

# Talking Urban Design Education

With Paul Murrain & Rob Adams  
at The Italian Waiters Club

**Paul Murrain is an urban designer from Oxford Polytechnic, UK, who has been a visiting fellow at Melbourne University in March and April.**

**Rob** - The topic that interests me is how does a good urban designer train? One of the observations I've made since arriving in Melbourne is that the professionals who often talk the most sense in terms of urban design are originally landscape architects, like yourself.

**Paul** - I don't think any current undergraduate design education provides enough in terms of urban design. They do not relate what the final stuff appears like, to the values that are behind it, and the politics therefore of design. They do not do it enough and landscape architecture didn't do that at all; it just believed that green space was in itself a good thing and that lower density was in itself a good thing, and that something called "ecology" mattered. There wasn't a great deal else that landscape architecture gave me quite frankly.

**Rob** - But then you come out as being one of the strongest critics of architects and saying, these guys are patently selling a highly disputable set of principles in terms of designing their buildings and urban spaces.

**Paul** - a private language yes.

**Rob** - It's a very private language and in fact it's a very elitist one. How do we train people to fully understand the complexities of cities. The other night you said that, through current processes of undergraduate architectural, planning and landscaping education, leading on to Urban Design as a post graduate course we might be doing it the wrong way around."

**Paul** - Absolutely the wrong way round, totally the wrong way round. Architecture is the best example of that because most architectural education does, as I said last night, starts with the object and as their education progresses they work in to the context and the complexities of context. They work towards it and they only just start to understand some of these complexities and they're finished, and go out into the practices that have grown up on the "object" and it really is the wrong way round. I've no problems at all with architecture dealing ultimately with objects because that is what they do with individual buildings, but they've got to respond to it from the complexities of the cities. You should start in all forms of education about urban places with a wholistic view of cities. The fact that it's political, it's economic, it's social and it's physical and it's all interrelated, and it's not just to do with the building of objects and leaving everything else out of it, which is what still happens in architectural schools. Planning brings in much more social dimension but leaves physical form out of it too much. Landscape brings in wholistic things but leaves out the stuff of the city and the architecture

of the city, and so we're all kind of flying on three cylinders, instead of everybody flying on four. That's the problem.

**Rob** - What's the structure of the course that flies on four and how many years do you need to get someone to think like that?

**Paul** - Lets take architecture which in England is six years with a year out. That is going to be cut by the Thatcher Government, to four years, which will probably have one year in practice.

I don't believe architectural education should take six years anyway because its a hell of a lot of self-gratifying rubbish that goes on in the course, but in terms of getting the benefits we talked about, I think you could take students at 18 and 19 and give them one hell of an Urban Design education in two years because they have a perfect way of understanding these things. They're bright and enthusiastic people who have usually lived in cities or towns. So I think that what you could do is to open their eyes to why the cities are like they are, and the only reason why that at present takes ages and ages is that all that is suspended whilst they're kind of brain washed in the present courses."

**Rob** - That's the inefficiency of the system at the moment, we spend six years disregarding or simplifying the context and then we have to go through a re-education process for another two years before we have the confidence to actually practice Urban Design.

**Paul** - That's right

**Rob** - It seems an incredibly inefficient and traumatic process.

**Paul** - You look at a nineteen year old kids

when they come into cities, they're so alive, and they're so aware of what's going on and ready to be exposed to all sort of other things to do with cities. Because they love cities, they come into cities on Saturdays, they come into cities at night, they're very involved in urbanism.

**Rob** - So you are saying that it's almost more essential that Urban Design comes up front in the education cycle.

**Paul** - Its important that it doesn't teach them something called design ie. the unique appearance of architecture or that it is the "thing" that matters, or that it doesn't teach them that transport planning matters above all else; or that planting trees in streets is the thing that matters above all else. It should teach them the fact that all these things go on in cities and there are different kind of views, and different kinds of people wanting different kinds of things and so on, that from all that, they will decide whether they want to be the person that gets the street trees right or the person who wants to deal with infrastructure and transport problems, or the person who wants to deal with the appearance of architecture, but they'll understand the environment in which they're operating far more politically. There isn't anything like a political education on putting cities together and you could do that with kids of nineteen and twenty, they're incredibly capable of handling that, and I think we almost insult them by assuming that they're not.

**Rob** - How do you feel having been in Australia now on two occasions to find that until recently we didn't have an Urban Design course and the courses we have set up are at a post graduate level?

**Paul** - It's always difficult to understand in short visits, and therefore a bit dangerous to try and form any real view about the structure of design education in a country or a state. It's very difficult and it would be very frustrating to do that, for example I have been working on the course at the University of Melbourne, for four or five weeks and I still don't understand what it's producing. I'm not saying it's producing something that's not bloody worthy. All I'm saying is that I don't understand what its producing.

**Rob** - Sure

**Paul** - I see students jumping from rock to rock; they do a module on this, and a module on that, and the theory is that if you put those things together you get some kind of collective view of anything, I have my doubts. So I think the thread of it all has got to be this sort of background under-

U.D.F.

Urban Design Forum was initiated by a diverse group of professionals who share a concern for and interest in better urban design. The main aim of UDF is to provide an ongoing forum for information, ideas and views about urban design.

The UDF group meets on the second Tuesday of every month in Melbourne. All interested persons are welcome. Contributions for this broadsheet should be sent directly to:  
Urban Design Forum  
c/o Bill Chandler, Convenor  
Loder & Bayly, 79 Power Street,  
Hawthorn Victoria 3122.  
Phone (03) 819 1144

Deadline for UDF 8 is 15th August, 1989.

standing at undergraduate level.

**Paul** - because the difficulty is if you have a short sharp intensive masters course you spend half your time unpicking the prejudices that have been put there in the first place.

**Rob** - that's right

**Paul** - and masters courses aren't very long

**Waiter** - that's nineteen

**Paul** - I'll get this Rob you've been paying

**Rob** -Ok

**Paul** - Typical Englishman my wallet's stuck in my pocket! - "was it nineteen?"

**Waiter** -Yes

**Paul** - thank you very much

**Paul** - It does alarm me, when I travel around a bit, I see things that are allowed legitimately to be called Urban Design courses and I don't think they are at all. In this sense, the very idea that an Urban Design course, just as one example, doesn't teach people property evaluation. It shouldn't be allowed to be an Urban Design Course.

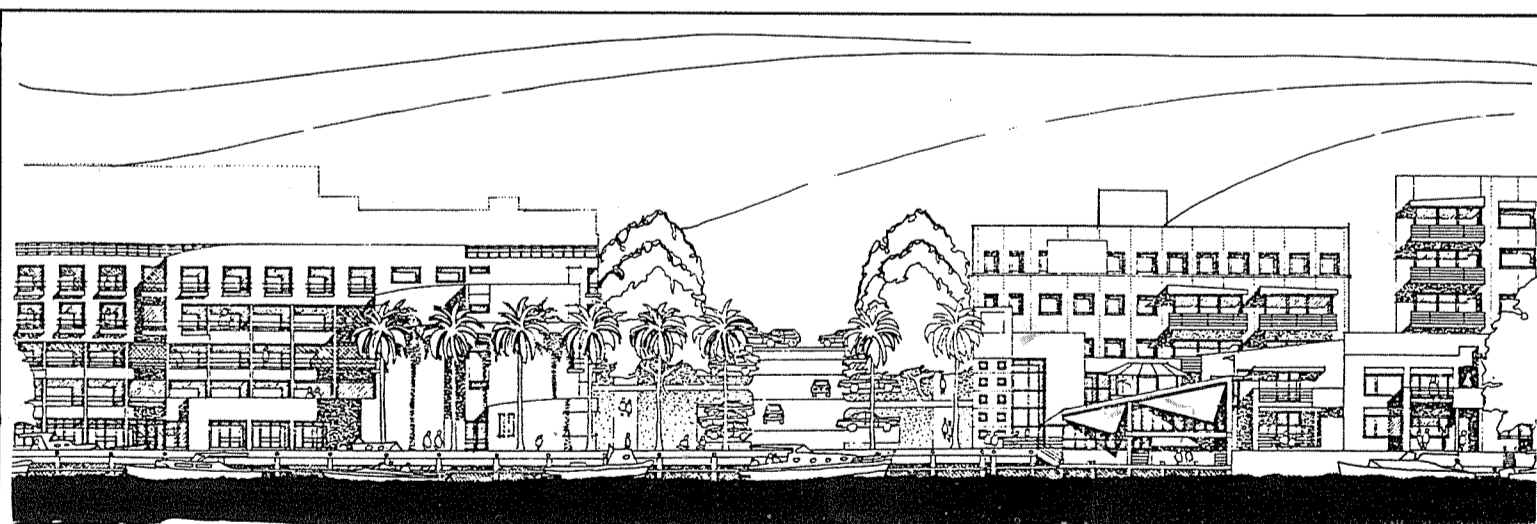
**Rob** - Yes

**Paul** - because its ludicrous when money has such an influence on physical form that Urban Designers don't understand money. Its arguably the single most important tool and that shocks a lot of people.

**Rob** - Sure

**Rob** - I'm going to have to call a halt there.

**Paul** - Thanks



R I V E R F R O N T V I E W - E A S T E L E V A T I O N

## THE CITY LINK PROJECT

Planning applications have recently been submitted for a \$120m mixed use waterfront project on the Maribyrnong River (Melbourne's outer river) at Footscray. With waterside restaurants, a hotel, residential, offices and cinemas, this project aims to revitalise economic activity in the western suburbs.

The project for the very extensive urban design input it has involved. This has involved the application of the "Responsive Environment" design principles and a variety of design influencing techniques. The concept was initiated by the Ministry for Planning and Environment's Urban Design Unit to establish a feasible mix and massing of uses. This formed the basis of an Urban Design Brief, to guide devel-

oper submissions. An urban design "Mixed Use" zone was introduced.

After appointment of City Link properties with architects Williams and Boag, as preferred developer, the City Link project has had extensive collaborative urban design refinement with the Urban Design Unit.

# A NEW RIVER FORESHORE GATEWAY FOR PERTH

By Ralph Stanton

The CityVision group has been active in following up its manifesto (previously reported in UDF) with some practical and imaginative work. CityVision believes that the time has come for Perth to make more of its superb location on the banks of the beautiful Swan River.

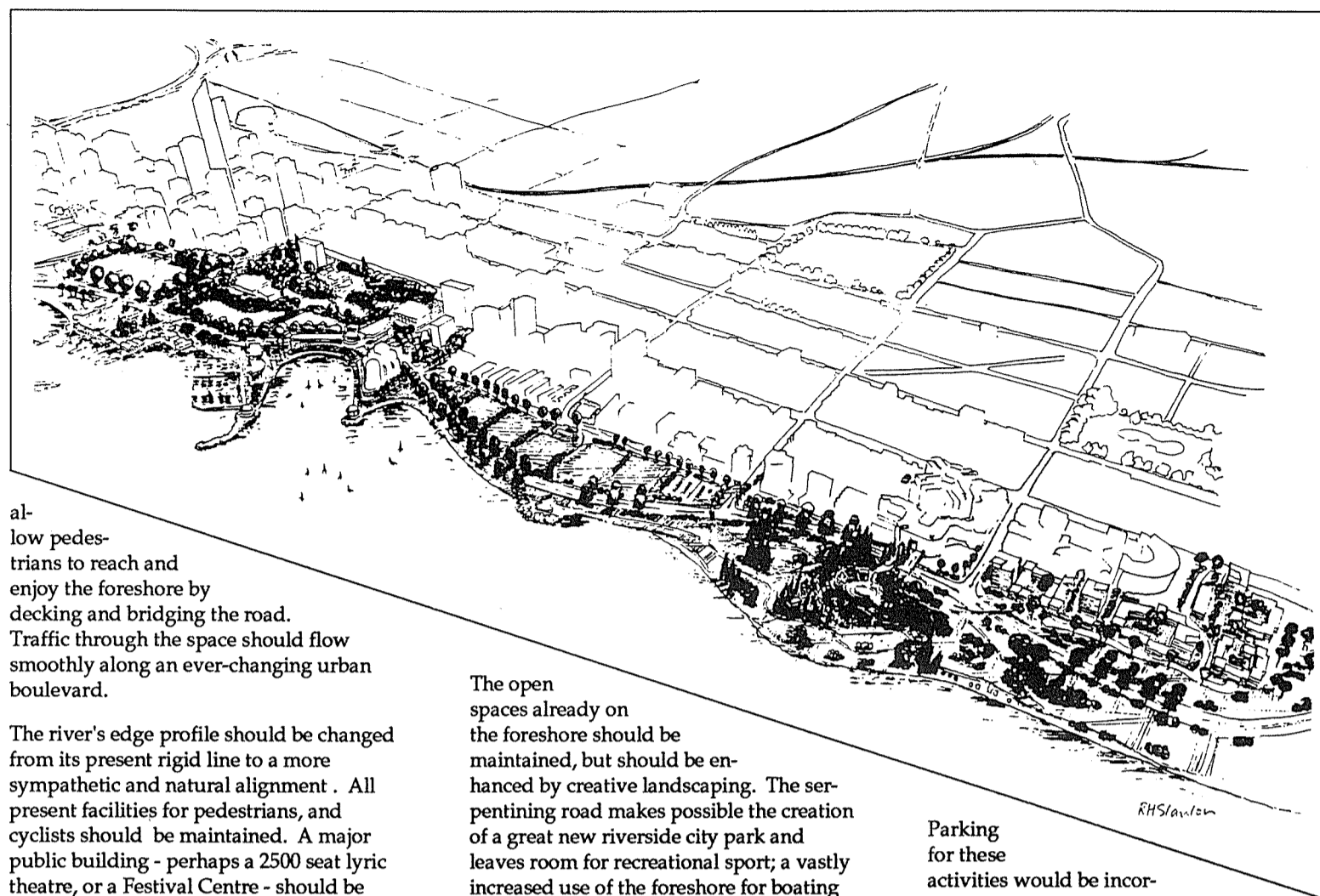
The under utilized space that divides the river from the city should offer to all Western Australians a dynamic playground. Upon this empty canvas a beautiful city gateway can be created that will enhance and mark Perth as a brilliant modern city.

The key innovation is to introduce an integrated design over the whole space from the end of the freeway system to the Causeway, providing a unique opportunity for the State capital to present a brilliant new face to the world.

## Cityvision's Recommendations:

Directly in front of the city center, there should be buildings on and near to the river's edge. These buildings should encompass recreational, cultural, tourist and corporate activities with room for retail activities such as street markets, appropriate shops and restaurants. The road system should be changed in a radical yet simple way. Serpentine the road through the space will release the energy of the river/land interface. It is the one brilliant design element that makes possible the full potential of the Perth City foreshore.

The road system would be re-designed to



allow pedestrians to reach and enjoy the foreshore by decking and bridging the road. Traffic through the space should flow smoothly along an ever-changing urban boulevard.

The river's edge profile should be changed from its present rigid line to a more sympathetic and natural alignment. All present facilities for pedestrians, and cyclists should be maintained. A major public building - perhaps a 2500 seat lyric theatre, or a Festival Centre - should be established on the edge of the river, as the architectural centrepiece of new developments.

Directly in front of the city, there should be facility for promenading by the river's edge in a truly urban setting; a softer, more natural environment would unfold as we move away from the city center towards the east.

The open spaces already on the foreshore should be maintained, but should be enhanced by creative landscaping. The serpentine road makes possible the creation of a great new riverside city park and leaves room for recreational sport; a vastly increased use of the foreshore for boating and yachting; easy public access to the city from the River. Any playing field lost in such a change will be replaced within the City.

At the Causeway end, there should be an inner city residential village established, close to the new river foreshore developments.

Parking for these activities would be incorporated in a variety of ways into the final plan.

CityVision believes that it would be a tragedy if the city foreshore were to be developed in a piecemeal fashion. The highest standards of urban design should be applied to this unique and potentially brilliant space.

## DESIGN AND CRIME IN SURFERS PARADISE

Juris Greste

There are some excellent examples of sound urban design on the Gold Coast. However, some of the consequences of the planning rules applying to high rise residential buildings are quite ruinous of urban quality.

Crime rates and the threat to personal safety on the Gold Coast is acknowledged to be higher than in most cities, mainly because of the high proportion of itinerant population. This will probably get worse as, with continued development, the street environment becomes dead and further alienated.

An unfortunate circular pattern is set up. The present rules for high rise residential blocks encourage development of isolated, compact, free standing buildings. They are well set back and boundaries are fenced or surrounded by barriers of thick planting. As sites are amalgamated into larger units, long sections of residential streets are turned into "deserts" - places without people or signs of life. The symbols, signs and trappings of friendly domesticity of the former houses have disappeared along with the natural surveillance of the street that provides a high degree of safety and security to users of the street.

### No Co-ordination Of Diversity

There appears no effort to co-ordinate the diversity of design, or landscaping. This is

particularly disturbing where, on one side of the street there are 3-5 story buildings addressing the street, but on the other side there is a non-descript thick belt of planting, hiding high rise towers. The planners no doubt have honourable intentions but, the street, as the fundamental element of urban form, gets destroyed in the process.

In many streets, even with the development at the present intensity, it would be very easy to rape or mug without the likely risk of a witness or a distress call being heard. This of course is not only unsafe but it greatly supports the perception of lack of safety and security. While residents value privacy and exclusivity, especially in the prestige/luxury apartments (are there any that are not), the perceived threat to security encourages the developers and designers to further respond in raising the "walls" even higher, creating little fortresses turned in on themselves.

Privacy of course is a social demand but we should not offer residents privacy at the expense of the quality of public space - the street. If the present trend continues the Gold Coast will not only be a setting for fun and recreation but increasingly for anti-social behaviour in the desolate and characterless residential streets.

Juris Greste is an urban designer and architect working in private practice on the Gold Coast.



Highrise streetscape in Surfers Paradise

# Tom Roper:

## INTERVIEWED ON URBAN DESIGN

A few months ago, Tom Roper, Victoria's Minister for Planning and Environment was under fire from various quarters for what was perceived by many as a cavalier and ill-informed approach to planning and urban design. To assess whether things have changed, UDF recently interviewed the Minister and found a somewhat more thoughtful response. But there remains a nagging doubt that, despite the Minister's increasing interest in urban design, there is a significantly reduced commitment by MPE to playing a lead role in ensuring improved urban design. Given the ongoing building boom, that is a worrying prospect.

Assisted by his then senior urban designer, Geoff Hawkins (who has subsequently resigned to join the State Electricity Commission), Tom Roper spoke about a number of his concerns and what he is trying to achieve. The following is a summary of the discussion.

**UDF:** What is your view of urban design?

**TR:** The key things I look for are: opportunities to make physical areas more attractive and lively, not just the CBD but where people shop and live. Our residential development guidelines were aimed at this, not just at more affordable housing. Heritage is also important. Providing an environment where people wish to come and where they wish to invest. Southbank, for instance, is a new form of urban living, we have a concern for how this city will look in the next century. Docklands is another example. The government is taking the big view, to get rid of inappropriate uses strangling the CBD.

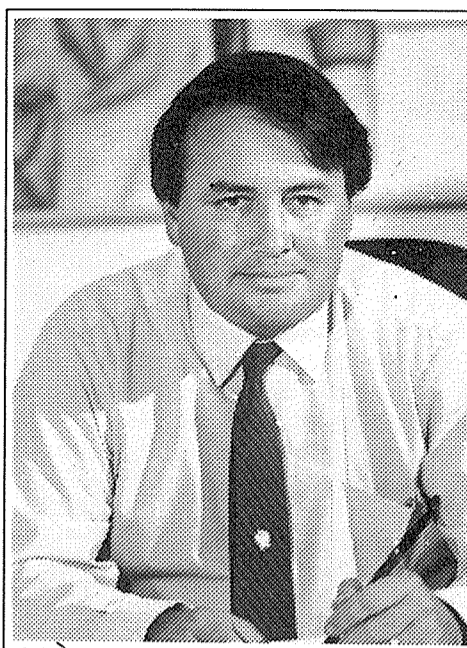
**UDF:** There is a perception that urban design is not a prime concern of the MPE,

and that the skill base in the Ministry is very thin.

**TR:** What I see is a strong involvement of our urban design people in the major projects, but the salaries in the private sector are hugely in excess of what the public sector can afford. We are constantly at risk of losing our best really good people, they have to make a donation to stay here, and they do. Take the Melbourne City Council as an example, they have 25 urban designers and architects who spend most of their time on the CBD (the MCC indicated they had only one full time officer devoted to Urban Design development control in the CAD Ed.), for which they do not even have responsibility. Our Townscape Advisory Service has been doing very good work in the country, and is now doing work in the city.

**UDF:** How do you make decisions between economics and good urban design? Do urban design controls really deter investment, as is sometimes threatened?

**TR:** The developers are now searching, and paying, for quality in a way they weren't a decade ago. They now see quality as one of the selling points for their buildings and the areas around their buildings. We've got a more receptive market. There is only one major project which I have categorically rejected. It was absolutely awful. One of our less desirable landmarks, a "green latrine" was to be replaced with two bigger green latrines. We told the developer to try again. He replaced his architect. The proposal we now have is an attractive one. We have said to a number of developers that they must improve the urban design of their architects. We use plot ratio bonuses as incentives to improve urban design.



Tom Roper, Victoria's Minister for Planning and Environment

**UDF:** Some of your decisions have been controversial. How do you decide?

**TR:** The MCC had initially supported the Lonsdale Street bridge in 1985. (This is denied by the MCC. Ed) There were differences of opinion within this Ministry about the CUB development. Winsome McCaughey (the Lord Mayor) wanted shops in a podium, but everyone I spoke to said that you just wouldn't get the shops there.

**UDF:** As a last question, you have been quoted as not being in favour of shared responsibility for planning and urban design in the central city as occurs in Adelaide. Why not?

**TR:** That system has been touted as one where there has not been any disagreement between the State Government and the City Council. Perhaps the reason is that there is not enough investment in Adelaide to disagree about!

## Post Graduate Course in Urban Design Underway in Sydney

The University of Sydney's post graduate course in Urban Design commenced this year with fifteen students under the leadership of Professor Fritz Stuber, Visiting Lend Lease Professor of Urban Design for 1989. The Chair has been readvertised for 1990.

The Master's course is being offered on both a full and part time basis. Studio work this semester has focussed on the possible redevelopment of the Pyrmont area - immediately adjacent to Darling Harbour. Work by the students will be exhibited in August as part of the Sydney Urban Design Forum mentioned elsewhere.

The course has attracted both architects and landscape architects. Persons interested in applying for the 1990 intake should contact the Urban Design Programme Director (Dr James R. Conner) on (02) 692 3669.

## PERTH:

### CURTIN UNIVERSITY

In 1990 Curtin's Department of Town Planning is proposing to introduce an urban design based seminar into its post-graduate town planning course. For further details contact David Hedgecock.

## FUTURE EVENTS

### PRELIMINARY ANNOUNCEMENT SYDNEY URBAN DESIGN FORUM 31st JULY -- 18th AUGUST

The newly established post graduate course in Urban Design at the Faculty of Architecture, University of Sydney, is to be launched to the public with a series of events - an Urban Design Forum - to be held in Sydney between 31st July and 18th August.

Events planned involve distinguished overseas and Australian speakers including: Dean John de Monchaux - formerly from Sydney, and currently Dean of the schools of architecture and planning at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, Boston U.S.A.; Professor Peter Rowe - Professor of Architecture and Urban Design, Harvard University and Professor Fritz Stuber - from Zurich, and 1989 Visiting Lend Lease Professor of Urban Design, University of Sydney.

In addition to public lectures, films and walks there will be:

\* Monday 31st July - Thursday 3rd August: an introductory course in Urban Design largely for non-designers, planners etc.  
\* Friday 4th - Saturday 5th August: an intensive workshop for designers focusing on Pyrmont, led by Professor Stuber.

Approximately 18th August: a public address by Dean John de Monchaux followed by a debate on Urban Design.

For more information contact either Jim Conner (02-692 3669) or Ann Heydon (02-692 3664) at the Faculty of Architecture, University of Sydney, NSW, 2006.

### ART MEETS ARCHITECTURE IN THE CITY

Conference, 4 October, 1989, Perth

The primary visual experience of the city is comprised of the surfaces of the buildings. In contributing to the experience of the city, the facades of the buildings are most potent at ground level especially the entry threshold and influence the perception of the space contained by the buildings. Whilst corporate identity strategies and retail marketing strategies recognise the power of this threshold experience, this most potent area of cultural expression remains almost totally devoid of input from artists.

The exploration of these thresholds is to be the focus of a conference entitled "Art Meets Architecture In The City", and an exhibition of sculptural installations called "Urban Thresholds" in Perth during the first two weeks of October. The program will coincide with the ARX 1989 international artists exchange "Metro Mania".

Participation from the full range of those concerned with the quality of life in the city is invited. Through the conference and exhibition, participants will be actively encouraged to accept the concept of the collaborative integration of artists in the design process, contributing positively to

enhance the development and vitality of Perth.

Speakers at the conference will include: Alison Sky (from the SITE practice, New York), Pamille Berg (Partner: Mitchell Guirgola Thorp, Architects, Canberra), Sue Clark (Victorian Ministry For the Arts), Andrea Hull and John Teschendorff.

For more information the please contact: Andrea Kins, co-ordinator, URBAN THRESHOLDS  
(09) 325 2799 or (09) 295 4376

### METROPOLIS '90

Metropolis '90 is the third International Congress of the World Association of the major Metropolises and will take place in Melbourne, between 15 and 19 October 1990. It is open to any person having an interest in the issues affecting the world's major cities.

The Metropolis Association was formed in 1985 and endeavours to encourage practical outcomes to the problems of big cities.

The core of the program for Metropolis '90 is made up of the following topics which are currently under examination by some of the world's leading authorities:

- \* The contribution of tertiary industries to the future of economic welfare of cities.
- \* Optimisation of transport costs in inner city areas.
- \* Waste Management:
- \* Accommodating new populations in cities in developing countries & political and administrative organisation of metropolitan areas.
- \* Major hazards in metropolitan areas.
- \* An economic perspective of the Asian-Pacific area
- \* Australian Metropolitan Development.

A major sub-theme will include "Creative Cities" - the main emphasis of which will be consideration of such aspects as the characteristics of cities that are attractive to people, emotionally satisfying cities and cities that encourage creativity: the role of different players in creating such cities - politicians, administrators, financiers, developers, planners, architects, artists etc; what cities should do to develop more creative and higher quality environments; what are the contributions of higher quality environments and vital cultural activity to the economic performance of the city; how significant are these contributions compared to other contributions; how can these contributions be better researched and identified, better promoted and understood and better utilised?

The organisers are inviting abstracts of proposed papers (by 30th September, 1989). Further information can be obtained from: Congress Secretariat, Metropolis '90, 545 Royal Parade, Parkville 3025. Telephone (613) 387 9955 Fax (613) 387 3120

### Acknowledgements

Urban Design Forum is published by the UDF Group for information and interest. The views in UDF are those of its authors and do not necessarily represent the views of organisations with which they are associated. Special acknowledgement is given for assistance with this edition to: Word processing, artwork and layout: Melbourne City Council, Urban Design & Architecture Division, (Howard Lindsay). Distribution: This edition is distributed as a supplement to the "Australian Planner" (RIPA) Reg. Pub. No.SBP 0566, "The Architect" (RAIA, Victoria) Reg.Pub. No. VBQ 0375, by the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (Victoria) and to various other interested people in Australia and overseas. Editors: Rob Adams, Bill Chandler, Wendy Morris. This edition of UDF is sponsored by the Melbourne City Council.

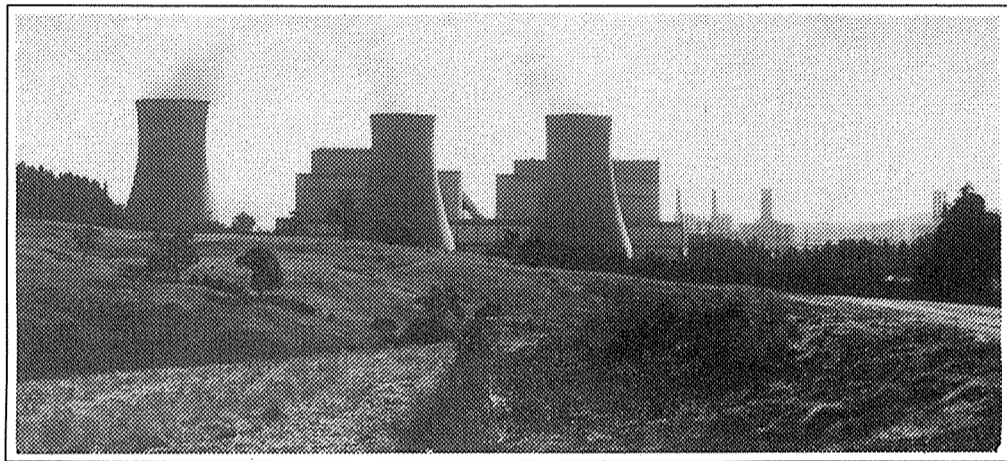
# THE 1988 LATROBE LANDSCAPE PROJECT

By Craig Wilson

"The message is the medium" might well sum up why improving the urban and inter-urban landscapes of Victoria's industrial Latrobe Valley was identified as the key to selling lifestyle and the region's environmental quality as a means to improved employment and economic growth. Investment will not be drawn to the region unless entrepreneurs or managers are prepared to live there. Australia offers many alternative choices to such people.

Only the clear and sometimes harsh observations of a respected professional and outsider could focus community attention and achieve actions. Professor Alexander Rattray, Professor of Landscape Architecture at the University of Manitoba, Canada, was an obvious choice.

Alex had worked successfully in the region in 1985 and this meant that local municipalities and the Latrobe Regional Commission (LRC) - the regional planning and economic development authority - accepted his expertise as a professional designer and a facilitator.



Yallourn W Powerstation - part of the drama of the Latrobe Valley's industrial landscape

## Brisbane Central City Guidelines By Vic Feros

The Brisbane City Council commissioned the preparation of the Brisbane Central City Guidelines, the principal purpose of which was to identify an appropriate urban character for Brisbane's Central City, and to establish guidelines to assist in achieving and maintaining that character. The resulting guidelines do not cover all aspects of urban design.

In its short history, Brisbane has changed many times. The rapid development of the last decades is changing the face of the city. In many ways the quality of the urban environment has deteriorated, largely unintentionally and unnecessarily.

For some time there has existed statutory regulations and policies governing development in the city. They establish certain minimum standards and controls but do not define any overall character nor suggest ways in which it could be achieved.

These guidelines, whilst supporting and extending existing policies and regulations, identify those aspects of the environment which are crucial in determining character, and offer advice and suggestions as to how these aspects might be best treated.

It is not the intention of the guidelines to limit change nor to restrict innovation. However, they do seek to assist in the achievement of a satisfying place in which to be, and one with a distinct and unique urban character.

At a glance guideline proposals include

### Collaboration in Funding

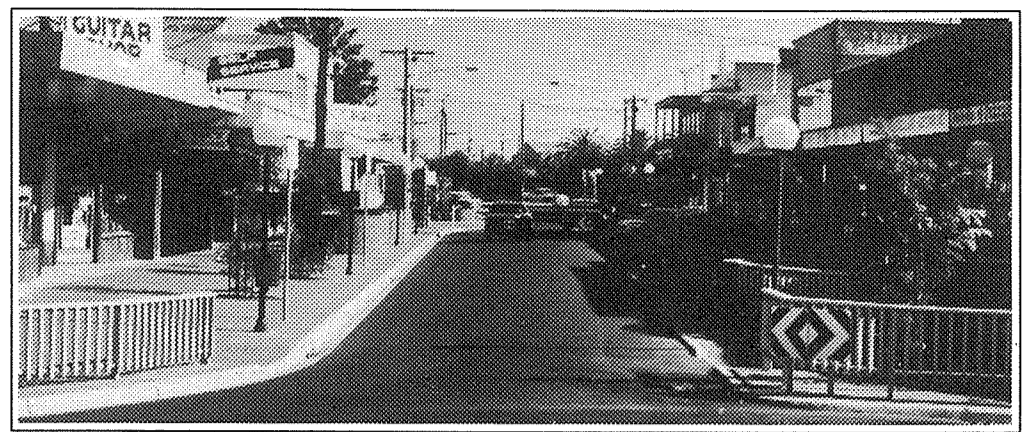
Funding to employ Alex and a support team was obtained by the Ministry for Planning and Environment's Townscape Advisory Service arranging sponsorship from the Ministry, Nubrik, Latrobe Regional Commission, City of Traralgon, Shire of Morwell and City of Moe.

Living in the Valley for five weeks in early 1988, Alex and his architect wife Angela Luvera, worked with the broadly based Latrobe Landscape Committee.

The Latrobe Regional Commission assembled a team to assist Alex, and the State Electricity Commission, a major employer in the region, made available its landscape architect full-time. All key organisations acknowledged the need for townscape and landscape enhancement as a component of their special responsibilities to accelerate progress in the area.

### Real Action

Through an approach which clearly identi-



Church street, Morwell, completed townscape improvements which have economic benefits and community support

fied and developed illustrated proposals for particular sites and by his depth of skill, personality and dogged persistence, Alex enlisted the participation of key players to generate thirteen projects.

1. Yallourn open cut coal mine environs rehabilitation by the State Electricity Commission (SEC).
2. SEC corporate and access entry point No: 2: landscaping by the SEC.
3. Buckley's Hill Reservoir, Morwell: landscaping by the Latrobe Valley Water and Sewerage Board.
4. Alexander's and Tramway Roads, Morwell: tree planting by the Shire of Morwell.
5. Moe city entrances from the Princes Freeway: tree planting by the Road Construction Authority (RCA).
6. Morwell western freeway entrance: tree planting by the RCA and Shire of Morwell.
7. Princes Highway, Traralgon east: tree planting by the City of Traralgon.
8. Morwell V-Line (Victorian railways) freight terminal: landscaping by V-Line and Shire of Morwell.
9. Morwell railway subway and under-

ground shops: physical enhancement works.

10. Moe retail centre: precursor to a townscape study by Loder and Bayly for the City of Moe and a retail improvement seminar by consultant, Bruce Atkinson, for the Latrobe Regional Commission.

11. Rutherglen Road shopping centre: landscaping by Townscape Advisory Service and implementation by the City of Moe.

12. Elizabeth Street, Moe: community arts project.

13. Key Street, Traralgon, fountain: a possible civic project involving the need for public and private sector patronage.

Following the project, the Latrobe Regional Commission published the Latrobe Region Landscape Study in July 1988 (telephone 051-74-8055 to obtain a free copy).

The State Government has supported this regional landscape enhancement initiative by committing \$500,000 over the 1988-90 period for landscape improvement work. The project generated action by focussing community private and public sector aspirations. In this respect it is successful. Its long term success will depend on ongoing local commitment.

seating, signs, lighting, litter bins, and so on

- \* co-ordinate graphics in character with particular spaces
- \* emphasize entrances to city centre, characteristic townscape and landscape forms
- \* conserve and emphasize views and landmarks, river, bridges, parks and distant hills

### THE DRAFT BRISBANE CENTRAL CITY DESIGN GUIDELINES REVIEWED By Juris Greste

"Design Guidelines" is an ambitious title. While the various suggestions all bear on design of the city, it is (by its own admission) not a set of guidelines for a better city, but an attempt to "identify a coherent and appropriate urban character which should be maintained and reinforced."

The document concentrates on the visual aspects of the city and plays down the role of the functional, psychological, perceptual and emotional. The guide seems to be equating urban design with aesthetic control and historic preservation. A better city surely is more than that.

### Character Over-emphasised

The guide focuses on character. Therein, however, lies the main weakness of the document. In emphasising character, the guide limits itself to how Brisbane can be made different from other places. There is nothing wrong in that. However, it fails to address the question of what must be done to make Brisbane a good (better) city in the first place.

### Philosophical Base

The activity of urban design is one which is not well understood even among those who

do "it". Thus an important role of a City Design Guide must be as a medium of education. The present publication does not offer a theoretical or conceptual base to which the specific recommendations can be related and thus better appreciated. It puts forward no general principles although some are implied.

### Implementation

The presently offered guidelines do not appear to give the B.C.C. urban designers any power. The guideline implores, exhorts, suggests, but puts no obligation or commitment on the developer or the designer to do anything that is not already mandatory under the present planning rules and by-laws. It relies too much on goodwill. A mechanism must be created where the urban design negotiators can trade urban benefits for the city in return for a gain to the developer. There must be some power to compel.

If the Council is serious about the quality of the urban environment, which it admits has deteriorated, it must have qualified urban designers committed to improving the quality of public space. Any guidelines and rules are only as good as the people who implement them. The B.C.C. and its consultants are however, to be commended for having taken an important step, be it only a first and limited step towards making Brisbane a better city for all.

THE PITCHED  
ROOF  
RE-INVENTED"

