

Urban Design in the Pilbara

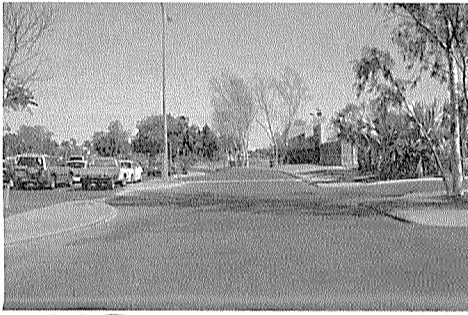
Neil Thom

As most Australians are aware, the Western Australian Pilbara region is one of the powerhouses of the Australian economy. Whilst this has a positive impact on the people involved in the mining and shipping industries, the quality of the urban environments has often been sub-standard and poorly designed, with little consideration for the climate. The historic reliance on fly-in fly-out workers has also had a detrimental effect on the community and the local economy, with little of the created wealth actually spent within the town.

In response to the need for an improved Urban Design outcome reflecting the wealth being created within the region, RPS was engaged by LandCorp in 2008 to help revitalise an aging and dated town centre environment in South Hedland. South Hedland was designed in the 1970's based on Radburn urban design principles, and has few climate responsive design outcomes. The "common green" spaces accessible by each of the homes have become inhospitable, unsafe and badly surveilled spaces where anti-social behaviour is common. The Town Centre was disconnected from the residential neighbourhoods by wide open drains and the supermarket, whilst being one of the most profitable in Australia, was in a state of disrepair and internalised around an air conditioned mall.

Greater permeability and legibility

As part of the redesign process RPS realigned, extended and closed a number of existing streets to provide a more legible and permeable Town Centre structure, whilst providing the ability for the existing shopping centre to sleeve a blank and unarticulated wall



▲ Shopping Centre Entry (2009) Shopping Centre Entry / New Main Street located to allow the shopping centre to sleeve the existing building (2011) – Source : RPS

with an activated frontage of specialty shops accessed from the new main street.

The new main street has design controls in place to provide continuous shade through the provision of awnings which are a minimum of three metres wide. Temporary shade structures are in place until the built form is delivered, and will be relocated into public parks as they are no longer required.

Part of the new main street was created to form one edge of the new Town Square which will be activated on all sides with a mixture of community, retail, hotel and short stay uses providing a safe environment during both day and night. The Town Square has a climate responsive design outcome through a relatively compact and human scaled environment as well as the use of technology through integrated misters within the shade devices and a water play area for children. The Town Square incorporates integrated spaces capable of holding night markets, outdoor performance events and a meeting place for visitors and residents alike. Extensive community consultation and collaboration with indigenous artists created a space that has been embraced by the local community and reflects the local indigenous culture.

Project Managed by LandCorp, Regional Development and Lands Minister Brendon Grylls, together with Mayor of Port Hedland Kelly Howlett opened the \$23.3m new Town Square and main street in December 2011. Additional work is continuing on the \$54m stage two wider city centre work as well as the delivery of the shopping centre expansion. The transformation of a tired, unsafe and inhospitable town centre to a modern, climate responsive, attractive Pilbara City is well under way.



Where does all of Gina's iron ore actually go?

Amidst our incessant debates about the need to increase housing densities, it is easy for the eyes to glaze over when considering the mega cities of Asia. While the so-called 'two-speed economy' (read: dig up and ship out WA and Queensland) plays havoc with our dollar and make our o/s travel cheaper, what effect is it

having on creating a more sustainable planet? Oh, it's the economy you say! Uh!

The nature of China's prosperity is put under the spotlight in an SBS program. It is titled 'The not so great mall of china', and can be found at http://www.youtube.com/embed/2yL7toj_4tQ

Australia Award for Urban Design 2012

Start preparing your entries!

The Australia Award for Urban Design (AAUD) acknowledges the critical role of good urban design in the development of our cities and towns. Prime Minister Julia Gillard is the patron of the AAUD, which was created by Prime Minister Paul Keating's Urban Design Taskforce and was first awarded in 1996.

The intent and scope of the AAUD is wide-ranging, and should attract entries for design initiatives, projects, built developments, and publications that will make a significant difference to the places, spaces, buildings and infrastructure of our cities and towns. It aims to:

- recognise recent urban design projects of the highest quality in Australia;
- promote the critical role of good urban design in the development of our cities and towns; and
- encourage cities, towns and emerging settlements of all sizes to strive for improvement.

Recognition of excellence and best practice is vital to the ongoing growth and development of urban design in Australia. Entering the AAUD provides an important opportunity to put forward design initiatives, projects, built developments, and publications from around Australia to be judged by a panel of experts. Entry into the AAUD facilitates professional

recognition and exposure of urban design work amongst a national audience. It is a prestigious Award that brings with it accolades from the multiple disciplines that contribute to good urban design.

The collection of the body of work demonstrated by the entries provides a showcase of the best Australia has to offer within the field of urban design. Many of the past winners are now featured as case studies on Creating Places for People: an Urban Design Protocol for Australian Cities website www.urbandesign.gov.au

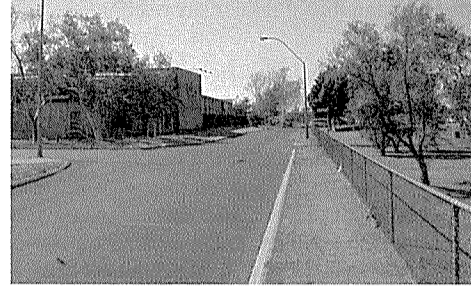
Entries for the Australia Award for Urban Design 2012 open in March 2012. Visit www.planning.org.au/whatson/australia-award-for-urban-design for more information on the Award and how to enter.



▲ Paddington Reservoir Gardens, joint winner of the 2009 Australia Award for Urban Design.

URBAN DESIGN FORUM

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▲ Main Street Looking North (2009) New Main Street Looking North (Artists Impression) – Source: LandCorp/Last Pixel



Neil Thom is Technical Director, Urban Design at RPS in Perth, and can be contacted at neil.thom@rpsgroup.com.au

National Urban Design Forum NUDF2012

Sign up now, places limited

The NUDF2012 will be held in Melbourne and Bendigo, Friday to Sunday 20-22 April. It will be a busy weekend, with about 80-100 urban design enthusiasts from across Australia visiting interesting locations, productively exploring issues and solutions, and enjoying good food and wine.

The theme

The central theme for NUDF2012 is 'Urban design in regional cities across Australia' - where 20+% of our population lives.

- urban design in regional cities, how they function, not just how they look
- roles of Local, State, and Federal Government, the private sector, institutions and communities
- urban design education and skill development for successful urban design in regional cities.

It will look at the work being undertaken

by private sector designers and developers in making sure regional cities are vital, successful, and part of our low carbon sustainable future.

Outline program

On Friday, we will set up key propositions for: delivering quality urban transformation; strong city centres; the vital elements (sustainability, prosperity, identity); mid-sized cities (overlooked, but often high-performing); beyond design (getting good ideas implemented intact); governance and operational challenges (innovative solutions). Then, at 5.30pm, we walk to the nearby award-winning Southern Cross Station for a sociable 2 hour train trip to Bendigo and, for those who are up to it, kick on at the renowned Wine Bank. The Saturday and Sunday program will be a lively mix of interactive sessions and local visits, with inputs from across Australia. Then back to Melbourne (or Tullamarine Airport) by about 4.30pm.

DAY/LOCATION	TIME	ACTIVITY	THEME FOCUS	PRESENTERS
Friday 20 April Deakin City Centre 550 Bourke Melbourne	12.00nn	Registration		Includes light lunch
	12.45pm	Introduction	Regional Cities in context	Victorian Dept Planning and CD Hisham Elkadi, Deakin University
	1.20pm	Working Session 1	What are the key issues? Challenges and propositions	Malcolm Snow, Places Victoria Dan Cass, Hepburn Wind
	3.20pm	Working Session 2	National approach to urban design in regional cities	Department of Regional Australia Rod Duncan, Deakin University SA Integrated Design Commission
	5.30pm	Go to Train		
	8.30pm	To accommodation		Kick on at the Wine Bank
Saturday 21 April Town Hall Lyttleton Terrace Bendigo	9.00am	Introduction	Bendigo in context	City of Greater Bendigo
	9.40am	Working Session 3	Bendigo case study Regional City place-making	City of Greater Bendigo Mark Coffey, Developer Rob Moore, City of Melbourne
	10.50am	Working Session 4	Case studies across Australia	State and Territory perspectives
	12.45pm	Town tours	Bendigo on show	Lunch provided
	2.15pm	Working Session 5	Critical review: urban design	Regional city cameos
	4.00pm	Working Session 6	International best practice	Tourist tales, what can we learn?
	5.30pm	Walk the town		
7.00pm	Dinner		Guest speaker	
Sunday 22 April LaTrobe University Visual Arts Centre View Street	9.45am	Working Session 7	Visions and wish lists	Small group working
	10.45am	Working Session 8	Where to now?	Plenary
	12.30pm	Lunch		
	2.00pm	Go to Train		Train arrives Melbourne 4.27pm

▲ More details will be provided when registrations are finalised and fees paid.

Style and flavour NUDF2012

This is not a traditional conference, but not quite *pecha kucha*. The program is well-structured, but the intent is active participation of all delegates, assisted by the modest size of the forum. There will be eight working sessions with a similar format: two or three concise presentations (12 minutes each); an interactive panel discussion (the presenters, plus three delegates with diverse interests; followed by a plenary discussion time for all delegates. The engagement and informal contributions of all attending will provide the richness of value for the event.

The main aim is sharing experience, insights, and wisdom.

The practical take-home is: what did I learn, how can I apply it?

As usual, we will keep the Forum cost at a modest level, thanks to the generous

involvement of both volunteers and sponsors. The fee is \$500 for the whole weekend (not including travel or accommodation), and \$150 for Friday only. Places are limited, and will be allocated in the order delegate fees are received. Priority will be given to those attending the whole weekend. There will be a limited number of 'special deals' for students and young professionals, and a range of accommodation options.

If you have already registered your interest, you should by now have received a registration form. To get a registration form, email to bruce@urbaninitiatives.com.au

Urban Design Forum, the Victorian Department of Planning and Community Development, and Deakin University are hosting NUDF2012, with support from City of Greater Bendigo, LaTrobe University, and a range of other organisations.

Creating a successful activity centre – challenges for Canberra's newest town

Trina McFarlane

A challenge for urban designers and planners everywhere is how to accommodate population growth in cities as we reach 'peak land'. Planning for the principal activity centre in Canberra's newest town of Molonglo Valley is no different. A centre is being created from scratch that will contribute to a more compact, sustainable city and provide high levels of urban amenity.

Molonglo Valley was identified as urban capable in the Canberra Spatial Plan in 2004 shortly after the city's devastating bushfires. The 2011 draft ACT Planning Strategy and Transport for Canberra policy update the 2004 plan. The focus remains on creating a more compact city and building on its decentralised activity centres and inter-town transport corridors. A target is for 50% of future housing to be in greenfield areas. Most of this will be in Molonglo Valley, the ACT's largest development front, with 55,000 residents.

People will move into the town from 2013. Why will people choose to live here over urban and suburban lifestyle options elsewhere in the city? There are excellent locational and environmental features that provide a local character and point of difference. Nationally significant attractions close by are ANU Mt Stromlo Observatory, Arboretum and Stromlo Forest Park.

It will take about 30 years for the town to

develop in three stages. Planning for stage 1 is complete and land is being released. Planning for stage 2 in 2011 is guiding development of the first 3,400 lower density dwelling sites – the more traditional suburbia – to meet the government's accelerated land release program. Now the attention is on the rest of stage 2 – the principal activity centre for the town and its higher density residential environs.

The town's activity centre is 7.5 kilometres west of the CBD and other employment nodes and public transport are easily accessible. It is well located on an elevated site with river frontage. Population targets are high for this steep, complex and environmentally sensitive site where up to 9,000 people will live on 160 hectares. While these densities are only seen in inner areas of Canberra, they are successful in less central locations in other cities. Brisbane's Kelvin Grove Urban Village, Sydney's Rouse Hill Town Centre and parts of Freiburg in Germany are sustainable mixed use centres that come to mind.

Design - led development strategy

A team led by Ross Bonthorne and Hames Sharley will prepare a design - led sustainable development strategy for this area in 2012. An advisory panel comprised of Alec Tzannes, Ed Blakely, Steve Driscoll and Ian-Wood Bradley will provide input at key points throughout the project.

▲ Molonglo Valley's principal activity centre site

This an opportunity to address many national and local policy challenges by creating a model for other centres and dwelling types that efficiently use the limited supply of land, and meet objectives for a compact city and affordable housing. There is potential for a vibrant hub of activity with large dwelling numbers, retail and commercial space, collocated education and community facilities, and rapid inter-town public transit services that connect with local buses and the mainstreet.

The quality of the public realm and built outcomes will be of importance to the community. Place-making initiatives include a park along the Molonglo River corridor

that flows through the town and adjacent to the centre that will balance objectives for recreational use, nature conservation and bushfire management. This major open space spine will be another asset for locals.

Further resolution will occur over the next few months. Conversations with stakeholders that started in 2004 will continue. Ultimately, the success of the centre will rest with the community.

Trina McFarlane is Principal Planner at the ACT Environment and Sustainable Development Directorate and can be contacted at trina.mcfarlane@act.gov.au

Design Review Panels initiated in South Australia

Every day we interact with the built environment. We know that how something is designed dictates how well it performs. Well-designed public places, streets, buildings, parks and city infrastructure have a positive impact on the quality of our lives. At the opposite end of the scale, poorly designed places are opportunities lost; they can be unsafe, economically unviable, unattractive and unsustainable.

The greatest impact on a project occurs early when decisions are being made, but while the cost and implications of change are minimal. This generally occurs in the months before consent authorities are asked to consider the project for planning approval.

Following a number of live training sessions in 2011, the Integrated Design Commission of South Australia's (IDCSA) Design Review Panels commenced this month. We are now able to provide some insight into how we have established Design Review Panels, how we are engaging with stakeholders and collaborating with the design community.

Establishing Design Review Panels

A key part of delivering the Design Review Program is the partnership with the design, planning and development sector itself, and drawing on the expertise of respected

practitioners. Following a rigorous Expression of Interest and Panel selection process, we appointed a number of industry leaders to four 'themed' panels. The panels cover areas such as 'Movement and Networks', 'Architecture and Urban Design' (two panels), and 'Master planning', as well as a Specialist panel pool which draws on the expertise of a broader network of professionals essential to a successful built environment.

"...the design review process as implemented by the IDC over the last year has led to not only more considered and quality design outcomes but also greater certainty for our clients and more efficiency for design consultants"

- Gavin Kain, Principal, Woods Bagot

As described in the Design Review Panel's Terms of Reference, Design Review is a non-statutory and free advisory service for selected significant projects. Formal Design Review Panel reviews are currently conducted monthly, with two or three projects under review at each Panel Session. The aim is to increase Design Review Panel sessions to bi-monthly dependent on project demand and resourcing capability.

The Design Review Panel adheres to our Terms of Reference, along with binding protocols on confidentiality and conflict of interest. All of

these documents can be found on our website <http://integrateddesign.sa.gov.au/what-we-do-2/design-focus/?stage=Live>

Engaging with stakeholders

A number of projects have applied for Design Review Panel consideration. Initial uptake of the service is strong with both private and public sector proponents seeing the value Design Review can bring to their project.

Projects reviewed to date include a large-scale 'campus' master plan, and urban development strategy plan, a large mixed-use precinct development, a community centre, neighbourhood shopping centre and an Adelaide CBD residential high-rise development.

Design Review does not supplant existing planning processes, its role is advisory and enabling, with all Panel sessions and reports prepared in the spirit of collaboration for great design outcomes. Design Review is a free resource available to all those involved in delivering public and private development, built and landscape projects in South Australia.

Collaborating with the design community

The IDCSA has an ongoing collaboration with UK Design Council CABE on the Design Review process.

Following the recent Government Architect's Network of Australia (GANA) meeting where there was significant interest in Design Review from all of the State Government Architects, the IDCSA has established a working relationship with the Office of the Victorian Government Architect, also in the early stages of establishing a Design Review Panel.

Throughout 2012, we will be looking to engage more closely with the design community and the many Agencies of Government. We will be building awareness of the service provided by the IDCSA, the advantages of participating in design review early in the design process and in an ongoing manner through project delivery. In parallel we will be looking at ways we might measure the impact that formal Design Review Panel has on achieving good design outcomes for the built environment, and celebrating successful outcomes.

In the broadest sense, we are committed to building a culture of design excellence and to improving life through design.

For further information, or to submit a project for review, please contact Ben Hewett, SA Government Architect, ben.hewett@sa.gov.au or Megan Antcliff, Design Review Coordinator megan.antcliff@sa.gov.au

Impact of temperature on years of life lost

Donnell Davis

The impact of temperature on years of life lost in Brisbane has been studied by Associate Professor Adrian Barnett of QUT's Institute of Health and Biomedical Innovation (IHBI). He said while many other studies had examined death rates on hot and cold days, this was the first study to examine years of life lost. 'The results are startling. Temperature-related deaths currently account for 6,572 years of life lost per year in Brisbane, which is more than the annual number of years of life lost to breast cancer of 3,733. The figure is so high because Brisbane has a very narrow comfort zone of a mean temperature between 20-25°C, on days when the temperature is above or below this range we tend to see an increase in years of life lost.' What are the urban design implications?

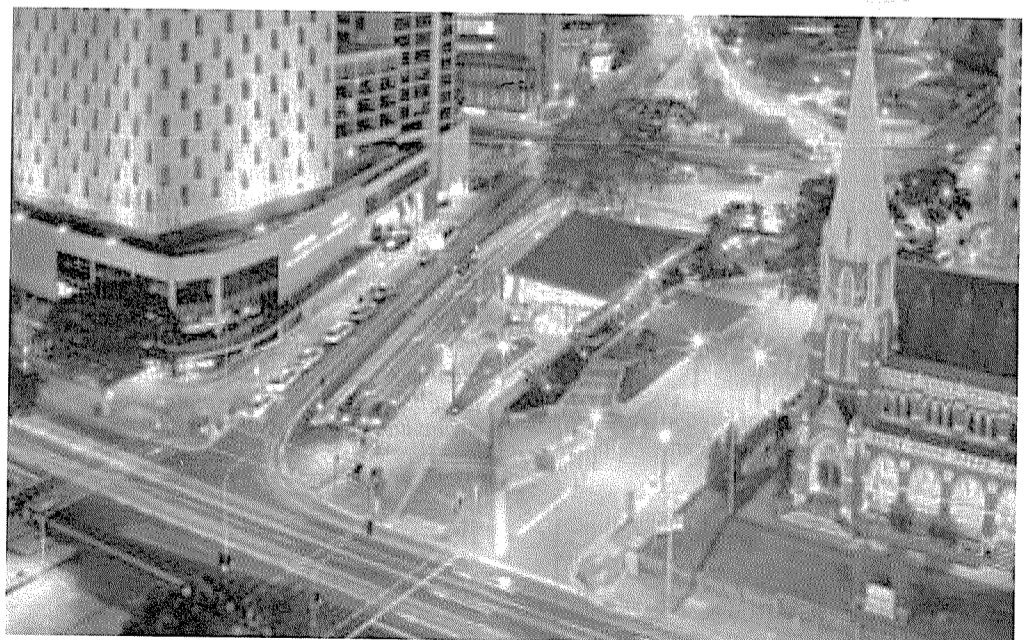
Professor Barnett said things would only get worse as Climate Change continued. 'A 2°C increase in temperature in Brisbane between now and 2050 would result in an extra 381 years of life lost per year in Brisbane. Should temperatures increase beyond the 2°C mark the results would be catastrophic. A 4°C increase in temperature would result in an extra 3,242 years of life lost per year'.

Deaths can be avoided

He said that many of these deaths could be avoided if we had better housing conditions. 'Many houses in Brisbane are built of thin planks of wood and are poorly insulated, which means the occupants are exposed to whatever the temperature is outside,' he said. 'This is in stark contrast to Scandinavian houses where the indoor temperature is kept constant all year round regardless of the extreme outdoor temperatures.'

"Our rates of cold weather deaths are far higher than all the Scandinavian countries despite our incredibly mild winters. "On the one hand this is an embarrassing finding, but it also shows that the problem is fixable if we work to improve indoor temperatures.

The CSIRO scientist, Dr. Xiaoming Wang said, 'Not only energy efficiency and smart transport, we should also take public health into the consideration of urban planning and building design to mitigate or adapt to the impact of increasing temperature. The research, The impact of temperature on years of life lost in Brisbane, Australia, was conducted in conjunction with CSIRO Climate



▲ Inner Northern Busway, joint winner of the 2010 Australia Award for Urban Design. By BVN Architecture and Queensland Department of Transport. How will it fare with global warming?

Adaptation Flagship, and was published in the journal Nature Climate Change. For more information contact Rose Trapnell, QUT, at rose.trapnell@qut.edu.au

Donnell Davis, is Founding Director of Envirobusiness - Greening the Boardroom, and can be contacted at donnell@envirobusiness.org

MidiCities on the March

Rod Duncan

The potential of nimble mid-sized cities to be at the vanguard in adapting to sustainable, prosperous and inclusive urban futures was expounded in a UDF article last year (Urban Living beyond the Metroplex, UDF No.93, March 2011). This capacity rests within a substantial component of urban Australia that is often unrecognised in public perceptions and policy, despite its advantages and potential.

National launch of 'MidiCities'

The article foreshadowed initiatives toward a national network for mid-sized cities being pursued by an informal working group spanning a variety of interests, disciplines and sectors convened through the new Urban Planning program at Deakin University. This culminated in the public launch of this concept as MidiCities for the future last October in conjunction with the SEGRA 2011 Conference conducted in Geelong.

The term 'MidiCities' was coined to provide a fresh, snappy umbrella name for these cities by side-stepping a variety of terms laden with ambiguity (regional), the baggage of preconceptions (provincial) or descriptions of what they were not ('non-metropolitan' or 'second tier'). These urban centres comprise a substantial proportion of Australia's settlement pattern, being the home and



▲ Ipswich - Council is leading with big plans for a stronger heart.

workplace of about four million people and the service centre for wider hinterlands. However they are frequently under-recognised through policy and public perceptions often adopting a simplistic dichotomy that contrasts 'metropolitan' and 'rural and regional' aspects of Australia. This ignores about four million urban dwellers – a bit like losing Melbourne, or Perth and Adelaide combined!

The concept proposes establishment of a national, cross-sectoral, trans-disciplinary not-for-profit network pursuing three core objectives:

- Linking and sharing – facilitating exchange of experiences and perspectives - among sectors, between localities and across jurisdictions.
- Understanding – enhancing the quantity and quality of information and relevant research.
- Enabling – capacity-building, strengthening skills, embedding resilience and nimbleness.

As a foundation principle, the network aims to complement and support the work of existing sector-focussed and State-based bodies, avoiding duplication of energy and roles, while providing a framework that facilitates established initiatives interacting and expanding their effectiveness.

First national conference, 11-12 July

The launch of MidiCities stimulated national media interest, and energised groups around the country keen to build on this concept and pursue a national network. A strong cluster of interest across Queensland includes a group of Regional Development Australia committees and municipal, academic and agency partners. This is being led by the Logan and Redlands RDA, which has committed to host a national MidiCities conference in July, probably 11-12 July in South East Queensland – make a diary note for this landmark event.

Ahead of this, April's UDF National conference will have a strong focus on regional cities, providing an opportunity to explore the achievements and potential of MidiCities from an urban design perspective.



▲ Toowoomba - A typical MidiCity with a distinctive identity reflecting its history, climate and confidence.

Along with the anticipated regional 'capitals' and provincial centres, interest in MidiCities has come from localities on the fringes of metropolitan areas (typified by Logan in South East Queensland) that feel their latent potential and distinctive identities are currently under-recognised. This expands some initial assumptions about what may constitute a 'MidiCity' and provides a topic for healthy debate at the national conference in July.

It is anticipated that a representative national body will be established to advance and coordinate the MidiCities initiative. Decisions about whether this organisation takes the structure of an incorporated body in its own right or is perhaps auspiced by a suitable host institution will evolve through consultation among participating partners considering the suitability for pursuing its aims and purposes.

www.MidiCities.com.au

In the interim, the web domain www.midicities.com.au and MidiCities name have been secured for transfer to the national body upon formation. The web site has been activated to aid the spread of information and to promote the national conference. Access this web site

for updates about the MidiCities concept, progress toward a national network and details of the National Conference in July.

The informal working party that has led the initiative to date is adapting to reflect the growing national interest, expanding upon its predominantly Victorian origins following the national launch. The aim is to maintain a broad spectrum of perspectives across business, municipal, academic, professional, government, community and research participation, while expanding the geographic and jurisdictional spread of contributors.

Those interested in contributing to the activities of the working group should contact convenor Rod Duncan, Associate Professor of Urban Planning at Deakin University on rod.duncan@deakin.edu.au.

Rod Duncan is Associate Professor of Urban Planning at Deakin University and advises cities and communities around Australia and New Zealand on techniques for strengthening city centres.

Recognising urban design professionals

The discussion about how best to recognise urban design professionals, and accreditation processes, continues. The UK Urban Design Group www.udg.org.uk has recently spelt out what is required to be 'recognised'.

Professionals with a suitable balance of education and experience can apply to become a Recognised Practitioner in Urban Design. The distinction provides a wide range of professionals with a valued affiliation (in many cases an additional one), proclaiming their commitment to - and experience of - urban design. It is expected that Recognised Practitioners will come from a diverse range of professional backgrounds.

Being a Recognised Practitioner can give those working in urban design a sense of identity, greater influence on professional practice and public policy, and a stronger sense of common purpose. Recognised Practitioners are

professionals with a wide range of skills and experience of designing in an urban context. Many of the new generation of professionals have more than one professional affiliation; moreover they expect - and are required - to develop new skills and areas of expertise throughout their career.

The core of the Recognised Practitioner assessment is the Capacity Check system www.capacitycheck.co.uk. This enables people from a wide range of different backgrounds and roles to be considered, including practitioners involved in policy formulation, research or academia.

In order to become a Recognised Practitioner, you must complete the application form and send it to the Urban Design Group office, where a Panel assesses the application, in a process which takes about two months. Recognised Practitioner membership costs £80.00 per year.

SA Active Living Coalition

The South Australian Active Living Coalition was formed four years ago as a partnership between government departments and agencies, such as the Heart Foundation and PIA, to provide a collaborative forum for the planning and coordination of communities that support active living in South Australia. Encouraging urban managers and developers to promote a greater emphasis on people friendly streets, as a catalyst for urban regeneration, has been a hallmark of the Coalition.

During this time the Coalition has identified a number of issues and opportunities to improving the health of people and their lifestyle through urban planning initiatives. Not only is the focus on walkable places and streets, cycling and recreation, being part of

Developments Plans and Local Government policy, but to provide tools and practical examples to promote strategies aimed urban design of spaces and development sites that provide social interaction and a sense of character.

"Streets for People - Compendium for South Australia Practice" is one such resource to be launched this year to assist professionals and authorities grappling with the issues of creating people-friendly streets whilst meeting national standards and regulations applicable to street and road design. Likewise "Healthy by Design SA" guidelines are being prepared in 2012 incorporating advice and guidance for retro-fitting existing urban environments and adopting good design principles for all ages.

Tasmania's loss is NSW's gain

The last UDF (No 96 December 2011) included a country-wide survey of our State and Territory Architects. In January, Peter Poulet resigned after three years in that position in Tasmania, and has been appointed as the NSW State Architect. Peter says "The Tasmanian Government should consider employing a Tasmanian this time, because there are very good local people who can do the job. In many ways my job was to really establish the position, establish its credentials, and a local person who understands the nuances of doing business in Tasmania could hit the ground running and not have to spend that time as I did understanding the place."

The Tasmanian Government is reviewing the role, but the Opposition has called for the role to be abolished, saying it is a luxury the Government can no longer afford. [ED: are Tassy finances in that bad a shape, or is it simply an ideological aversion to the importance of good design?] Many other people disagree, and praise the pioneering work of Peter Poulet.

Peter is the 23rd Government Architect since Francis Greenway was appointed in 1816.



▲ Peter Poulet (Photo: The Mercury)

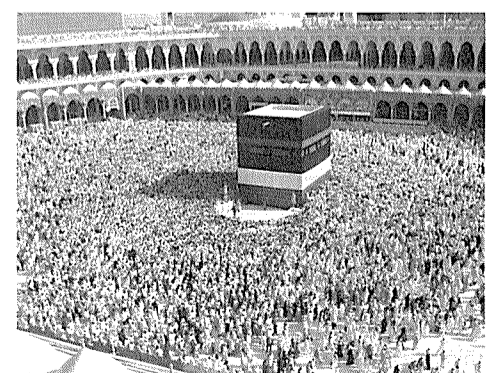
The wisdom of crowds

Are all pedestrians born the same? Does culture or personality count? There is a strange but extremely valuable science of how pedestrians behave. Seems that their behaviour is brought about by probabilities, says Mehdi Moussaid of the Max Planck Institute in Berlin. If two opposing people guess each other's intentions correctly, each moving to one side and allowing the other past, then they are likely to choose to move the same way the next time they need to avoid a collision. The probability of a successful manoeuvre increases as more and more people adopt a bias in one direction, until the tendency sticks. Whether it's right or left does not matter; what does is that it is the unspoken will of the majority.

That is at odds with most people's idea of being a pedestrian. More than any other way of getting around - such as being crushed into a train or stuck in a traffic jam - walking appears to offer freedom of choice. Reality is more complicated. Whether stepping aside to avoid a collision, following the person in front through a crowd or navigating busy streets, pedestrians are autonomous yet constrained by others. They are both highly mobile and very predictable. These are particles with

a will, says Dirk Helbing of ETH Zurich, a technology-focused university.

The biggest test possible of these tools and techniques is the hajj, the annual pilgrimage to Mecca in Saudi Arabia that Muslims are expected to carry out at least once in their lives if they can. With as many as 3million pilgrims making the journey each year, the hajj has a long history of crowd stampedes and deaths. Indeed, video footage of a hajj stampede is used by lots of modellers to validate their simulations of crowd turbulence.



▲ The hajj

Urban design study programs

Juris Greste

The following is a summary of recent research on urban design study programs in Australia and New Zealand. The complete paper lists and summarises the various courses and programs for urban design education available. This investigation was conducted in October, 2011, based on internet information. The findings are grouped under four headings: Post graduate degrees; Undergraduate degrees and courses; Course units, segments or subjects; other short introductory programs.

The extent of the internet information is varied and diverse which accounts for the difference in details in the document. Comparing like with like is thus not possible. Although credit points are stated (where available), it must be noted that they are not necessarily of equal or similar value from one university to another. Nevertheless, they do offer some indication of the relative 'weight' of a program.

No doubt the various courses and programs reflect the demand of the market. The extent to which the focus of the various study programs is on urban design seems to depend on the host academic department or faculty as well as the course general orientation. Some courses are really planning degrees with some urban design attention (not previously offered). Others are full double degree post graduate programs with urban design emphasis within a professional discipline program. There are, no doubt, urban design components (units of study) of varying length and extent within some built environment

undergraduate courses. These have not been included in this survey as they were not specifically intended to offer specialised knowledge and understanding of urban design. However, they are listed separately.

The choice is not easy

For someone wanting to gain deep urban design knowledge and skills to offer specialist services, the choice is not easy. Post graduate courses range from one year full time duration of 96 credit points; to one and a half year 12 credit points; to two year duration of 96 credit points; to a three year program. The particular 'flavour' of the programs (architecture, planning, landscape architecture, property development) is also difficult to ascertain from the published information. One would need to speak to past or current students and research the backgrounds of staff. The decision making process, especially for overseas students, could be quite arduous.

In terms of what extent of academic background or learning makes one 'qualified' to be an urban designer remains a vexed and contestable issue. The urban designer community at present is indeed a broad church. While it may be a controversial question, it nevertheless is appropriate to ask whether there should not be an attempt to reach agreement on some core knowledge and skills. It may be time for that kind of discourse.

Currently there is a diversity of urban design education options available. There are seven post graduate degrees in Australia, one of

which will be available in 2012, and one in New Zealand. Generally there is one post graduate program available in each state capital (with two in Melbourne, Deakin University having provincial and regional campuses). Generally they are of one year full time duration, except the new 3 year double degree at Adelaide University. To broaden the choices, some can be exited at Graduate Diploma levels. However, one must note that some degrees have specific discipline orientations. Some appear to have a stronger planning leaning than others.

Of the undergraduate programs, the RMIT five year double degree course could be regarded as on par with some of the post graduate courses, especially if length of study is any indication. However, the other undergraduate program – at Bond – while seemingly having a clear urban design content, is a first tier undergraduate degree preparing students for entry-to professional level courses, mainly planning. Thus it could be challenged as an urban design program.

There are six 'embedded' urban design programs or course units, generally of one semester or less duration. In fairness to the other above-mentioned courses, these programs have to be regarded as only introductory or familiarisation subjects.

Without further detailed comparison, on present indication the Griffith 'Essentials of urban design' program at 10 days of full time attendance may be regarded as being of similar 'weight' to some of the other unit programs.

QUT took the lead in 1986

From this brief survey, it would appear that since the introduction of the first Masters level urban design course at QUT in 1986, opportunities for the acquisition of urban design knowledge have expanded greatly. This is encouraging and reassuring. So it should be in the most highly urbanised nation in the world. Is this also the sign of a cultural change towards valuing urban qualities and urbanity for its own sake? Are we seeing an appreciation of the importance of high quality public space?

A future extension of this investigation will seek to gather information of the number of graduates the various programs, especially post graduate, have produced. No doubt a considerable number of those will be foreign students who will have returned to their home countries. Thus, it remains to be seen just how many locally based urban designers we are producing as we continue to grow and expand our cities and urban centres. Informal and hearsay evidence seems to indicate that we need many more well educated urban designers in positions of responsibility, especially at local government level and in procurement decision making positions, to give us the form and quality of cities and towns that we need in a world of changing climate and diminishing resources.

For more information, contact Juris Greste at jandlgreste@optusnet.com.au

New Book

Home - evolution of the Australian Dream

Philip Cox, Philip Graus, Bob Meer

Is it only Australian's who have a dream about owning their own home? You know the one - the much-touted dream of a detached house on a 1/4 acre block with enough space for mum, dad, 2.4 children, a dog or two, chooks, well-watered lawn on which to train budding football, cricket and tennis stars - oh and provide a home theatre big enough for the half the neighbourhood (if you know them) and, of course, house in comfort the 2.4 vehicles. I wonder if that dream is sustainable?

Some ironies abound. In 1946 Robin Boyd become director of the 'Small Homes Service', set up by the Royal Victorian Institute of Architects in conjunction with The Age. The service aimed at promoting rational house-design. He wrote *Australia's Home* in 1952. Who doesn't have a thumbled paperback copy on their professional bookshelf? Boyd's last work, the *Great Great Australian Dream*, was published posthumously in 1972. It summed



up the pretensions of his profession and the frustrations of his generation.

This new book by Philip Cox, Philip Graus, and Bob Meer takes a different approach. It is a handsomely presented volume, including many watercolours by Philip Cox. It traces the history and development of the Australian house, considering individual houses and the context of their suburban environments. But there is more: it canvases utopia, suburbia, sprawl and density, Australian urban models - and the future of Australia cities.

Jane Curry Publishing 2011 978-0-9808129-9-2 RRP \$45

Boost your urban design knowledge in 2012

The new Urban Design Training Program for Victoria is now available. This year, the program focuses on planning and building for activities areas, designing new communities and successful public spaces, and urban design for rail environments. The popular Urban Discovery Walks are back again offering participants exposure to a range of projects in and around Melbourne and regional Victoria.

If you would like to know more about the program, please contact the Urban Design Unit, Department of Planning and Community Development on (03) 8644 8815 or visit www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/planning/urbandesign

For online registrations, visit the DPCD PLANET Professional Development Program: www.dpcd.vic.gov.au/planet



Blogs coming out of our ears!

In your spare time, or as part of an obsession with fast media, take a look at the following:

- <http://www.udg.org.uk/> run by the UK Urban Design Group
- <http://www.urbanophile.com/> run by American urban affairs analyst, Aaron M. Renn
- <http://www.urbanvista.net/> run by students out of Melbourne University
- <http://beneaththewisteria.blogspot.com.au/> run by Robert McLean, a UDFer based in Shepparton
- www.placefocus.com.au, run by Andrew Hammond, the current President and founding member of the Urban Design Alliance (QLD)
- <http://vitalplaces.blogspot.com.au>, run by Robert Prestipino based in Queensland.

Juris Greste has written about urban design over a lifetime, and has decided to join the blogmasters rather than just leave it sitting on his computer. It is expected to go online in March, but in the meantime you can contact Juris at jandlgreste@optusnet.com.au

Conferences, etc

Beware false conferences!

Perhaps it was only a matter of time. Now urban design has hit the mainstream, scams can be an attractive proposition for unscrupulous operators. These scams swim about with the plethora of commercially organised conferences, particularly in Europe. Apparently one was advertised last year (not in UDF!), people paid money up front, and one person travelled many thousands of miles to find there was nothing - even though it was supposedly linked with reputable organisations. The Urban Design Group in UK is keeping a track of this activity, and up-to-date information can be seen at www.udg.org.uk

Place Making Training series

David Engwicht

Day One: The Art of Place Making, explores the 14 secrets of creating vibrant neighbourhoods, prosperous shopping streets, and magical public spaces. It also includes an eye-opening walkabout through a real urban environment, applying the lessons learned in the workshop.

Day Two: Becoming a More Creative Place Maker, explores the secrets of unleashing your personal potential as a place maker - including a brand new technique for consistently thinking outside the box - Dual-Spiral Thinking.

Coffs Harbour - 22, 23 March;
Sydney - 26, 27 March;
Melbourne - 29, 30 March;
Brisbane - 16, 17 April;
Townsville - 19, 20 April;
Adelaide - 3, 4 May;
Fremantle - 7, 8 May.

For more information and bookings:
www.creative-communities.com/training

Global Planners Network Congress
14-17 April, 2012, Los Angeles

Game Changers: Energy, Climate Change and the Green Economy. For more information see www.planning.org/conference/proposals.htm

International Making Cities Livable Conference

20-24 May 2012 Portland Oregon USA

With the theme 'True urbanism: planning healthy communities for all', this 49th IMCL, will examine the evidence, and focus on ways we can reshape the built environment to increase physical and social health and well-being. For details and a complete list of speakers, presentation topics, tours, and program, see www.livablecities.org/conferences/49th-conference-portland

World Urban Forum

1-7 September 2012, Naples

The Sixth Session of the World Urban Forum

(WUF6) will take place in the ancient city of Naples with the theme The Urban Future, hosted by the UN-Habitat, Government of Italy, Campania Region and City of Naples. Bringing together a diverse range of people and organisations involved in city planning, design and management to share their vision for better, smarter cities of the future. For more information see www.unhabitat.org/wuf

Walking and Sustainable Cities

30 September- 4 October, 2012

Mexico City

With the title 'Step into the future', the Walk21 partnership is calling for papers and proposals for its next conference, for the first time in Latin America. Themes are: Inclusion; Trust; Well-being; and Community. For details see www.walk21.com

2012 UK National Urban Design Conference

18-20 October, Oxford

This year's conference will centre on the University of Oxford Brookes; the 300 seat Nelson Mandela lecture theatre at the Saïid Business School, University of Oxford, and for the annual dinner, the medieval Pembroke College Oxford.

The programme is being developed by Louise Thomas, co-editor of Urban Design, and Professor Georgia Butina-Watson, at Oxford Brookes. For more details see www.udg.org.uk

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

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