



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: AILA Submission regarding the Western Distributor Project**

AILA is the growing national advocacy body representing 2,500 active and engaged landscape architects, and promoting 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 working 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.

The Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) Victorian Chapter provides the following submission in response to consultation on the **Western Distributor** project by the Victorian Government in partnership with Transurban. We have reviewed the Design Update and Discussion Paper dated April 2016, and is now seeking a further conversation regarding this important project.

We acknowledge that the Western Distributor Project represents a significant investment in Melbourne's future and do not underestimate the importance of the legacy it will leave for the local and broader communities.

We have outlined our response to the Design Update following and hope that it will be given full consideration as the project moves forward.

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

*AILA advocates for an option with more tunneling that does not impact on the quality of the open space.*

We see parks and green space as critical city infrastructure and their protection 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.

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We note that the selection of the tunneling 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 road requirements and minimizing the negative impact on the park. Rather, any solution must instead actively uplift the quality of this established, community-loved piece of open space.

We believe the Western Distributor Project must dedicate resources to independent multi-disciplinary design review to ensure all opportunities are realised. The Office of Victorian Government Architect's Victorian Design Review Panel (VDRP) is 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 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 behaviour change in the long term. This is essential if we are to protect the qualities that make our city so liveable today.

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

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 Victoria State Manager



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