

# Federal Government flurry of reports

Dorte Eklund and Sara Stace

*Jane Jacobs – the great American thinker and author of 'The Economy of Cities' was not an architect, or a town planner. But her ideas – that seemed so radical when she first wrote about them – did more to shape the face of American cities in the second half of the 20th century than just about anyone else. She was particularly critical of urban sprawl and planning styles that destroyed communities, separated land uses and rebuilt sterile areas. And she was a fierce advocate for citizen involvement in vision making and comprehensive planning. Though she died five years ago, her theories about the ways cities work can be seen in academic discussion across the world. In reviewing her book *The Death and Life of Great American Cities*, the *New York Times* wrote that Jacob's prescription for successful cities was to bring 'people and activities together in a jumping, joyous urban jumble.'*

These were Anthony Albanese's opening words as he launched *Our Cities, Our Future* – a national urban policy for a productive, sustainable and liveable future, on 18 May this year.

The National Urban Policy establishes, for the first time, an overall framework for the eighteen major cities of Australia – complementing both the new Sustainable Population Strategy and the government's ongoing focus and commitment to regional Australia. It also seeks to reinforce the Council of Australian Governments' (COAG) current reform agenda, including the review of capital city strategic planning systems.

The National Urban Policy articulates the role of the Australian Government in facilitating better outcomes in our cities, whether through direct investment or by influencing the actions of others, such as through COAG.

In conjunction with the launch of the National Urban Policy, the Australian Government announced a number of new funding initiatives for cities:

- Sustainable Australia - Liveable Cities – \$20 million to leverage additional resources from State and Territory governments, as well as local councils, for planning, feasibility assessment, design and/or capital works which improve the quality of life in our cities.
- Sustainable Australia - Suburban Jobs – \$100 million administered by the Department of Sustainability, Environment, Water, Population and Communities to develop job opportunities and employment precincts within easy reach of where people live in the outer suburbs of Australia's major capital cities.
- Sustainable Australia - National Smart Managed Motorways Trial – \$61.4 million to retrofit existing road infrastructure with smart technology to improve traffic flows along congested motorways.

In the lead up to the National Urban Policy, the Australian Government, through the Major Cities Unit, undertook an extensive consultation process. In December 2010 it released a discussion paper *Our Cities – building a productive, sustainable and liveable future*, accompanied by a background and research paper *Our Cities – the challenge of change*. The Major Cities Unit visited all 18 major cities, with around 450 participants involved in workshop meetings involving a wide range of industry and professional associations, community groups, State, Territory and local governments. Nearly 230 written submissions and survey responses to the *Our Cities* discussion paper were also received.

Having completed its work on preparing a National Urban Policy, the next item on the agenda of the Major Cities Unit is an annual

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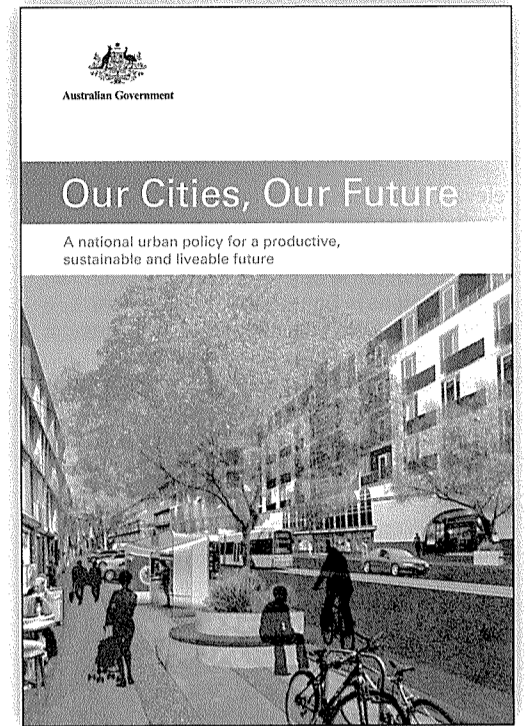
update of the State of Australian Cities report. The inaugural 2010 report has been a runaway success, with over 460,000 downloads to date. The report highlights emerging trends and issues to promote discussion and debate on managing growth and change in our urban centres.

## Australian Urban Design Protocol

Another item on the agenda of the Major Cities Unit, which had been put on the backburner in order to complete the National Urban Policy, is the development of an Australian Urban Design Protocol. In its review of capital city strategic planning systems, COAG listed as one of its criterion that planning systems should 'encourage world-class urban design and architecture'.

The Australian Urban Design Protocol will establish a definition and common language for urban design, and will provide a framework to measure, implement and improve best practice to deliver on COAG's criterion. The Urban Design Protocol is due for release later this year.

Dorte Eklund is Executive Director of the Major Cities Unit and can be contacted at Dorte.Eklund@infrastructure.gov.au, and Sara Stace is Director, National Urban Policy at the Major Cities Unit, and can be contacted at Sara.Stace@infrastructure.gov.au



For more information see [www.majorcities.gov.au](http://www.majorcities.gov.au), and for some industry responses see [www.architectureanddesign.com.au/article/industry-responds-to-new-national-urban-policy/529691.aspx](http://www.architectureanddesign.com.au/article/industry-responds-to-new-national-urban-policy/529691.aspx)

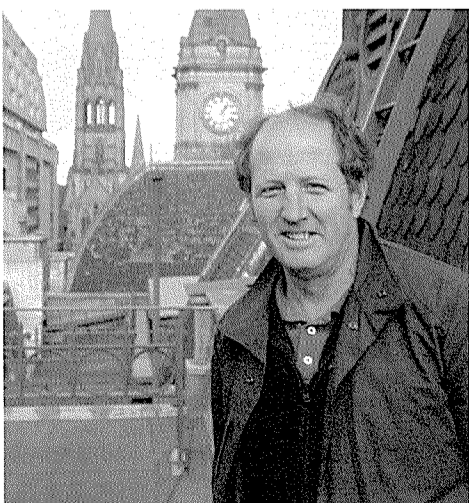
## Cities: the problems and the solutions

Two years ago, Rob Adams led a team study jointly commissioned by the Victorian Department of Transport and the City of Melbourne to establish the potential to transform metropolitan Melbourne to meet the projected population of 8 million by 2050. 'Transforming Australian Cities - for a more financially viable and sustainable future - transportation and urban design' was a major contribution to the metropolitan planning and sustainability debate. In a recent interview with UDF, Rob Adams reflected on what led to his observations about how cities work, and how to plan and design them sustainably for the future – and what has happened since the report was published.

There are some ironies, says Rob. Superficially, the then Labor Victorian State Government supported the proposal to focus low rise medium density development on public transport routes, and limit fringe sprawl. But they missed the point of the concept completely by legislating to allow increased development zoned either side of all public transport routes – potentially a 400m medium density 'corridor'. Needless to say, this was met with serious opposition.

Despite seeming to absolutely oppose the concept prior to the election last November, the then Opposition, now State Government, seems to be more in tune with the actual intent of the proposal: to accommodate the increased population in about 7.5% of the existing suburban area, focussed on public transport nodes – retaining the traditional suburban form

▼ Rob Adams



for the remaining 92.5%, without resorting to high rise.

However, they have proceeded with major extensions of the urban fringe. Rob notes that recent research further complicates the irony: the fringe is now becoming unaffordable, despite rhetoric to the contrary.

### Einstein was right!

Rob says Einstein got it right: you can't use the ideas and techniques that created the problems to solve those same problems. [what Einstein actually said was: 'No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it'] We are still trying to use the ideas of the 1950s, when suburbanisation really took off, and what we need is a new paradigm, Rob says. Currently the resources are insufficient, and new skills relating to community engagement and implementation are needed.

As a member of the Urbanisation Council of the World Economic Forum, Rob was recently very surprised, indeed shocked, that when setting the agenda for the Davos Symposium, there were many important topics – but not 'cities'. Rob says that this omission flies in the face of the fact that cities are primary home to the world's population, its greatest economic driver – and its largest producer of greenhouse gases. National governments are mostly blind to the importance and challenge of cities, he says.

Notwithstanding the flurry of recent activity by the Australian Government, interest in cities is very limited. Rob says it focuses only on the large scale and the macro, such as main roads and railway projects, not the fine grain, or with an understanding of how cities actually work. Governance is a key challenge to be addressed. We are still operating on 19th century patterns of decision-making. We have Ministers for all sorts of things – but not cities. Community often don't trust planning – with changes to controls, political decisions – and often lack credibility. Local government decisions need to be well thought through, sensible and robust – not driven by fear of change, say Rob.

### Effective problem solving

The real challenge is to convince politicians, and the public, that successfully planning and designing cities is an effective route to solving other problems – such as population increase, climate change and social inclusion.



▲ Nicholson Street after density increase

▼ Nicholson Street before density increase



The City of Melbourne has adopted a new and simplified approach to planning for change. Rather than traditional zoning, the planning principles revolve around three types of areas: those where stability is paramount, those where tweaking is acceptable, and those where comprehensive development is appropriate.

Rob was stimulated first by the lessons from Cape Town University in 1960s where, instead of building more spread-out universities, they discovered better, cheaper and sensible options – such as re-timetabling lectures with extended hours. The result was three times the number of students, and more buildings, but no more land taken. And it created a more active and enjoyable social environment. This approach also applies to cities, says Rob. Rather than relying on 'big infrastructure', such

as stand-alone shopping centres and roads, look at fine grain mixed uses such as very accessible child care adjacent to where the parents can take advantage of part-time work and diverse job opportunities.

Rob Adams is an optimist. He concludes that the next decade is a very exciting time for Melbourne, to overcome the problems, and to meet the challenges. Innovation, he says, is important but it is also important to look back to go forward, to learn from the old successful ways and apply the new paradigm for the future.

Rob Adams is Director City Design at Melbourne City Council, and can be contacted at [ROBADA@melbourne.vic.gov.au](mailto:ROBADA@melbourne.vic.gov.au)

# Next generation planning

Mike McKeown

Growth Management Queensland and Council of Mayors (SEQ) have developed new guidelines for neighbourhood, street and housing design in South East Queensland. The Next Generation Planning handbook is intended to help councils plan for future growth, 'making places great for people, and ensuring they can afford to live there'. The handbook is supported by a short online video to raise awareness about housing choice, good planning and affordable living.

## Evidence-based

The Next Generation Planning handbook is of special interest to SEQ planners because it uses empirical evidence to inform regionally relevant guidance. As the introduction of the handbook explains, 'The inspiration for this handbook came from the great places of SEQ, studied in detail in its preparation'. A total of 59 locations in Sunshine Coast, Ipswich, Toowoomba, Gold Coast and Brisbane were studied. Each location was nominated by council planners, as representative of the 'best of the best' on their patch.

## Affordable living

Affordable living is a term that infers a broader definition of housing affordability than is found in some debates on the issue. The handbook advocates a wide range of housing options for SEQ neighbourhoods and centres, including large and small detached houses, terrace houses, the 'plexes' (duplex/triplex/quadplex/quintplex), as well as 'fonzie flats' and apartments. The handbook provides guidance on each housing type, and model provisions suitable for use in planning schemes, to promote and regulate these housing options.

## SEQ Place Model

The research underpinning this handbook suggests that settlements in SEQ can be understood as a series of place types, each with common characteristics, similar land use mixes and intensities of development.

The SEQ Place Model identifies eight place types in SEQ from the study of well known locations around the region. Each place type is recognisable by its function, special qualities, intensity, character and housing forms. These include natural areas, rural areas, rural towns, next generation suburban and urban neighbourhoods, mixed use activity centres and CBDs. (Next Generation Planning handbook, p4)

The SEQ Place Model is an adaptation and evolution of the well known transect planning technique, pioneered by North American new urbanists but also used in some Australian developments. What is of note here is the application of the transect to a specific Australian region. This has resulted in some variations from the 'new urbanist transect'. A rural township place type (a common and meaningful typology in SEQ) has been added. Suburban and urban neighbourhood definitions are also aligned with SEQ Regional Plan policies concerning residential density (suburban neighbourhoods being 15-30 dwellings per hectare, and urban neighbourhoods 30+).

Development of the SEQ Place Model has not been an academic exercise. It is a tool for broad-scale strategic planning across a local government area, a town or a suburb.

## Form-based codes

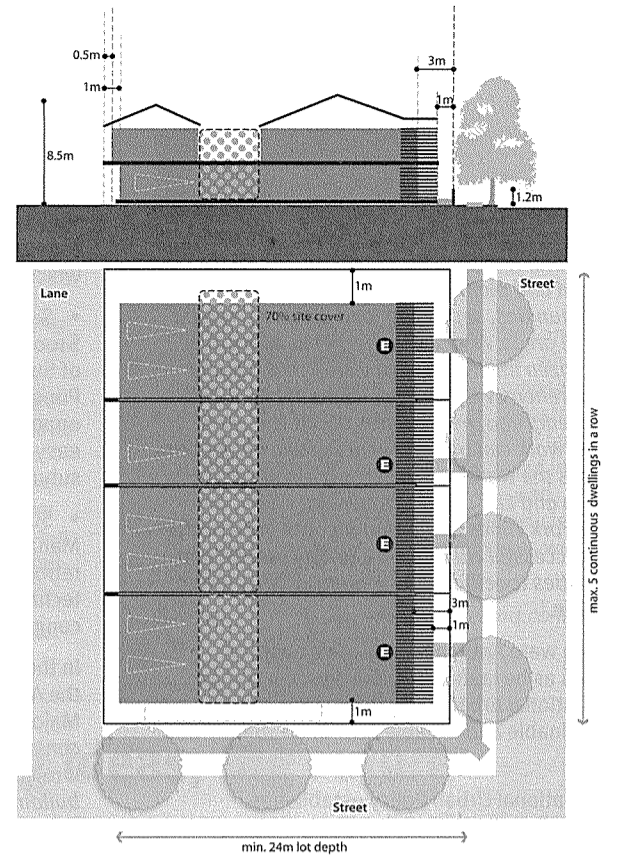
The handbook advocates the use of form-based codes in SEQ planning. Form-based

codes use graphics as well as words to articulate planning requirements and promote more predictable building designs. Prescriptive, predictable codes might be said to be contrary to performance-based planning, but there is plenty of space for bespoke designs as well as well-considered standard options.

## Conclusions

This project was a rare opportunity to undertake research and development on planning and urban design for (predominantly) residential development. It is timely that the handbook has been prepared when new planning schemes are being written or contemplated by many SEQ councils. It is anticipated that the guidance in Next Generation Planning will inform, be adapted and be used in these new planning schemes.

The Next Generation Planning handbook can be downloaded at [www.dlqp.qld.gov.au/growth/ngp](http://www.dlqp.qld.gov.au/growth/ngp) where the video 'Affordable living... what does it mean to you?' can also be viewed. For further information please contact Mike McKeown on (07) 3405 8551 or [mike.mckeown@dlqp.qld.gov.au](mailto:mike.mckeown@dlqp.qld.gov.au)



# Australian Urban Design initiatives

It's interesting to see some of the initiatives being taken by people who were involved in the Australian Urban Design Initiative (AUDI) last year. Tasmania and Victorian local government are moving forward.

## Hobart City Council – Centre for Excellence, Urban Design, Tasmania

The Hobart City Council has appointed George Wilkie as Executive Manager City Design to prepare an Inner City Action Plan to be presented to the Council later this year. The plan is in response to the study report prepared by Gehl Architects; Hobart 2010, Public Spaces & Public Life, A city with people in mind, and to the responses generated from an extensive period of community engagement and consultation. This constitutes the first stage of the of Hobart's Inner City Development Plan.

The Council on receipt of the Gehl report immediately opened it for public comment and discussion, and has carefully avoided publishing any likely responses or reactions until all members of the greater Hobart community are able to consider the report and to lodge their opinions. The whole report can be viewed on the Council's website, [www.hobartcity.com.au](http://www.hobartcity.com.au)

In conjunction with its desire to provide a city with people in mind, the Council strongly

supports the development of a professional urban design centre for excellence in Tasmania. The University of Tasmania has indicated support for this concept, and further discussions will be conducted to structure an operational relationship.

Discussions have taken place with the State Architect, Peter Poulet, and he supports the concept of a centre for excellence in urban design. These discussions recognise that there are a number of educational institutions and professional bodies representing consultants and practitioners in the fields that constitute urban design. Currently there is no dedicated organisation in Tasmania that people working in urban design can join for professional, collegiate and social interaction.

Urban Design Forum provides a degree of information distribution, but there are limitations to the extent of its influence without a representative body for urban designers.

It is therefore considered that an important preliminary step in establishing a 'centre for excellence' is to foster a 'federation of urban designers' who practice, or desire to practice in Tasmania. The term federation has been chosen to allow membership by urban designers who belong to other professional

institutes and associations without imposing on those bodies.

A meeting has been scheduled and a range of relevant representatives invited. It is hoped that an agreement can be reached to support the establishment of a Federation of Tasmanian Urban Designers and the Centre for Excellence in Urban Design, Tasmania.

George Wilkie is Executive Manager City Design, Strategy and Governance Division, Hobart City Council, and can be contacted at [wilkieg@hobartcity.com.au](mailto:wilkieg@hobartcity.com.au)

## Local Government designers gather

Frank Hansen

A gathering of Victorian Local Government designers was held at the City of Manningham in April, with lunch and a panel of stimulating guest speakers - and networking drinks at the end of a very interesting afternoon. The highlight of the afternoon was a presentation by Jim Sinatra of Sinatra Murphy on a recent project in Noble Park Shopping Centre in the City of Greater Dandenong. Jim presented a beautifully illustrated talk on the community consultation and design process for a multi-cultural neighbourhood which he dubbed a "cultural mosaic".

It was decided by those in attendance to formalise the group so as to ensure its continuance, and to better facilitate a more concentrated and united impact on public design and design in public places in Victoria. It was a diverse group of architects, landscape architects, urban designers and other design professionals, with almost 80 professionals in attendance

The next step, initiated by Felix Hemmingway of the City of Geelong, was to encourage people to nominate themselves or another person for a committee whose first task will be to develop a charter for the group for adoption at the next gathering. The City of Knox has already shown a strong interest in holding this meeting. The committee will comprise of six people and it is hoped that the committee regularly changes membership so that new people and new thinking is encouraged.

This group is important not only as a collection of a vast array of skills and experience but also for individual practitioners at "the coal face" of delivering good design locally. It will hopefully grow into a network which can help push the broader agenda of better more integrated design outcomes.

If you are a Victorian local designer and you think you have been overlooked by this group, please email your details to Frank Hanson at [frank.hanson@whittlesea.vic.gov.au](mailto:frank.hanson@whittlesea.vic.gov.au) and we'll include you in future mailings.

# Urban design in regional towns

Robert McLean

Arguments behind calls for the re-opening of Shepparton's Maude Street Mall to cars are understandable - but are well past their use-by date. The city we enjoy today will be vastly different from the Shepparton of tomorrow and so everything we do should be aimed at creating an infrastructure that is more, rather than less, walkable.

Armed with the misleading belief that the world's finite supply of oil is inexhaustible, towns and cities are being created and structured to answer the wants and needs of car-bound communities.

Reliable research illustrates that the world's oil reservoirs will be empty in about 30 years and as oil is the foundation on which everything else stands - from beer to beans and clothes pegs to communication - we need to be creating a built-environment, and that includes

our mall that will serve the city in a low-energy future.

Considering that the debate is not, in essence about the commercial realities of doing business in the mall today, rather it's about doing business in the mall as we head down that bumpy road to the end of oil.

This, however, poses a rather pressing, and understandable, dilemma as those businesses already in our mall want to be profitable, and successful, right now. Business plans do not allow for an income hiatus as Shepparton abandons what once worked and then moves to embrace what will work in the evolving 21st century.

It seems that any workable financial panacea will only emerge from a city-wide social change orchestrated by a City of Greater Shepparton Council that rigidly controls the placement and development of infrastructure within the

city to ensure walkability and, more extensively, our public bus services.

Curitiba, with its 1.6 million residents, provides the world with a model in how to integrate sustainable transport considerations into business development, road infrastructure development, and local community development. Shepparton could learn from the success of this burgeoning Brazilian city.

Our mall needs people who live there; above and behind the businesses, and in going about their daily lives they inadvertently become the passive eyes that deter anti-social behaviour.

We need people to build a civil society, not cars.



▲ Shepparton's Maude Street when work began to convert it to a mall - it was opened as a mall in 1986

Rob McLean is a journalist, lives in Shepparton, and is a regular participant in UDF events in Melbourne. He can be contacted at [robed@sheppnews.com.au](mailto:robed@sheppnews.com.au) This article first appeared in the Shepparton News.

# Climate responsive urban design in the UAE

Craig Guthrie  
and Mary Papaioannou

Planning and designing new cities and public realm spaces that are liveable and responsive to a desert environment poses particular challenges. In this article we discuss some of the passive design strategies that were employed on Middle Eastern projects with which we were recently involved, and how we approached sustainability issues as Australian trained landscape architects working in the Middle East.

The United Arab Emirates has a tropical desert climate with sunny weather and infrequent rainfall. Maximum temperatures from April to September average above 40 degrees, often accompanied by high humidity. In the recent past, the design of many urban projects has responded poorly to these conditions, and has resulted in developments where outdoor comfort is compromised and reliance on internal air conditioned spaces and car transport has risen. This has come about for a number of reasons - including the UAE's rapid urbanisation set against a still-developing strategic planning backdrop, and also an attitude that the severity of the natural environment is something that can be overcome by technology and abundant fossil fuel.



▲ Traditional wind tower

Increasingly, however, government and developers have been taking an interest in more sustainable agendas - with many passive design measures being investigated and implemented in projects throughout the UAE to reduce reliance on fossil fuels for cooling, and also to extend the duration of the public realm 'comfort period' well into the summer months.

Of course, passive design measures are not a new idea in the Middle East. Lessons can be found in the fabric of historic urban settlements in the region where people have been ameliorating microclimatic conditions to create liveable environments based on passive design principles for centuries.

As designers who were new to the region, we were interested in studying and drawing on this tradition and reinterpreting these old lessons to create new places for a new, contemporary society. Our work commenced with investing time to gain a solid understanding of the existing natural systems and landscapes - and our design response included the application of community planning and design principles we were used to working with in Australia.

Similarly encouraged to draw on tradition and respond to place, more and more contemporary UAE projects are establishing compact mixed use structures with a high level of public realm connectivity. There are a number of benefits. Opportunities for walking or cycling to a wide variety of destinations are maximised as distances are reduced. This is important when temperatures make outdoor activity very difficult during daylight hours over a significant part of the year.

Local air temperatures (internal and external) can be significantly modified through the provision of shade. 'Self shaded' buildings and spaces can be more easily achieved where urban form is compact and streets are narrow in relation to building height. Further shading can be provided through awnings, colonnades and freestanding structures and, when planned in parallel with pedestrian, cycle and open space networks, will provide maximum benefits in locations of high activity.

Configuring and aligning streets, built form



▲ Shibam, Yemen (Image from internet)

and open space to facilitate air flow, especially capturing cooling onshore breezes, can further increase comfort on hot days.

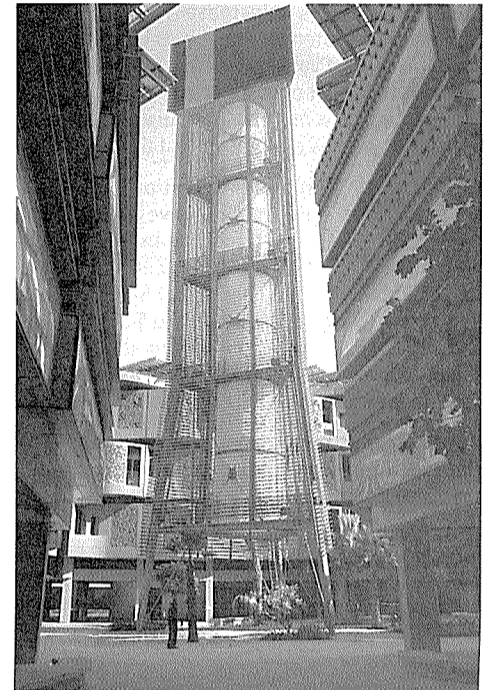
On buildings themselves, wind towers are traditional architectural features found in the Gulf, which are used to draw breezes down into buildings. They can also be used to ventilate courtyards and other public realm spaces - and contemporary interpretations are featured in recent developments.

Planting, canopy trees in particular, can also be used to moderate local air temperatures and reduce the urban heat island effect through shade provision, evapo-transpiration and wind control.

However, given the precious nature of water in the UAE, balancing the benefits of planting against irrigation water demand is important. On streets for example it is more beneficial to locate trees on the verges rather than the central median, so that trees provide shade for pedestrians as well as amenity.

Carefully located water features can improve thermal comfort through evaporative cooling created by breezes as they blow across the water body. Water features should be small in size and shaded in order to minimise water loss and positioned to provide maximum human interaction.

Craig Guthrie is Principal at Hassell and can be contacted at [cguthrie@hassell.com.au](mailto:cguthrie@hassell.com.au) and Mary Papaioannou can be contacted at [mpapaioannou@hassell.com.au](mailto:mpapaioannou@hassell.com.au)



▲ Modern wind tower

## Shaping suburbia

Dave Bennett

As world urbanisation increases, the issue of how we live and how close we will live to each other will become increasingly important. It interfaces with many issues including sustainability, affordability, community and our personal lifestyle/aspirations.

What role should/can the suburbs play in our cities growing and getting healthy? New research from Shaping Suburbia [www.shapingsuburbia.com](http://www.shapingsuburbia.com) has focused on what sustainable living might look like for suburban dwellers - and that's most of us - and how existing suburbia can evolve to be that place. This new research connects the types of places/houses we choose to live in, with the walk-ability of their environments and the benefits of improved walk-ability.

Contrary to the typical views about residential density shown in the media, of course it's not a case of only the polar extremes of either a) high-rise or b) suburbia. Nor is it as simple as the more (of either) the better. Instead, residential density is of course a variable - and that is the key point here. What is the optimum form, density and shape of a healthy, sustainable place where most of us would prefer and benefit from living?

Yes it's important to have good design, walkable suburbs, low infrastructure costs per person, great social services, good pavements, safe suburbs and access to public transport,

but Shaping Suburbia shows that these things occur and survive best when the density is just right - effectively a 'sweet spot' of residential density.

Even if the residential density is increased from brick-and-tile suburbia but falls short of the ratio required for the 'sweet spot', then the other community infrastructure and services do not survive well enough for the associated co-benefits to thrive. These co-benefits are enjoyed by both residents and the community generally, and can be significant.

### Density 'sweet-spot'

The density 'sweet-spot' also creates additional new housing that is able to be provided by small-scale builders and, importantly, still allows individual lot titles and the opportunity for productive gardens. Individual property titles are, of course, very highly valued by many home buyers in our culture.

Shaping Suburbia links its own research with various other data to highlight a range of positive outcomes and co-benefits in making changes to our suburbs in pursuit of this 'sweet spot'. What is proposed is an evolutionary change for suburbia for this century. This change will provide real health, financial and lifestyle benefits to land owners in middle ring suburbs - The corresponding uplift in land values - can potentially make suburban mums-and-dads the heroes of a wave of new micro-



▲ lower density...

development that also provides improved communities for our cities.

[www.shapingsuburbia.com](http://www.shapingsuburbia.com) shows that cleverly modifying strategically chosen existing suburbs can provide a key part of the solution for our growing cities. Benefits include health, sustainability performance, strengthened communities, financial gains, improved access to shops and services and improved housing choice and housing affordability.

Getting the density right is not just about housing more people, although it is that too - it is about creating vibrant, active, safe, more sustainable places where people can live in connected communities and be their healthy best.



▲ higher density...

Are there other options for suburbia which provide better lifestyle, health and sustainability outcomes? Are existing suburbs able to keep their leafy, freehold title and a familiar environment and yet still house more people? Shaping Suburbia says a loud 'yes' to this, and has also found that there will be some unexpected windfalls for its residents in the process.

David Bennett is a Sydney Architect, Founder of Shaping Suburbia and Co-Chair of the Australian Institute of Architects NSW Sustainability Committee. He can be contacted on [david@shapingsuburbia.com](mailto:david@shapingsuburbia.com)

## Australia Award for Urban Design and Built Environment Meets Parliament

A total of 45 entries have been submitted for the 2011 Australia Award for Urban Design. Recipients will be announced and celebrated at a gala dinner event at the National Gallery of Australia 6.30-10.00pm Tuesday 21 June. Guests will be treated to welcome drinks and canapés, followed by the awards ceremony over a three-course meal in the newly opened and stunning Gandel Hall. The awards will be featured in the next edition of *Urban Design Forum*.

Built Environment Meets Parliament (BEMP) is an annual summit which facilitates conversation between parliament and industry leaders and explores issues that influence national prosperity. BEMP's goals are to discuss changing community needs, industry trends and critical issues; discuss public policy ideas that can help build sustainable communities; and showcase leading built environment industry and professional practices.

BEMP 2011 will be held 9.00am-5.30pm, Wednesday, 22 June, in the Theatre, Parliament House of Australia. It will focus on liveability and resilience in a greener economy with a collection of presentations and panel discussions throughout the day from ministers, members of parliament and key industry leaders.

Confirmed speakers include: The Hon Greg Hunt MP; Roger Wilkins AO - Attorney General's

Department; Graeme Newton - Queensland Reconstruction Authority; Lucy Turnbull - Turnbull & Partners; and Edward Glaeser - author of 'Triumph of the City'.

For more information and registration see [www.bemp.com.au](http://www.bemp.com.au)

# Metro, anyone?

Nathan Alexander

No Australian city yet has a metro rail system, although many Australians will be familiar with them from travel overseas. A metro is a high capacity and high frequency passenger railway service, serving an urban area, powered by electricity and using grade-separated tracks. Each metro line uses exclusive tracks and platforms. Tracks are typically underground, but may be elevated or on the surface. With no level crossings and no other rail traffic, a reliable schedule is easier to achieve. By running at frequencies of less than ten minutes, passengers don't need to bother with timetables.

Australian cities already have extensive public transport networks. Why introduce a metro as well? Firstly, different transport modes excel at different trip types. While trams are excellent for short trips, and 'normal' passenger trains are good for long trips, metros excel in the mid-range.

Secondly, as a city's total transport demand increases, it needs to increase the capacity of its transport system, and a metro line might well be the best value solution. Thirdly, by taking people out of trams, cars, buses, and 'normal' trains, a metro will reduce the demand on those systems and decongest them.

New technology allows the creation of a low-cost 'light metro' network to serve middle and inner suburbs. In just ten years, between 1997 and 2007, Madrid built 200 kilometres of line and 150 stations for a cost of just \$50m per kilometre. Compare that with the \$185m per kilometre for the proposed Parramatta-Epping rail link or the \$68m per kilometre average cost for Sydney's 160 kilometres of motorways.

Assuming a 25 minute maximum journey time between the centre and periphery, a metro system would have a diameter of

approximately 50 kilometres. From central Sydney, that would take in Hornsby, Parramatta and Bankstown, while from central Melbourne it would include Caroline Springs, Craigieburn, Ringwood and Springvale.

In Australian cities, metro lines will work best connecting several major suburban centres through the city centre. For example in Melbourne, a line might run between Monash University and Tullamarine Airport via Chadstone, Caulfield, South Yarra, central Melbourne, Moonee Ponds and Keilor.

## Catching metro is simple

Catching a metro can be as simple as walking from a footpath down one escalator straight onto a platform. Platforms can be as little as 7m below footpath level. With shallow platforms and a sophisticated ticket validation system, the street can act as the concourse, bringing more life to the street, reducing passenger walking time and lowering station cost.

The stations can be contained within a box only 20m wide, and so can be small enough to be built within most of the main streets in Australian suburban and city centres. Routes could mostly run under main roads and so to a large extent avoid the costs and problems of tunnelling under private properties.

All in all, metros can offer a green transport solution that largely fits under existing public land. Around stations it leads to dense urban form and intensely used pedestrian environments. Sounds like a dream transport system for any urbanist. Metro, anyone?

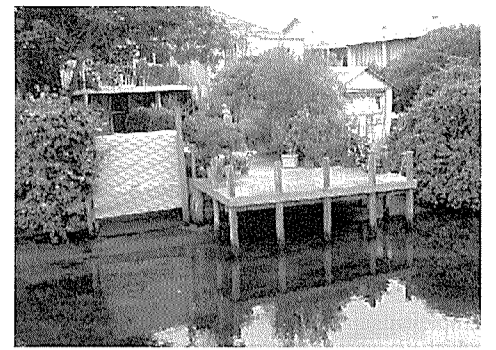
*Nathan Alexander is an urban planner and designer who recently worked with the Victorian Department of Transport on a new underground rail line through central Melbourne. He can be contacted on [natalex@wellex.com.au](mailto:natalex@wellex.com.au).*

# Up the creek...?

Edition 93 (March 2011) of Urban Design Forum had a number of articles on our urban relationship with water. It is interesting that The Public Land Consultancy, in its Terra Publica March-April 2011 publication asks 'Where's the property boundary?', and notes that 'another area of law where we're waiting for public-spirited litigants to come forward is the law relating to riparian boundaries.'

In the nineteenth century, many Crown Allotments in Victoria alienated as freehold were bounded by the centreline of an abutting watercourse. The Water Act 1905 revoked these Crown grants insofar as they applied to the waterway, and redefined the freehold boundary as being at the edge of the land 'over which water normally flows.' This provision survives as section 385 of the Land Act 1958. Notably, section 385 not merely confirms the revocation of the pre-1905 freehold status, but decrees that such land 'must be taken always to have remained' the property of the Crown.'

All sorts of questions are raised in the article:



▲ Where's the property boundary?

what are the residual rights under the Land Act? what of subsequent subdivision? what if Crown Land is reserved for public purposes? does Native Title survive? what of cadastral boundaries defined by the sea? what if land has been swept out to sea? (it occurred in Aceh, Indonesia after the tsunami) – and with climate change upon us?...The article concludes, 'As the waters rise, perhaps we'll find out.'

See the full article at [www.publicland.com.au](http://www.publicland.com.au)

# CAPIThetical - Big Ideas, Big Future

This is a design ideas competition for a hypothetical Australian capital city. We don't presume that Canberra is about to be abandoned – but who knows what ideas will emerge!

Do you have a passion for culture, cities and urban planning? CAPIThetical invites you to look back at the big ideas that shaped our national capital and look forward to the big ideas that will shape our future cities in the 21st century and beyond. In the lead up to Canberra's Centenary celebrations in 2013, it is timely to consider the factors and influences

that led to the creation of a new capital for a newly federated nation.

Artists, graphic designers, architects, urban planners, environmentalists and students are invited to review these events and to help our nation imagine how such a challenge would be met today.

There are over \$100,000 worth of prizes available.

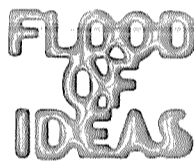
Stage one competition entries are due 31 January 2012. Register now, entry is free. For more information see [capithetical.com.au](http://capithetical.com.au)

# Flood of Ideas seeks innovative responses to flooding

Flooding occurred in many areas of Queensland during late December 2010 and early January 2011, with three quarters of the state declared a disaster zone. Edition 93 (March 2011) Urban Design Forum carried a number of related articles, but now is the time to share our flood experiences and find a way to be better prepared next time.

'Following the 1974 floods, as a community we learnt a lot and initiated some important changes to better prepare us for future floods' said Peter Skinner, President of the Australian Institute of Architects 'Unfortunately, it would now appear that we also forgot a lot over the following thirty-six years and maybe we also lost a lot of the good thinking from that time.'

The 'Flood of Ideas' project aims to allow everyone to take part in a conversation that might help us be better prepared for future floods."



Flood of Ideas is a forum gathering diverse and creative ideas for how we plan and respond to floods and natural disasters in our community. We are collecting and documenting flood response ideas.

Sketch it, paint it, photoshop it, write it... submit it. Check out the website [www.floodofideas.org.au](http://www.floodofideas.org.au) and upload your idea.

# Works of art or places for people?

Andrew Hammond says that an interview with film director Peter Weir raises a challenge for urban design - work of art or places for people?

In an interview for the Weekend Australian, Weir says, 'I actually squirm a little at that word 'art'. My priority is to entertain an audience and I want my movies to do well at the box office. I'm still surprised by how snobbish European directors can be at the Cannes Film Festival. They make good films but their manner can be so superior.' Andrew says he was struck by the corollary between film and urban design. Are we trying to design pieces of art for awards or



▲ Centennial Park, Cooma, NSW. Markets on a sunny Saturday morning. A park being used by people without a lot of design intervention.

places for people? Can we have weekly 'box office' statistics for places, as well as our peer reviewed awards?

# Conferences, etc

## International seminar on Urban Form 26-29 August 2011, Montreal, Canada

The 18th International Seminar on Urban Form has a theme of Urban Morphology and the Post-Carbon City. The objective is to explore how interdisciplinary research on urban form can contribute to debates, policies, and progressive professional practice for addressing key environmental challenges of our times. Abstracts of papers on the conference theme, or any other theme related to Urban Form are welcome. Send abstracts ASAP to [isuf2011@alcor.concordia.ca](mailto:isuf2011@alcor.concordia.ca). For more information visit [www.isuf2011.com](http://www.isuf2011.com)

## Strata and Community Title 7-9 September 2011, Gold Coast

The Strata and Community Title in Australia for the 21st Century conference is taking place on the Gold Coast this year. General information concerning the conference can be found at: [www.griffith.edu.au/conference/strata-community-title-australia-21st-century-iv](http://www.griffith.edu.au/conference/strata-community-title-australia-21st-century-iv) This is the fourth time that the biennial conference has convened. While we have been successful in gaining engagement from most stakeholders involved in strata titled complexes, at our first three conferences we have had little success in securing inputs from the planning and urban

design fraternity. The organising committee is particularly keen to rectify this at our 2011 conference.

## 4th International Urban Design Conference

### 22- 23 September, 2011, Surfers Paradise, Queensland

The conference will be held at Surfers Paradise Marriot Resort and Spa. Registration is now open, and a discount is available to delegates who register and pay before the close of Early Bird. To register visit the conference website [www.urbandesignaustralia.com.au/registration.html](http://www.urbandesignaustralia.com.au/registration.html)

## Walk21

### 3-5 October, 2011, Vancouver, Canada

The Walk21 Metro Vancouver partnership of community groups, health authorities, universities and governments is proud to present an international conference to discuss how car dependent communities around the world can take the next steps beyond the automobile city. Participants are invited to follow their heads, their hearts and their hands, and vote with their feet by contributing, and you need to take action ASAP.

For updates and details about the conference visit [www.walk21.com/vancouver](http://www.walk21.com/vancouver), or contact [vancouver2011@walk21.com](mailto:vancouver2011@walk21.com)

## State of Australian Cities Conference

### 29 November – 2 December, 2011

Australian society and economy is dominated by its cities and regions, and the future of Australia's environment is also linked to urban sustainability. The State of Australian Cities is a national forum, held biennially, to share scholarship directed at the complex and multidimensional issues facing us as an urban nation. This conference will seek ways of bridging the divides created by a focus on disciplinary-based approaches to research, towards better cities in a better country.

The Conference Committee invites you to submit an abstract ASAP for the 5th State of Australian Cities Conference to be held at Melbourne University, 29 November – 2 December, 2011, in the following themes: Governance, Environment, Economy, Social, and Infrastructure. For more information and to submit an extract see [www.soac2011.com.au](http://www.soac2011.com.au)

## 49th International Making Cities Livable Conference

### Portland, Oregon, USA, 20-24 May, 2012.

This conference, Planning healthy communities for all, will examine the evidence, look at the best strategies, planning and design solutions, and focus on ways we can reshape the built environment to increase physical and social

health and well-being for all. You are invited to submit a presentation proposal. Please see the list of presentation topics ([www.livablecities.org](http://www.livablecities.org)) and submit a 250 word abstract online for blind peer review before June 15, 2011.

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