

Space for thought: the role of urban design on the Gallipoli Underpass

In the past 18 months, Australia has developed an appetite for infrastructure investment quite unlike any other time in our history. Fortuitously or not, Australia has dodged the recession bullet, and the huge expenditure by the Australian Government was seen as a solution to preventing a slide into what was feared would be the first depression since the 'Great Depression' of the 1930s.

It may be fortuitous timing, because Australia has suffered from chronic public underinvestment in transport infrastructure over the last 3-4 decades. Adelaide is not immune to these fundamental shifts, and in how we live in a world increasingly worried about climate change and our ecological footprint. While governments chart their course through the rough seas of the downturn with the aim of keeping the economy going, without due planning and design we may face a series of 'recession projects' – the effects of which could outlast the economic circumstances, and our cities could ultimately suffer in 'value management'.

The risks for design are significant – to enable easy procurement, government and consultant project managers may demand 'off the shelf' basic solutions, removing the opportunity for innovation and time to properly develop integrated and well resolved design solutions.

What does this quick-spend approach mean for our cities, and further, how can the critical role landscape architects and architects perform positively influence the built outcome of these projects to avoid the inadvertent scarring of our cities?

The Gallipoli Underpass

The Gallipoli Underpass represents a new benchmark for infrastructure development in South Australia. Incised into the landscape, the bold and simple walls of the underpass represent the economic strength South Road provides for the state - now and in the future. Integrated within the existing suburban context, the design acknowledges the cultural and historic importance of ANZAC Highway as an ANZAC remembrance boulevard with a series of memorials to remember all those who never returned from conflict.

From the strong grid of Manchurian Pear trees planted in gravel to represent parading soldiers, the symbolic representation of the Lone Pine, the individual memorials to the Air Force, Navy and Army, as well as honouring the cultural and close relationship with New Zealand, the project showcases innovation in design and construction.

The project also represents a collaborative procurement model via an Early Contractor Involvement Alliance – co-locating a team of architects, engineers, community relations, contractors and the client in one location for over 12 months. Through collaborative and integrated design and construction methodologies, the project has been realised ahead of time and budget, and resolved complex traffic and engineering issues, creating a new and energised public domain for the benefit of the local and wider community.



URBAN DESIGN FORUM

ISSUE No. 90

June 2010



◀ ▲ Gallipoli Underpass

Integrated design

While the project was fortunate to be procured using an alliance, it could have easily been a traditional design and construct, or other model. Regardless of procurement type, the role of integrated design is critical to the success of projects. More importantly, as more stimulus projects enter critical design phases, the opportunity exists for designers to meaningfully contribute, collaborate, integrate and stimulate the 'right' outcomes. The achievement of these objectives will be the real legacy for our cities.

The project credits are the 'AdelaideConnect' Consortium: Client - Department for Transport, Energy and Infrastructure; Contractor - Thiess Pty Ltd; Contractor - LEED Engineering and Construction; Urban Design, Landscape Architecture - HASSELL; Civil, structural, hydraulic, geotechnical, environmental engineering - Parsons Brinckerhoff; and Community Consultation - Kath Moore and Associates.

Daniel Bennett is Principal and Landscape Architect with Hassell in Adelaide. He can be contacted at dbennett@hassell.com.au

'CABE DownUnder' update

The response to the 'CABE DownUnder' article (UDF No 80) has been extraordinary. From across Australia, and beyond, positive support and enthusiasm for the initiative has led to some prompt action. Forty five people attended a short notice initial meeting at Melbourne Town Hall, bringing a diversity of interest and experience together to both discuss the concept, and plan for action.

A group of 13 from the initial meeting, all volunteers of course, have had a weekly session over the past month to develop the concept, explore the dimensions the challenge, and commence action to implement the initiative. The focus and energy of that group has been impressive, but the electronic involvement of people from other states (particularly Queensland), and even from UK has added significantly to their work.

Beyond talk

It is clear that many people and organisations are itching for something like UK's CABE to

be established in Australia. The diversity of people promoting the initiative includes a wide range of interests, not just urban design – property, development, health, economics, and national and local politics. The common messages are:

- *don't just talk* - do something to make it happen
- *make it inclusive* - it is not the preserve of one or other of the professional 'design' groups
- *craft a governance and action model appropriate for Australia* – building on the UK CABE experience but relevant and effective for our national, state and local levels of interest
- *make it practical* - a significant contribution to addressing the macro challenges facing Australia: climate change, population increase, employment, affordable living, transport, and overall sustainability and liveability

- *improving the quality of our cities and towns* – embracing the functional, aesthetic and economic realities in the context of holistic national spatial planning and development.

What next?

Given the widespread enthusiasm for action, it is critical that the development of the 'CABE DownUnder' initiative involve a diversity and geographic distribution of people well beyond the original initiators in Melbourne. The immediate actions of the 'group of 13' are to coordinate and produce:

- *a concise brochure* (June) - outlining the nature and intent of the initiative, recognising the diversity of interests and actions by others, and suggestions for how to get involved
- *a prospectus/proposal* (August) – to give form to the initiative, and provide sufficient substance to promote/influence/convince Federal, State and Local politicians, relevant bureaucracies, enterprises and groups of all

sorts, the media, and the general community of the benefits of a 'CABE DownUnder' – presumably with a more appropriate name! [ED: bottle of good red for the best suggestion!]

- *a compendium of relevant ideas/examples/data* (first edition by the end of 2010) – as an evolving underpinning for the initiative. (Perhaps there is an educational or research institution or PhD candidate looking for both a challenge and status).

Get in touch now

Because the interest in, and enthusiasm for, this initiative is evolving so quickly, hard copy is a slow medium to keep in touch. There is already a substantial and growing email list to keep people up to date so, if you are not on this list and want to be, send an email to wchandler@bigpond.com. However, in the near future, it is expected that a more manageable electronic process (eg website, blog, etc) will need to be created as part of ongoing action.

Australia Award for Urban Design update

There were an encouraging 38 entries for the Australia Award for Urban Design this year – and the standard and competition for recognition seems to be increasing each year.

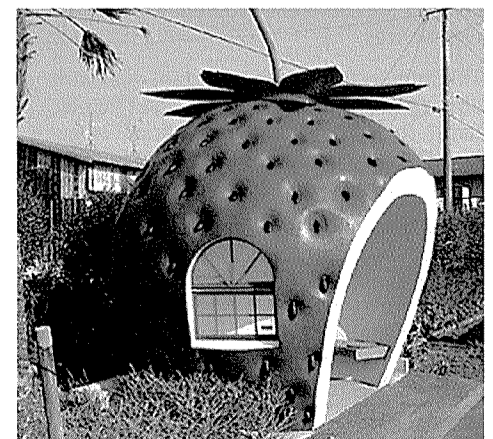
Judging took place in May, and the winners will be announced at a dinner in Canberra on 15 June, in conjunction with the Built Environment Meets Parliament (BEMP) event on 16 June.

The results of the AAUD will be featured in the next edition of UDF. For more information about BEMP see www.bemp.com.au

Urban design – more than the ordinary and obvious!

Who said urban designers don't have a sense of humour? Our readers are always on the lookout for interesting left field examples of how some designers are addressing the challenges that are common to many cities. Without asking questions about context and local circumstances, the results may sometimes surprise us.

These bus stops were noticed by public transport campaigner Cathy McNaughton (cmcnaughton@optushome.com.au). You can find some more examples at www.treehugger.com/files/2010/04/crazy-bus-stops.php?campaign=th_weekly_nl



Fourth Australian New Urbanism Congress

Over 300 people attended the recent ACNU 2010 New Urbanism Congress and its related TOD Design Master Class and Charrette Training program in Adelaide in April.

Themed as "From Plans to Places", the Congress focussed on presenting and reviewing built outcomes, including the successes and the challenges to do better. A lively and diverse program featured speakers and projects from around Australia, as well as several presentations by the three impressive international keynote speakers, Stef Polyzoides (CNU co-founder) from Pasadena in USA, Paul Murrain from UK, and Brian O'Looney, from Torti Gallas, in Washington DC. Many delegates agreed it was the best ACNU Congress yet, with high quality presentations, good interaction and discussion, and plenty of networking. The Congress Program and presentations will be placed on the ACNU website www.acnu.org in June.

The TOD Master Class spent three days developing design solutions for two distinctly different TOD sites – one in Woodville, an

incremental intensification project around a station in an older established part of Adelaide, and the other in the northern suburbs - Elizabeth Regional Centre – a huge enclosed mall in a sea of car parking, with an empty site across the rail tracks.



During the Congress, delegates toured Mawson Lakes, now transforming into a surprisingly dense and lively mixed use place with a newly-built station, catalysed by university students and defence personnel. Other tours went to the emerging infill projects of Lights View and Lochiel Park, and incremental intensification projects throughout the City Centre. Delegates also got

to experience Adelaide's lively nightlife, as well as an opening reception with the famed Zoo pandas, Wang Wang and Funi.

Wendy Morris is a Director of the Australian Congress for New Urbanism and Joint Director of the Ecologically Sustainable Design consultancy in Melbourne. She can be contacted at esdwendy@netspace.net.au

Street elevations – a critical element of the approval process?

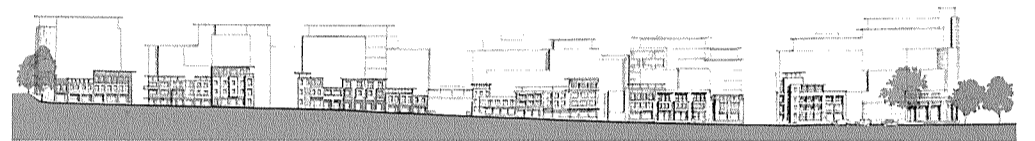
Oliver Penman

Debate and discussion during the recent ACNU Congress in Adelaide wove together many strands of exasperation from all strata of the development process regarding the quality of built outcomes falling far short of the design vision. If a project is true to its aim of being truly place-specific, then surely the nexus between designing a project 'for people' and having it approved by authorities 'for people' should be a relatively simple affair? Assuming both parties have the same people in mind....

However, in the quest for an approvable height control and a bankable floor space, the casualty is too often the street. The approvable design concept should be expressed as a visual conception of the future street experience, not an abstract mathematical equation of total built form.

In governing built form, the street elevation deserves a stronger presence in the approvals process. Able to depict street-viewable height, it also has the benefit of illustrating modulation of massing and the impact of topography. Of course, the plan will almost always be the starting point for design, but a number or colour-coded shapes only encourages people's worst built imaginings regarding built form outcomes. A concept elevation burns off this miasma of community trepidation. Less costly than a 3D CAD rendering, it is also scalable and, unlike an axonometric view, is a good approximation of what will be perceived from the street.

This idea sits well with the idea of blended densities and combination building typologies presented by USA-based CNU founder, Stefanos Polyzoides. His examples of Californian courtyard apartment/townhouse hybrids fill a desirable gap in the transect of density between small lot housing and apartments. Moreover, these hybrids achieve genuine density, while retaining a streetscape which is sympathetic to neighbours, both adjacent and on the opposite side of the street.



Layered approach

A layered concept elevation, complete with trees (existing and proposed), people, and cars provides incentive for strong landscape design. Great trees can effortlessly conceal mediocre architecture and, as such, the retention of existing mature trees or a commitment to significant, established new street tree planting should be recognised in the approvals process for inflicting less 'architectural risk' on the street.

While it may only seek to govern street-wall height, envelopes and modulation, an approvable concept elevation pre-configures a consideration of the local vernacular and local building typologies at the early stages of design. What are the common local materials, predominant architectural styles, building typologies and relative rate of aberration? How

does the project fit into the street rhythm? Need a street be symmetrical in terms of total development, if it is asymmetrical in terms of development opportunity? That there are well-loved, large and possibly heritage-listed homes on the other side of the street should not undermine the cumulative density rationale of the project site.

The importance of plans is unquestioned for design and understanding of the project in its entirety. However, a solely plan-based approval process with numeric 3D envelope controls in no way guards against the spaceships of placeless international modernism landing in a suburb near you.

Oliver Penman is an urban designer with Sydney-based New Urbanist firm, Annand Alcock Urban Design and can be contacted at oliver@aad.com.au



Reflections on ACNU Congress 2010

Phil Smith

As with all good music festivals, ACNU Congress 2010 had a suitably hectic pace. The solid bill, with its mix of headline acts and indie practitioners, suited the 'single session' approach. No choosing who to see, just strap yourself in and hang on!

But I'm still struggling to describe the Congress (that could be the mental equivalent of tinnitus!!). I've got plenty of good notes and sketches, but the pearls of wisdom, the beautiful images, the ideas, the provocation and argument are all still swirling. They'll come to land at some point and will undoubtedly influence the way I work.

Most immediately memorable and just as useful are the conversations had around the event. These pub-based discussions connect the conference content with our own experiences.

This intersection raises important questions about ACNU. Is this an organisation for old farts? How do we younger practitioners 'get a look in' but honour and retain input from ACNU pioneers?

Do we engage on new fronts and who should our audience be? Are plans the most suitable tool for explaining projects to the uninitiated? Why don't we produce useful info/tools for non-designers at the government coalface? Is the Transect scary and misunderstood? How long will it be until we have an adequate suite of good NU projects 'on the ground' to touch, taste and feel?

A turning point for ACNU?

These questions indicate a robust organisation in transition, and Congress 2010 may be a turning point for ACNU. But the value of the Congress theme - 'Plans to Places' - sits nicely in the middle of these questions.

Plans are visioning tools, but they are also design tools and evidence of thought and process. As designers we forget that plans are not always the best tool for debate - not everyone understands the 3D implications of a plan.

Conversely, the visit to Mawson Lakes generated much debate about NU form (mostly from non-designers), but with little discussion of the issues of delivering 'place' in such a short timeframe. But it's these form-based delivery conversations we need to have with our audience who are reluctant to discuss plans.

So the importance of communicating our ideas in the third dimension was reaffirmed for me at ACNU. Stef Polyzoides' diagrammatic analysis of typologies drove this home. But an equally valuable communication method was the photo-analysis of 'what works and what doesn't' by AAUD. They put the 'to' back into Plans to Places.

Just don't tell Peter and Clive I called them 'old farts'!

Phil Smith, is an Urban Designer, Architect and Associate Director with the Deicke Richards consultancy in Queensland. He can be contacted at phil@deickerichards.com.au

Inspired by the conference

Emille van Heyningen

I was inspired by the recent ACNU Conference in Adelaide. We get so bogged down by our normal daily duties that we often forget what we are really supposed to be doing - we need to realise we can and should transform the built environment.

We do actually create environments for people and have influence on the way people live - this comes with a responsibility to ensure that we create positive change for our people and our communities.

I think we all to some extent are aware of much of the information discussed at the conference, but it was good to be re-informed, re-inspired and, for New Urbanisms as a group, to mobilise to the momentum to create this positive change in the built environment for our communities.

International speakers of great value

Peter Shellie

I had the great pleasure to attend the 2010 ACNU Conference in Adelaide, and as a first timer found it a fascinating experience and one I look forward to repeating in the future.

Of particular value from the conference was the very high quality of the international speakers who not only provided very exciting papers with terrific examples but they participated in the Conference. The multiple presentations they did really helped to gain a better insight into their thinking, and the language they

The most memorable lessons I learned at the conference are:

- "Small is beautiful"
- We need to put people first (the rest will come...)
- We need to return to the basics - connectivity, placeness, compactness, diversity and frugality
- We need to use Australian architecture - use the existing architecture as prompt/guide and avoid 'universal' architecture and design in our cities.

I will certainly use my new found New Urbanism knowledge in my work from now on!

Emille van Heyningen is a Senior Strategic Planner at the Rockhampton Regional Council and is responsible for the revitalisation of the Rockhampton CBD and the preparation of the new Planning Scheme for the Rockhampton Region. He can be contacted at Emille. VanHeyningen@rrc.qld.gov.au

use, and that assisted in understanding the concepts better. The opportunity to interact with them and to have such access was terrific.

The local speakers were generally very good and gave an insight into what is happening in Australia in this area. Some revealed how far behind or narrow they were looking, while others had over-reached. It's always good when you see the boundaries being pushed!

Peter Shellie, is Development Director, Eynesbury Township, Geo Property Group, and can be contacted at Peter.Shellie@geopg.com.au

The next conversation

Adam Beck

No urban planner, architect, designer or developer has escaped the latest conversation around Australia's growing cities and the challenges this presents for our future urban policy and planning frameworks. From major cities units to growth summits to population ministers, our responses are evolving. So, too, are the tools that the Green Building Council of Australia (GBCA) is developing for industry.

For some, the GBCA's Green Star tools are a challenge, and for others they are business-as-usual. For seven years we have used voluntary rating tools to generate market demand for building green which, ultimately, has resulted in industry transformation. What if we could do the same for our precincts, places and communities? Could we create market demand for more sustainable processes and outcomes that shape our communities?

Framework for sustainable communities

In response to this challenge - and indeed this opportunity - the GBCA, with the support of government and industry around Australia, has created a national framework for sustainable communities. This framework provides the foundations for a future rating tool. The framework establishes five national principles for shaping the evolution of communities, both new and existing. It addresses the issues of liveability, prosperity, environmental quality, place making and governance. Given the range of issues to be addressed, the framework has been developed through a collaborative process with our project partner VicUrban, and guided by a diverse technical reference committee reporting to a national steering committee. The framework and tool are being developed with the kind support of our sponsors Rock Development Group, Brisbane City Council, Lend Lease, Stockland, Grocon, Sydney Harbour Foreshore Authority, Barangaroo Delivery Authority, and Sustainability Victoria. A draft of the framework was scrutinised by over 150

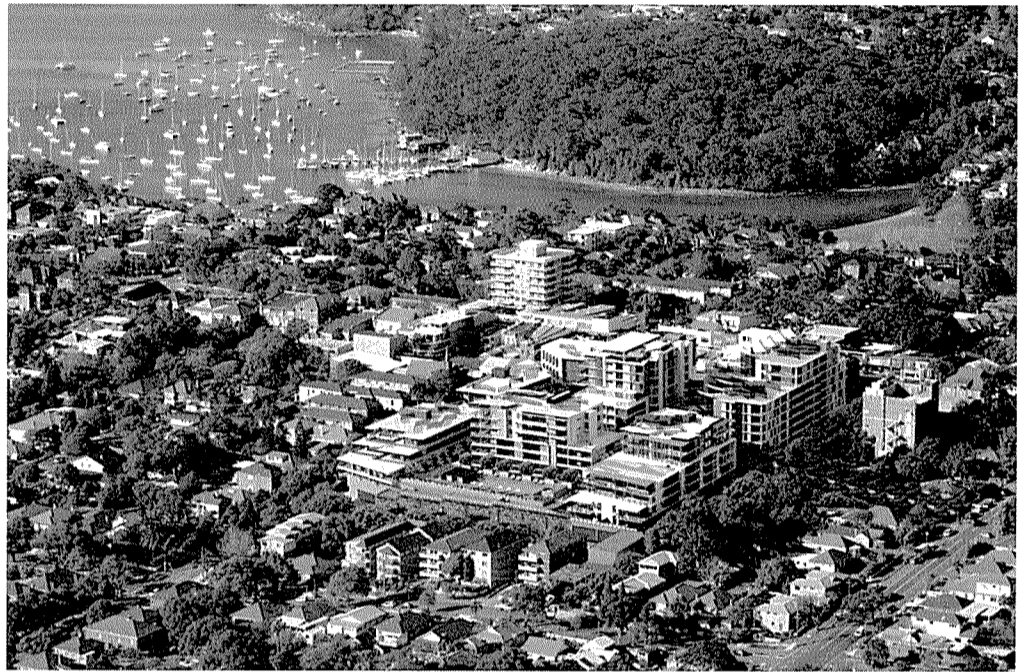
organisations across industry and all levels of government over the past two months, and will now be refined and launched later this year. The GBCA hopes the framework will help government and industry to evolve our future cities and provide a much needed 'common language' around the attributes of sustainable communities.

A foundation for the Communities Tool

Importantly, the framework establishes the foundations for the Green Star Communities tool, the GBCA's most exciting project yet. This journey is ambitious and demanding, and indeed daunting. However, using our well-tested model for tool development, we believe that through strong partnerships and information exchange we can produce a tool that helps to create demand and rewards leadership for exemplary sustainable community projects.

The scope of the tool is yet to be confirmed and will take into account the feedback from more than 12 months of consultation with industry and government. Our tool development will consider tools and methodologies that already exist within the market place, as the Green Star model references existing best practice benchmarks and standards as opposed to creating new ones. We have also commenced a process of identifying the successes and failures from our sister organisations in the UK, US and Canada, which have followed this same path through the development of their tools for communities and neighbourhood developments. As with our building tools, we expect Green Star Communities to evolve over many years and we look forward to engaging with you in this journey.

Adam Beck is national leader for Green Star Communities for the Green Building Council of Australia, and can be contacted on 0410 506 043 or adam.beck@gbca.org.au The draft Green Star Communities framework can be downloaded from www.gbca.org.au

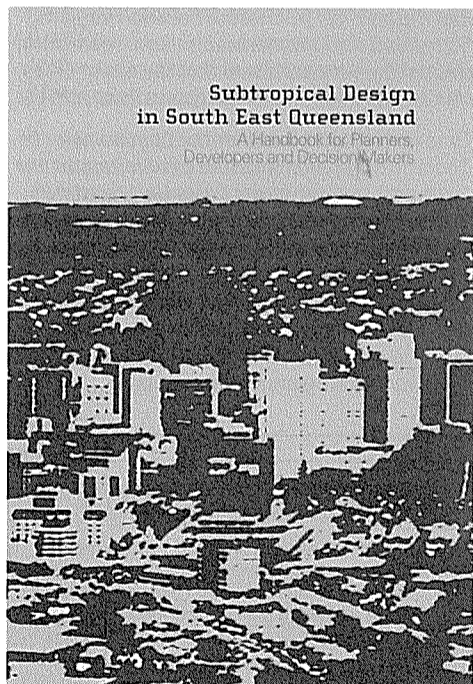


Subtropical design in South East Queensland

- handbook for planners, developers and decision-makers

Christine Carter

South East Queensland is fortunate to have one of the world's most liveable climates and a diversity of landscape that offers a high level of amenity to its inhabitants. It is now recognised that development can capitalise on the region's climate and character, to create urban form with lower energy consumption in a more liveable environment.



"Subtropical Design in South East Queensland: A Handbook for Planners, Developers and Decision Makers", recently released by the Centre for Subtropical Design at Queensland University of Technology (QUT), provides a well researched and timely step toward the realisation of sustainable subtropical development. The publication investigates the 12 principles for subtropical design set out in the SEQ Regional Plan 2009-2031, regional policy 8: compact settlement.

The handbook demonstrates a range of 'place-based strategies', relating to the 12 principles, that are specific to SEQ and its sub-regions and provides insights into how subtropical culture can be maintained during urban intensification. Specifically, the handbook explores the following, perhaps less widely understood, aspects of subtropical design:

- the importance of climatically responsive design and micro-climatic conditions within medium to high density areas as well as at a neighbourhood level
- the importance of local character, and the role that vegetation and green space has in subtropical urban areas
- a focus on the use of outdoor spaces and blurring the boundary between the 'indoor' and 'outdoor' spaces of subtropical cities
- maximising the value and provision of green space through the thoughtful use of vegetation, clever use of space and the optimal orientation of streets and development blocks.

Implementation of subtropical urbanism

With the handbook as a guide, the challenge of realising subtropical urbanism remains. Two broad methods of implementation are evident: *enforcement*, through government control and regulation; and *incentive*, requiring a shift in market trends and cultural awareness.

Subtropical outcomes by enforcement - It seems obvious, especially due to the direct link to the regional plan, that some level of government enforcement may be required to deliver the principles contained in the handbook. A code-based controlling mechanism will need careful consideration to ensure it does not stifle the innovation in thinking required to achieve great subtropical design outcomes. In any case, and in keeping with the 'place specific' approach intrinsic to the handbook, any future policy is probably best delivered through local planning instruments.

Also of note are the challenges associated with the Building Code of Australia which, in broad terms, does not allow for the flexibility needed to deliver locally responsive design outcomes.

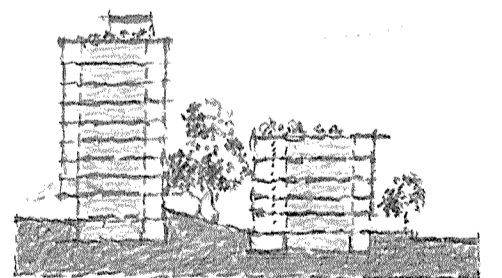
Subtropical outcomes by incentive - Publicising the substantial benefits that exist in adopting subtropical design approaches - with an emphasis on the obvious liveability, amenity, value, and energy efficiency benefits - is the first step in generating wider support for subtropical urbanism. The challenge is that in order to achieve a much deeper acceptance in the market, more measurable data that quantifies

the relative costs and benefits is required. This could perhaps be achieved by building exemplar projects, or through the development of a subtropical design rating tool.

Congratulations

The Centre for Subtropical Design, and in particular Rosemary Kennedy, should be congratulated for their ongoing perseverance in this important area of education and research. The Handbook is a major milestone for design in the region. The handbook can be viewed online at www.subtropicaldesign.org.au or can be purchased at the QUT bookshop.

Christine Carter is a Senior Urban Designer in the Brisbane office of Urbis, and can be contacted at ccarter@urbis.com.au



▲ Promote tree longevity by providing sufficient unobstructed growing space above and below ground.

Impacts of climate change on infrastructure

Climate change poses significant threats to the nation's infrastructure, a research plan released today by the Australian Government shows. The *National Climate Change Adaptation Research Plan: Settlements and Infrastructure* says climate change is likely to result in increased damage to buildings, energy, telecommunications, transport and water infrastructure and services.

The Research Plan identifies research priorities in four main areas - urban planning and

management, built environment, vulnerable coastal communities and infrastructure. In response to the plan, the Federal Government has announced \$6.5 million for climate change research into the potential risk. This research is aimed at helping Australia's towns and cities prepare for unavoidable climate change.

To download a copy of the research plan see www.nccarf.edu.au

Moving people - solutions for a growing Australia

This report is a collaborative publication produced by the three leading groups representing the public transport industry in Australia Australasian Railway Association, Bus Industry Confederation and International Association of Public Transport (UITP).

It has been jointly authored by John Stanley (Adjunct Professor, Institute of Transport and Logistics Studies, University of Sydney) and Simon Barrett Managing Director of LEK Consulting, Australia. The report is targeted

at key policy-makers in Commonwealth and State/Territory Governments, with an interest in, or responsibility for, transport policy and related areas. It has significant implications for urban design and planning in our cities and towns. For more information see www.ara.net.au/UserFiles/file/Publications/Moving_People_summary.pdf

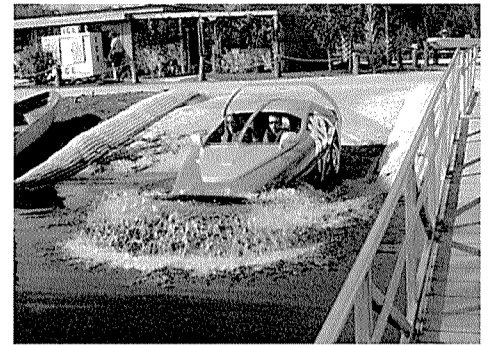
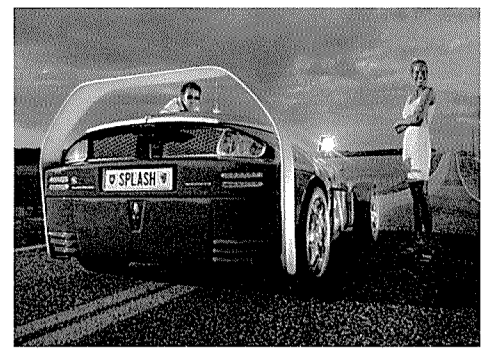
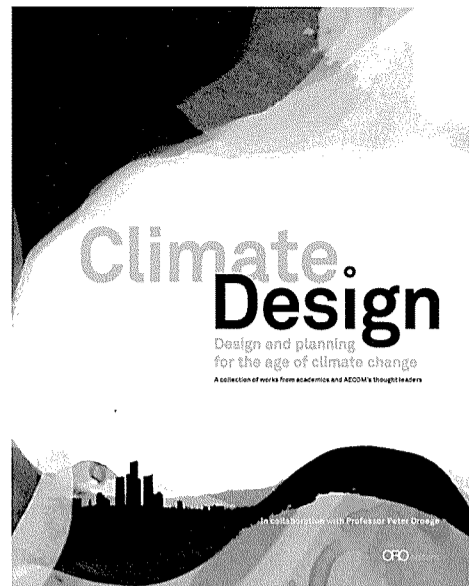
'Climate design' AECOM and Professor Peter Droege

How will new approaches to design and planning mitigate the effects of climate change and adapt to its already inevitable impacts? Based on the philosophy that looks beyond the silos of traditional design practice, to make the connections between architecture, planning, landscape, ecology and engineering, this book, is edited by global design and engineering company AECOM and Professor Peter Droege – widely acknowledged expert in the field of renewable and sustainable design – and focuses on radical solutions. It illustrates how new thinking can convert investments in urban infrastructure, land use and development into resilient and enduring support systems for human and environmental prosperity.

Written for designers, architects, planners, engineers, policy makers and academics, *Climate Design* explores the current paradigm shift towards sustainability, and includes 22 essays written by designers from around the world.

Professor Droege says, "*Climate Design* brings together powerful new practices and innovative thinking in areas such as urban planning and landscape design, soils and water engineering, energy and transport infrastructure and socio-economic change. Uninformed design and planning choices contribute to the climate conundrum in direct ways – by perpetuating inefficiency and fossil fuel dependence, and by missing a myriad of choices that could lower destructive levels of resource consumption and help sustain the resilience of planetary ecosystems. *Climate Design* presents practice and ideas that go beyond sustainability – they address the very question of survivability."

Climate Design is currently being launched at various AECOM events throughout Australia and is available for purchase through Amazon for US\$40.



Sustainability and urban design

Robert McLean

Urban design is integral to Australia building a sustainable future. Its importance is hugely underestimated just as we have failed to grasp what a different mindset we will need to survive the 21st century - and live beyond it.

Australia's population is growing rapidly, and careful urban design - linked to an understanding that life in the decades to come will be different from what we have enjoyed for the past century – is critical.

An article in the last Urban Design Forum (UDF 89 March) argued for the creation of a national *Integrated Design of the Built Environment Commission (IDBEC)*. Although a national IDBEC would be a wonderful start, the commission alone would be inadequate as in addition, and importantly, help should be given to ordinary Australians to enable them to understand, and accept, realities associated with the decades ahead.

Predictions about our growing population (up to 35 million by 2050?) will stress everything about life for Australians - from transport to food security, and working and housing. Simply sharing existing public and private space will be a priority we don't yet truly understand, and so it is that which will compel the introduction of a national IDBEC.

However, there is more to consider – climate change and peak oil are forces we don't yet truly understand, but are both things that can be answered, or at least substantially answered, through careful and thoughtful urban design. Hence, even further need for a national IDBEC.

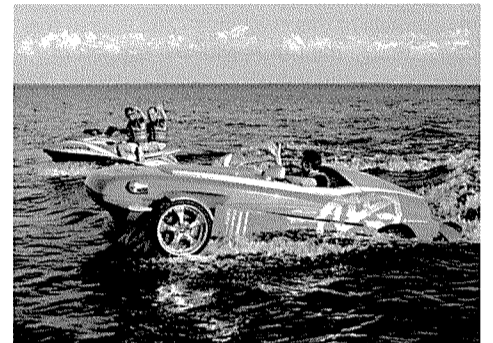
The Australian dream of a detached house on a separate block is fading, so quickly it is becoming a nightmare, and so one of the first tasks of a national IDBEC would be to explain to Australians the need to increase our density of living and in doing that show them how that could be done in a manner that enables them to retain, as much as possible, many of the pleasures of their present enjoyable way of life.

A change of mindset

Challenges ahead will demand a massive change in mindset: obligatory changes to how we live, where we live, where we work, what we do, how we move about, where we shop, how we shop. In fact, understanding and accepting that a future that brings limitations brought on by climate change and peak oil will force us to live where we live – that is have and find all the resources for happy and sustainable life within, mostly, walking or easy cycling distance.

The journey from where we presently are to that new, and sustainable, way of living will require an unprecedented understanding and acceptance of thoughtful urban design that capitalizes on the efficient use of public and private space.

Robert McLean is a UDF regular, a journalist, and a resident of Shepparton. He can be contacted at robed@mcmedia.com.au



Urban design: small is beautiful

Most of Britain's large urban masterplans have failed to deliver, according to an article in the UK Institution of Civil Engineers Urban Design and Planning journal. A back-to-basics approach - based on smaller, more viable plots - is required.

Kelvin Campbell, a leading urban designer and founding partner of UK practice Urban Initiatives, says the problem has been caused by trying to replace the role of the public sector with the private sector. "The public sector has expected the private sector to deliver projects that are too big, too intertwined and often too-self centred," he says. The result is typically large, soul-less developments that suck life out of surrounding areas, and yet often struggle to prosper themselves.

Campbell calls for the re-establishment of a more fine-grained approach to defining and regulating new development, based on a street-plot-block-building relationship. While a 'big picture' is still needed, he believes this is better achieved through a series of 'extra small' interventions rather than an 'extra large' masterplan.

'The old delivery models are broken' according to Sir Bob Kerslake of the UK Homes and Communities Agency. But are these models dead or just sleeping? Some would be inclined to blame the current recession for breaking the models. 'It will all get better,' they say, 'when confidence returns.' Others would say the models were broken long before the recession. Did society really get it right before, or was it just flogging a dead horse? Like many recently failed UK high-street chains, they would say that the recession did not kill the business, it merely buried it. So is this a time to reflect and change approaches or is a paradigm shift upon us, whether welcome or not?

What is now needed is an upside down version of the big architecture approach propagated in the last decade. This has been the underlying fault in many masterplans in recent years – the hit and miss of the wow factor. Many of these have forced the architecture rather than facilitating it – plans that are too predetermined to produce single outcomes rather than offering individual

responses. The fault of the masterplanner lies in not understanding the absolute need for complexity and an obsession with making the plan look 'interesting'. In the world of 'form follows function', if the building does not work, the masterplan needs to be reworked.

A new way of defining and regulating new development is required: something that focuses on the extra-small as the essential building block for our cities and towns. It is the cumulative effect of many 'extra-small's' that will deliver the qualities society wants from a place – the million dabs on the canvas, the fine grain. This does not mean that everything needs to be small, but larger things should start from a consolidation of the small, always enabling the position to be reversed. In other words, once one has a plot one can combine this into a lot, a block or a phase of development, but one can always go back to the plot. It is against the grain of the collective small that the special buildings can be reflected.

Integrated transport?

More left field thinking, a new Swiss car spotted by UDF NZ reader, Ivy Heung Ivy.Heung@manukau.govt.nz

Dear Editor

I have known Dorte Ekelund for a long time now, and I enjoyed her contribution about the Major Cities Unit in the March edition (UDF 89).

However, not all problems are centred around major cities, and frankly, the regional cities exhibit the same constraints - perhaps in smaller proportion. In fact, some might suggest that the political framework between Regions, States and the Commonwealth have manifestly created the very problems that the Major Cities Unit is endeavouring to address retrospectively.

Time will tell as to whether the Commonwealth Department of Infrastructure (and Infrastructure Australia), and the Major Cities Unit constitute another part of the problem or part of the solution?

Yours faithfully

Neil R. Smithson,
Managing Director, Smithson Planning
smithson@smithsonplanning.com.au

Conferences, etc

International Cities, Towns & Communities 2010

12-15 October, Coffs Harbour

The 2010 ICTC Conference & Exhibition will be held at the Opal Cove Convention Centre, Coffs Harbour, NSW, from 12-15 October. Optional Special Interest Group Sessions on Place Making, Business Improvement Districts (BID's) & Transit Oriented Design will be held on Tuesday 12 October. Plenary and concurrent sessions will be held on Wednesday 13 and Thursday 14 October. Three optional Field Trips covering Place Making, Infrastructure Projects and Planning Projects will be held on Friday 15th October.

Confirmed international keynote speakers include Peter Williams, Chief Executive, Better Banks London, UK and Andy Taft, President, Downtown Fort Worth, USA. For more information see www.ictcsociety.org

International Making Cities Livable Conference

17-21 October, 2010 Charleston, SC, USA

The 48th IMCL conference has the theme True urbanism: planning healthy and child-friendly communities and an exhibit on successful solutions for healthy and child-friendly communities. The co-organizers are City of Charleston and IMCL Council. For more information see www.livablecities.org

EAROPH Golden Jubilee Congress

31 October – 4 November, 2010
Adelaide, Australia.

The Golden Jubilee Congress of the Eastern Regional Organisation of Planning and Human Settlements (EAROPH) is hosted by the Planning Institute of Australia, South Australian Division. The main theme of the Congress (Cities and their region - catalysts for change) is the impact of population change related to climate management and the

associated issues that are being debated at an international level - including infrastructure planning, water security, renewable energy and sustainable tourism. For more information see www.EAROPH2010.com.au

Getting communities back on their feet

17-19 November, 2010 The Hague, The Netherlands

The 11th International WALK21 Conference and 23rd International Workshop of the International Co-operation on Theories and Concepts in Traffic safety (ICTCT) will look at promising approaches to support walking for a sustainable future.

Leading speakers and delegates from around the world are being encouraged to participate in this landmark event. They are invited to share their knowledge and successful experience to bring walking into the mainstream of politics, planning, investment and delivery. For more information see www.walk21.com/2010 or www.ictct.org

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Urban Design Forum is published for information and interest by Urban Design Forum Incorporated. The views are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the views of organisations with which they are associated.

Sponsorship: Thanks to the Victorian Department of Planning and Community Development and Melbourne City Council for their continuing support.

Word processing, layout and printing: New Litho, Surrey Hills, Victoria

Distribution: This edition is distributed by the Planning Institute of Australia, by the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects, and to various other interested people in Australia, New Zealand and across the World.

Web: A new consultant register and an increasing range of related information is available at www.udf.org.au

Co-ordinating Editor: Bill Chandler

Contributions for UDF 91 DEADLINE: 10 August 2010
Send to: Bill Chandler Email: wchandler@bigpond.com

ISSN 1030-990X

