ground entries, emergency entries, ventilation stacks and chiller plants), and
- the deferred time for the new landscapes that are proposed after completion of the engineering construction works to make a contribution to the urban environment.

It is noted the EES concludes that achieving the outcomes set out in the recommended Environmental Performance Requirements would ensure the MMR project achieves acceptable environmental, social and economic outcomes. However, AILA recommends the Landscape and Visual Environmental Performance Requirements (EPR) as set out in the EES, be revisited and strengthened with more detailed and defined measures. Additional requirements should include the involvement of appropriate design professionals that have the skills and experience to address the objectives and requirements, plus the allocation of appropriate research and funding to implement the proposed mitigation measures. This would also ensure the general nature of the EPR has more defined requirements by which the measures can be confirmed.

The loss of significant trees in the urban landscape to enable to construction works will have significant visual and environmental impacts. It also appreciated that many of the trees that would be removed are nearing the end of their useful life expectancy, and would be removed as part of a general tree replacement program.

The EPR indicates the re-establishment of trees to replace the loss of canopy cover and these trees are to achieve canopy size equal to (or greater) than typical mature examples of the species in Melbourne. Given many of the replacement trees will be planted over underground stations, AILA seeks assurance from the Melbourne Metro Rail Authority that appropriate soil depth and structure would be provided to achieve this requirement. There are examples (such as at University Square) where trees planted over underground infrastructure have not attained a canopy size equal or



greater to typical mature examples in Melbourne, and it would be desirable to recognise this outcome and add appropriate measures to address this potential shortcoming.

AILA encourages appropriate research and consultation with soil scientists and arboriculturalists to ensure the right soil profile is reinstated over the underground stations to promote the healthy and sustainable growth of canopy trees in the Melbourne streetscape environment.

In addition, AILA questions the inclusion of this requirement in the EPR, as the satisfaction of it would not be able to be confirmed for a significant number of years due to the time for trees to reach maturity. There is also no mention of adequate compensation or measures to address this requirement if it is not met. AILA recommends more realistic and functional performance requirements and measures for the replacement of lost canopy trees, determined in consultation with Melbourne City Council, the City of Port Phillip and Stonington City Council. Otherwise, it appears as a superficial commitment that can easily be pushed aside.

The proposed route of the MMR includes underground access portals at South Yarra and at Kensington. These portals are associated with important local open space areas: Osbourne Street Reserve / South Yarra Siding Reserve and JJ Holland Park, and during construction, there will be high impact for the recreational users of these. The EES recognises this, though AILA encourages due consideration of place-based amelioration measures to ensure the disruption to the recreational and visual values of these open space reserves are minimised for adjoining communities. Also, as these portals would be dominant visual features in the landscape, AILA strongly recommends due consideration is given to their architectural design and integration – rather than accepting just a simple engineering solution.

There are other open space and civic places along the proposed route that will also be disrupted during the construction phase of the project: University Square, City Square, Queen Victoria Gardens and the Domain Parklands.

The EES indicates well designed, attractive and well-placed hoardings to screen the construction works will be determined at detailed design. AILA seeks assurance from the MMRA that appropriate professionals will be engaged in this process to ensure the landscape and visual amenity of the local context around the various construction sites along the proposed route will be enhanced by interesting and attractive landscape and urban elements. These could include murals, photos, green walls, large trees in containers, pop-up installations and other features that will consider viewpoints, viewer perception and experience, visual amenity, and the visual catchment.

Following construction phase of the project, AILA recognises the significant opportunities for the longer-term amelioration of streetscapes and public places associated with the station entrances at Domain, Flinders Street, City North, Parkville and Arden Street. With the appropriate design input by urban designers and landscape architects (along with other built environment professionals), the overall urban context could be considered to express the full potential of environmental, social, economic and aesthetic benefits.



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Summary

AILA supports the Melbourne Metro Rail Project and the opportunities it will bring for urban renewal and upgrading of the landscape values associated with Melbourne's streetscapes. We encourage the Melbourne Metro Rail Authority to actively engage with all relevant design professions, including landscape architects, to ensure integrated, attractive and appropriate infrastructure is built within the public realm associated with the construction of the access portals and the underground stations.

AILA encourages the MMRA and the state government to actively seize the opportunity to leave another legacy for future generations, much as our forebears left us with the magnificent tree-lined avenues constructed over a hundred years ago and that have established such a strong sense of identity and place for Melbourne.

We look forward to your favourable consideration and response to this letter. Should you wish to discuss or would like to arrange a time to meet please contact Felicity McGahan, AILA Victoria State Manager on 0401 811 976.

Yours sincerely

Felicity McGahan

AILA Victorian State Manager