

01/05/08

PIA POSITION

Good urban design contributes to the creation of positive and vibrant communities. It reinforces a sense of place, encourages neighbourhood interaction, and promotes the development of functional and meaningful places for the community. Urban Design integrates the processes and expertise of many related disciplines. It is a collaborative and multi-disciplinary design process that is concerned with the formation of public space and its interface with the built form, focusing on creating a desirable environment to live, work and play.

The definition of Urban Design has many interpretations amongst different professions, but essentially it is about the relationships and connections between the buildings, spaces, and places in our cities and towns, and the people that live in and use them. PIA recognises the important role of urban planning to improving the quality of urban design and ensuring its relevance to planning decisions. Urban design encompasses the preparation of design guidelines and regulatory frameworks; incorporating aesthetic appearance as well as the more regulatory role that the planning profession contributes. It provides the tools with which the quality of our urban areas and community wellbeing can be consciously improved.

Urban design is interested in the design and community needs at urban scales and ranges in scale from the metropolitan or regional level, to a city or town, or down to a street, building or public space. Urban Design is increasingly used to capitalise on the potential of new public places and to revitalise and transform run-down areas. Good urban design is concerned not just with the appearance of development and infrastructure but with the positive impact the built and natural landscapes have on people and land use, and the consequences of design on economic, social, and environmental outcomes and values.

PIA ENCOURAGES THE FOLLOWING ACTION:

- The council of Australian Governments (COAG) should establish an Urban Design Taskforces to collaboratively develop and Australian Urban Design Charter. The Charter will provide a framework for harmonising and improving urban design outcomes in our cities and regions and the connections between them. Supporting the development of this Charter recognises that better urban design will make our cities more efficient and productive, as well as improving environmental and social outcomes and thereby, the quality of life for Australians of all ages. A communications and demonstration program should follow the establishment of the COAG agreement and release of the Charter.
- A demonstration program funded jointly by the Commonwealth and State Governments should be established to provide concrete evidence of the benefits if investing in better urban design at the national, state, and local levels.

POLICY PRINCIPLES

Australia is highly urbanised, with over 85% of our population living in cities and towns. Good Urban Design impacts positively on all aspects of community life, and is increasingly important to ensuring that our urban environments are healthy, safe responsive to climate and attractive as well as allowing business, social, and cultural life to flourish.

Quality urban design brings together and seeks to integrate a range of complex urban policy objectives into a workable and aesthetically pleasing outcome. At the macro scale, high quality urban design can enhance housing choice and diversity, provide easy access to transport systems and employment opportunities. A 'sense of place' can enhance a community's appreciation of a place and can contribute to reducing car dependency and creating safer and healthier places to live in, improving overall community wellbeing and sustainability. Urban design encompasses the physical and spatial design of our cities while embracing the social, economic, symbolic, and spiritual aspects of our cities.

PIA believes that is essential that all three spheres of Government, industry, the professions and the community have shared urban design vision for Australia. Investment in good urban design which supports the city structure offers a full array of easily accessible opportunities to every community.

At every scale, quality urban environments are a strategic asset. Australia's great cities and regions are the primary means by which the nation generates prosperity. Good urban design contributes to the reinvestment in and regeneration of towns, and regional centres. Making the most of our cities rests not only with the adequacy of transport, telecommunications, power and other physical infrastructure, but also in the capacity to attract and retain knowledge workers through appealing and "clean and green" living and working environments, public spaces and cultural vitality.

PIA ACTION

PIA will continue to promote the importance that good Urban design plays in Australia's urban development. PIA supports and is committed to the role of urban design in the planning profession and will continue with the following specific actions:

- Continue to foster quality urban design through the PIA Planning Excellence Awards by each Division of PIA and Nationally.
- Continue to co-host and raise the profile of the Australia Award for Urban Design in partnership with the RAI and AILA.

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PIA ACTION *(cont)*

- Develop National urban Design Guidelines to provide guidance and examples of best practice.
- Continue to lobby the Commonwealth, State, and Local Governments to ensure Urban Design is a priority policy consideration in the built environment and seek a National Urban Design Charter reflecting PIA's guidelines.
- Promote collaboration amongst the built environment professions, through bodies such as the Built Environment Design Professions Council.
- Support and incorporate good Urban Design as part of university planning education, and through conferences and workshops.
- Support events and professional development for planners in urban design.

THIS POSITION STATEMENT DERIVES FROM

PIA Liveable Communities (2004)

RELATED REFERENCES

New Zealand Urban Design Protocol 2005
The South Australian Urban Design Charter 2004