Dear Sir/Madam,

Thank you for the opportunity to make a submission to the Innovation Review being conducted by the Expert Panel of the Department of Innovation, Industry, Science and Research.

The Planning Institute of Australia (PIA) is the peak professional association for 4500 urban planners and related professions in Australia and overseas.

PIA is a member of the Australian Construction Industry Forum and the Australian Council of Built Environment Design Professions (BEDP) and supports the submissions lodged by these two organisations.
In a national context better performance and innovation in the built environment sector can positively contribute to a wide range of issues of importance to the nation such as:

- More affordable housing
- Better responses to climate change issues
- Efficient use of infrastructure
- More socially cohesive communities

Many of these issues were high on the agenda at the 2020 Summit. However the built environment does not currently receive the same level of recognition in innovation as other sectors.

In particular PIA strongly supports the establishment of an Innovational Council for the Built Environment as recommended in the BEDP submission. It is imperative that Australia be a leader in sustainable development, and capable of harnessing creative ideas in planning research and practice. In addition an independent body providing design advice directly to public construction agencies is part of the suite of responses required for innovative action. More detailed information outlining PIA’s support for this initiative is attached.

Clearly greater emphasis on innovation in the built environment can lead to improved performance in the economy. Modelling work undertaken in 2003 by the National Institute of Economic and Industry Research has shown that improved structuring of the metropolitan region alone would enable the NSW economy to be $1.4 billion larger than it would otherwise have been in 15 years time and the Australian GDP would be boosted by $1.7 billion. There would be 20 000 more jobs in NSW and 24 000 more jobs across Australia.

Figures collected by the Federal Government estimates there are 11 200 urban planners working in Australia, with around half working in the Government sector and the other half for the private sector.

In total there are around 100 000 built environment professionals working in Australia and increasingly these skills are being used on international design projects. Over the last five years the urban planning profession has grown by around by around 43% compared to 13% across all occupations. There is currently a skill shortage of around 20% or urban and regional planners with future job prospects being very strong.

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1 Australian Job Search web site
Increased attention on research, skills and innovation for this sector is warranted given the contribution that this sector can play in the economy.

I would be happy to elaborate further on any of the information provided in this submission and can be contacted on 02 6262 5933.

Yours sincerely

Di Jay
Chief Executive Officer
2nd May 2008
Support for the establishment of an Innovational Council for the Built Environment

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.

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.

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 it is essential that all three spheres of Government, industry, the professions and the community have a 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.