

Australian Institute of Landscape Architects

Advocacy Manifesto

2025

A healthy, greener, resilient and jobs-ready Australia





Advocacy Manifesto 2025

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Australian Institute of Landscape Architects

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Cover Image.

2024 AILA National Climate Positive Design Award

St Peters Street.

Landskap & City of Norwood Payneham and St Peters

Kaurna

Photo by Duncan McKenzie

This Page Image.

2024 AILA National Landscape Architecture Award for Small Projects

National Site of Recognition for Thalidomide Survivors and their Families

PLACE Laboratory

Ngunnawal Country / Ngunawal and Gundungurra

Photo by Peter Bennetts

Acknowledgement of Country

The Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) acknowledges and respects Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples across Australia as the Traditional Custodians of the lands, waters, seas and skies.

We recognise their unique ability to care for Country and their deep spiritual connection with Country.

We honour Elders past, present and emerging, whose knowledge and wisdom will ensure the continuation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures, and the values which uphold them.

AILA's Strategic Values

At the heart of AILA's vision are three strategic values that underpin every initiative and project we champion:

Climate Positive Design

In an era of unprecedented environmental challenges, we lead with a commitment to climate positive design. Our goal is to create spaces that go beyond reducing harm—they actively restore and enhance the environment, delivering long-term benefits for communities and the planet.

Connection to Country

Our design philosophy is deeply rooted in a respectful relationship with Country. By integrating Indigenous knowledge and honoring traditional custodianship, we ensure that our projects not only respect cultural heritage but also promote sustainable, community-led stewardship of the land.

Gender Equity

We are committed to fostering a diverse and inclusive profession. This means ensuring equal opportunities, fair remuneration, and supportive workplace policies so that every landscape architect can thrive and contribute their unique perspective to shaping our built environment.





Economic value of the landscape architecture industry to the Australian economy

22,162

full time equivalent (FTE) employees



\$23.7 billion

total contribution to gross domestic product

\$8.2 billion

in direct economic contribution



\$8.1 billion

in additional indirect supply chain impact



\$7.4 billion

estimated contribution towards total increased consumption in the economy over time



Additional benefits of **WELL DESIGNED SPACES**

Landscape architects generate additional economic, environmental, social and cultural benefits as a result of their work in the design, construction and maintenance of private and public use spaces.



AILA's Advocacy

The Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) champions quality design for public open spaces, stronger communities, and a sustainable planet.

For over 59 years, AILA has led the dialogue on nature-based solutions that support healthy, liveable cities and regions. As we approach the 2025 federal budget, this manifesto outlines our strategic priorities to ensure that government policies and investments deliver on a greener, more resilient future.

By embedding environmental stewardship into every aspect of planning and development, we can enhance community wellbeing, protect biodiversity, and drive sustainable economic growth.



1

Policy and Regulatory Change

Stronger policies are needed to mandate green and blue infrastructure, enhance resilience, and protect biodiversity. AILA calls for planning reforms, federal funding, and stricter environmental protections to ensure sustainable urban development.

2

Targeted Investment in Blue & Green Infrastructure

AILA advocates for a national framework, dedicated funding, and long-term investment in blue and green infrastructure to enhance climate resilience, improve urban liveability, and maximise economic benefits.

3

Improved Governance & Delivery

AILA calls for improved leadership, governance, and coordination to ensure integrated urban planning and the long-term success of blue and green infrastructure initiatives.

4

Knowledge and Capacity Building

AILA calls on the federal, state and local government to strengthen Australia's climate resilience and urban sustainability by investing in interdisciplinary education and research in nature-based solutions, supporting national data-sharing frameworks for ecosystem services, and funding next-generation landscape architecture programs that address future skills shortages.



2024 AILA National Award of Excellence for Parks and Open Space
Romsey Ecotherapy Park
ACLA Consultants
Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country
Photo by Steven Pam - Smartshots

1. Policy and Regulatory Change

1.1 Mandate Green & Blue Infrastructure

- Require all new public and private developments to integrate green (vegetation-based) and blue (water-based) infrastructure.
- Ensure urban planning policies explicitly recognise and enforce the inclusion of living landscapes, green roofs, permeable surfaces, and urban wetlands.
- Promote nature-based solutions such as green corridors, urban forests, and constructed wetlands to mitigate urban heat and improve air and water quality.

1.2 Planning Policies Prioritising Resilience

- Enforce resilience-focused urban planning, integrating heat mitigation strategies such as tree canopy targets and reflective surfaces.
- Expand water-sensitive urban design (WSUD) as a standard in all new developments, ensuring improved stormwater management, reduced flood risks, and increased groundwater recharge.
- Mandate sustainable drainage systems (SuDS) to enhance flood resilience, prioritising vegetated swales, rain gardens, and retention ponds, to better manage storm events and improve water quality.

1.3 Stronger Biodiversity Protections

- Establish clear, measurable targets for habitat restoration and native planting in urban and peri-urban areas.
- Develop biodiversity corridors that connect fragmented green spaces, supporting native wildlife and increasing ecological resilience.
- Enforce stronger restrictions on land clearing, ensuring native ecosystems are protected and regenerated.

1.4 Federal Funding for Biodiversity Strategy Implementation

- Provide long-term committed federal, state and local funding to close the gap between policy ambitions and actual delivery.
- Ensure biodiversity strategies include implementation roadmaps, clear accountability mechanisms, and community involvement.
- Support landowners and developers with grants or incentives to integrate habitat restoration and conservation practices into projects and general and management.



1.1 Mandate Green & Blue Infrastructure

AILA calls on the government to make green and blue infrastructure a non-negotiable element of every new public and all levels of government to private development. This means establishing mandatory planning standards that require the integration of living landscapes, from green roofs and permeable surfaces to urban wetlands, ensuring that our built environment actively supports nature. By embracing nature-based solutions like green corridors, urban forests, and constructed wetlands, AILA envisions cities that mitigate urban heat and improve air quality, ultimately fostering healthier, more sustainable communities for generations to come.

1.2 Planning Policies Prioritising Resilience

AILA demands that urban planning policies prioritise resilience by integrating robust heat mitigation strategies, such as ambitious tree canopy targets and the use of reflective surfaces, to cool urban areas. It is essential to standardise water-sensitive urban design (WSUD) in all new developments, ensuring improved stormwater management, reduced flood risks, and increased groundwater recharge. By mandating sustainable drainage systems, including vegetated swales, rain gardens, and retention ponds, AILA believes that our cities can be built to better manage extreme weather events and safeguard community well-being.

1.3 Stronger Biodiversity Protections

AILA urges the government to implement stringent biodiversity protections that secure a thriving urban ecosystem. This begins with setting clear, measurable targets for habitat restoration and native planting across urban and peri-urban areas. Developing interconnected biodiversity corridors is critical for bridging fragmented green spaces, thereby supporting native wildlife and enhancing ecological resilience. Additionally, enforcing tougher restrictions on land clearing will ensure that native ecosystems are preserved and regenerated, making biodiversity a cornerstone of sustainable urban development.

1.4 Federal Funding for Biodiversity Strategy Implementation

AILA calls on the federal government to commit to long-term funding dedicated to biodiversity strategy implementation. This funding must bridge the gap between policy ambitions and actual delivery, supporting comprehensive implementation roadmaps, clear accountability measures, and robust community involvement. By providing targeted grants and incentives, the federal government can incentivise state and local levels and empower landowners and developers to integrate habitat restoration and conservation practices into their projects, ensuring that efforts to protect and enhance biodiversity are both sustainable and transformative.

2. Targeted Investment in Blue & Green Infrastructure

2.1 Develop a National Urban Blue & Green Infrastructure Framework

- Create a nationwide strategy to standardise the integration of blue and green infrastructure across states and territories.
- Establish clear guidelines across states, territories and local governments to implement ecosystem-based solutions in urban planning.
- Identify priority areas for investment and restoration based on climate resilience and community well-being.

2.2 Recognising Green Infrastructure as an Asset Class

- Advocate for Treasury to classify green infrastructure as an asset class, ensuring appropriate valuation and financial investment.
- Enable public and private sectors to allocate dedicated funding streams for living infrastructure, making it financially sustainable.
- Develop economic valuation frameworks that recognise ecosystem services provided by green and blue spaces.
- Integrate health and well-being benefits into these frameworks by acknowledging improvements in air quality, mental health, and opportunities for physical activity, thereby enhancing community resilience and overall quality of life.

2.3 Establish a Blue & Green Infrastructure Fund

- Create a national fund dedicated to blue and green infrastructure as part of the national climate resilience and recovery plan.
- Support urban forestry programs, wetland restoration projects, and city greening initiatives with long-term funding.
- Encourage at federal, state and local levels public-private partnerships to maximise funding opportunities for large-scale projects.

2.4 Commitment to Long-Term Investment

- Develop sustainable funding models to ensure blue and green infrastructure is maintained beyond initial implementation.
- Support local councils in securing financial resources for ongoing landscape maintenance and management.
- Foster collaborative investment models that engage industries, businesses, and communities in sustaining public green spaces.
- Implement procurement protection measures that mandate construction budgets for landscape and green scopes remain intact, with designated independent inspectors ensuring compliance with project standards.





2.1 Develop a National Urban Blue & Green Infrastructure Framework

AILA advocates for the creation of a comprehensive, nationwide strategy that standardises the integration of blue and green infrastructure across all states and territories. This framework should include clear guidelines for local governments to implement ecosystem-based solutions in urban planning, ensuring that every community can access the benefits of nature-based design. By identifying priority areas for investment and restoration, based on climate resilience and community well-being, this framework will drive transformative change, enhancing urban liveability and maximising long-term economic and environmental benefits.

2.2 Recognising Green Infrastructure as an Asset Class

AILA calls on the government to elevate green infrastructure by having Treasury formally recognise it as an asset class. Such a classification would ensure that investments in living infrastructure are properly valued and that both public and private sectors can allocate dedicated funding streams toward these critical projects. By developing robust economic valuation frameworks that capture the full spectrum of ecosystem services, ranging from improved air quality to enhanced social cohesion, green and blue infrastructure will become an integral part of our financial planning, underpinning a resilient and sustainable urban future.

2.3 Establish a Blue & Green Infrastructure Fund

AILA urges the federal government to establish a dedicated national fund for blue and green infrastructure, forming a cornerstone of the national climate resilience and recovery plan. This fund should provide long-term support for initiatives such as urban forestry programs, wetland restoration projects, and at state and local levels for city greening efforts, ensuring that these transformative investments receive consistent financial backing. Additionally, by fostering public-private partnerships, the government can leverage further investment and drive large-scale projects that secure our natural capital and enhance the overall quality of urban life.

2.4 Commitment to Long-Term Investment

AILA demands sustainable funding models to ensure blue and green infrastructure endures well beyond initial implementation. This includes robust support for local councils in securing ongoing landscape management resources, fostering collaborative investments from industries and communities, and enacting procurement protections that preserve green construction budgets, verified by independent inspections.

3. Improved Governance & Delivery

3.1 Establish a Federal Minister for Cities

- Appoint a dedicated Federal Minister for Cities to oversee urban resilience, climate adaptation, and sustainable development.
- Fund a '**Government Landscape Architect**' in each state and territory to provide expert guidance on green and blue infrastructure projects.
- Strengthen intergovernmental coordination on urban sustainability policies.

3.2 Recognition of Public Open Space as Essential to Housing Goals

- Include green spaces as a mandatory element in affordable housing projects to ensure long-term liveability.
- Integrate public open spaces into housing developments to support physical and mental health, social cohesion, and biodiversity.
- Establish minimum green space requirements per capita in urban planning policies.

3.3 Reframing Economic Value

- Develop economic models that quantify the long-term benefits of landscape investments, including health savings, increased property values, and reduced disaster recovery costs.
- Promote nature-based solutions as cost-effective infrastructure that supports community well-being.
- Advocate for financial incentives for developments that exceed minimum green infrastructure requirements.

3.4 Aligning Investment for Multifunctional Landscapes

- Ensure stormwater management, transportation, and public realm funding are integrated to create multi-benefit urban landscapes.
- Encourage cross-sector collaboration between water, transport, and housing agencies to optimise landscape investments.
- Prioritise projects that provide social, environmental, and economic benefits simultaneously.

3.5 Ongoing Maintenance & Stewardship

- Shift funding models to include long-term maintenance and care for landscapes, ensuring they thrive over time.
- Promote community stewardship programs, empowering local residents to take part in landscape upkeep.
- Establish national best practices for the long-term management of urban green spaces.



3.1 Establish a Federal Minister for Cities

ALLA calls on the Federal Government to appoint a dedicated Federal Minister for Cities to spearhead urban resilience, climate adaptation, and sustainable development nationwide. This role is vital for ensuring a coordinated, visionary approach to urban planning across all levels of government. Furthermore, ALLA advocates that each state and territory fund a '**Government Landscape Architect**' to provide expert guidance on green and blue infrastructure projects from the outset. Strengthening intergovernmental coordination on urban sustainability policies will create a unified framework that drives transformative change in our cities.

3.2 Recognition of Public Open Space as Essential to Housing Goals

ALLA calls on the government to redefine affordable housing by recognising public open space as an indispensable element of long-term urban liveability. Mandating green spaces within housing projects will ensure that developments contribute not only to shelter but also to the physical and mental health, social cohesion, and biodiversity of communities. By integrating public open spaces into housing developments and establishing minimum per capita green space requirements, the government can create environments that support thriving, sustainable neighborhoods for all Australians.

3.3 Reframing Economic Value

ALLA calls on the government to develop innovative economic models that fully quantify the long-term benefits of landscape investments. These models should capture health savings, increased property values, and reduced disaster recovery costs, thereby reframing nature-based solutions as cost-effective, essential infrastructure. By advocating for financial incentives for developments that exceed minimum green infrastructure requirements, ALLA believes the government can drive a paradigm shift in investment practices—one that recognises the significant social, economic, and environmental returns of sustainable urban design.

3.4 Aligning Investment for Multifunctional Landscapes

ALLA urges the government to adopt an integrated funding approach that aligns investments in stormwater management, transportation, and the public realm to create multifunctional urban landscapes. This strategy involves cross-sector collaboration between water, transport, and housing agencies, ensuring that infrastructure projects deliver social, environmental, and economic benefits simultaneously. Prioritising such holistic investments will optimise the impact of public funds, fostering resilient, vibrant urban environments that meet the diverse needs of modern communities.

3.5 Ongoing Maintenance & Stewardship

ALLA calls for a reimagined approach to delivery that embeds workforce development into the implementation of urban green and blue infrastructure. By embedding maintenance and stewardship into funding frameworks, the government can secure the lasting benefits of sustainable urban design. Training pathways, certification programs, and place-based learning should be integrated into stewardship initiatives to build a jobs-ready workforce equipped to deliver climate-adaptive and resilient urban environments. These programs should cultivate talent across planning, design, and construction disciplines, encouraging interdisciplinary collaboration and workforce diversity. National best practices for community-led green space management will further support local capacity and ensure the enduring impact of landscape-led investment.

4. Knowledge & Capacity Building

4.1 Upskilling Across Disciplines

- Integrate training programs for planners, engineers, and developers to build capacity in nature-based solutions.
- Establish certification programs that validate expertise in sustainable landscape design.
- Encourage interdisciplinary collaboration to break down silos in urban planning.

4.2 Educating the Public on Climate Resilience

- Advocate for Treasury to classify green infrastructure as an asset class, ensuring appropriate valuation and financial investment.
- Enable public and private sectors to allocate dedicated funding streams for living infrastructure, making it financially sustainable.
- Develop economic valuation frameworks that recognise ecosystem services provided by green and blue spaces.

4.3 Better Data & Metrics

- Make ecosystem services data, such as heat reduction, biodiversity gains, and water retention, publicly accessible.
- Develop standardised performance indicators to track the effectiveness of blue and green infrastructure investments.
- Encourage open data-sharing initiatives among government agencies, researchers, and industry professionals.

4.4 Next Generation and Academic Support

- Advocate for the federal government to increase Commonwealth support for educational institutions and research programs focused on nature-based design solutions.
- Provide \$200,000 in funding to support the Be a Landscape Architect (BALA) program, attracting the next generation of landscape architects and professionals at a critical time for sustainable design.



4.1 Upskilling Across Disciplines

AILA calls on the government to integrate comprehensive training programs for planners, engineers, and developers that focus on the value and application of nature-based solutions. By establishing certification programs that validate expertise in sustainable landscape design, the government can ensure that professionals across disciplines are equipped with the skills needed to collaborate effectively. This interdisciplinary approach will break down traditional silos in urban planning, fostering a unified, innovative framework that drives resilient and environmentally integrated development for the future.

4.2 Educating the Public on Climate Resilience

AILA urges the government to launch public awareness campaigns that spotlight the critical role of urban ecology and landscape-led design in climate adaptation. By incorporating climate resilience education into school curriculums, we can nurture environmental stewardship from an early age and empower future generations. In addition, supporting community-led projects that demonstrate practical applications of sustainable urban design will enable citizens to see firsthand the benefits of nature-based solutions. These initiatives will build a well-informed public that is ready to advocate for and contribute to resilient, sustainable communities.

4.3 Better Data & Metrics

AILA calls on the government to make vital ecosystem services data—such as metrics on heat reduction, biodiversity gains, and water retention—publicly accessible, providing a transparent basis for informed decision-making. We advocate for the development of standardised performance indicators that reliably track the effectiveness of blue and green infrastructure investments. Encouraging open data-sharing initiatives among government agencies, researchers, and industry professionals will foster an environment where evidence-based strategies can be continually refined to meet the challenges of climate change. This commitment to transparency and rigorous measurement is essential for achieving long-term sustainability in urban planning.

4.4 Next Generation and Academic Support

AILA demands robust academic support to nurture the next generation of sustainable design professionals. This includes increasing Commonwealth-supported academic placements and dedicating \$200,000 to the "Be a Landscape Architect" (BALA) initiative, ensuring that educational institutions and research programs receive essential backing to drive innovative, nature-based design solutions when they are most critical.



2024 AILA National Landscape Architecture Award for Play Spaces
Yirran muru Aboriginal Interpretive Playspace
Fiona Robbé Landscape Architects with Shellharbour City Council
Dharawal
Photo by Michael Boyle

Conclusion

As we stand at the threshold of the 2025 federal budget, AILA calls on government leaders to embrace a future where nature-based solutions and strategic investments drive sustainable growth. Our manifesto sets out clear priorities that, if acted upon, will lead to stronger communities, vibrant public spaces, and a resilient Australia prepared for the challenges of tomorrow.

For more information on our work and strategic vision, please visit www.aila.org.au.



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