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Chris Steel MLA
GPO Box 1020,
Canberra, ACT 2601
steel@act.gov.au

AUSTRALIAN INSTITUTE OF LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTS (AILA)

SUBMISSION

to the Urban Open Space Land Management Plan

Dear Minister Chris Steel MLA,

On behalf of the members of the Landscape Architecture community, AILA ACT appreciates the opportunity to present our views and concerns in the preparation of your Urban Open Space Land Management Plan.

The Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) champions quality design for public open spaces, stronger communities, and greater environmental stewardship. We provide our members – in urban and rural Australia, and overseas – with training, recognition, and a community of practice to share knowledge, ideas, and action.

With our members, we anticipate and develop a leading position on issues of concern in landscape architecture. Alongside government and allied professions, we work to improve the design, planning and management of the natural and built environment. AILA represents over 3,500 members throughout Australia and overseas. As a not-for-profit professional association, our role is to serve the mutual interests of our members and the wider profession.

AILA ACT commends the ACT Government for setting out a vision to provide our city with “Sustainable urban open spaces that enrich the lives of our community, improve the amenity of the Territory’s urban environment, and protect and enhance their cultural, social and environmental values.” However, feel that this could have been expanded to capture resilience, productivity, biodiversity, and sufficiency.

Our profession is probably the best placed to have been consulted for this report as we work closely with your directorate in all matters landscape planning, management, constructability, and maintenance. As such, the lack of consultation with our industry has been a missed opportunity in delivery of a comprehensive document. Our members could have provided your team with valuable insight and experience in ensuring that your ‘vision’ is achievable, and maybe in some circumstances surpassed.



In addition to the below points that are raised, we would also appreciate feedback on who your directorate engaged with (that is consultants and other directorates) in preparing this document, their brief, and how the assessment matrix was formulated.

As you are aware the ACT's Planning Reform has been reviewed, so not clear if any correlation exists between this and your document, and thus if your principles and objectives were captured in any layer of the Planning Reform deliverables, or vice versa.

Whilst we appreciate you inviting our institute to provide feedback on this document, the lack of connection between this and the Planning Reform documentation highlights the need for the ACT to invest in a Chief Landscape Architect and Senior Landscape Architect advisors to oversee and inform appropriate briefs and assessment in connecting all aspects of Landscape within our city and territory.

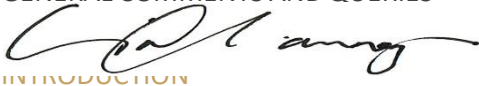
We would be very happy to contribute further to this discussion and provide input as needed. Please do not hesitate to contact me in this regard. We look forward to receiving your response to our submission.

Regards,

Cia Flannery

AILA ACT President

GENERAL COMMENTS AND QUERIES



INTRODUCTION

Has ongoing engagement with community and relevant industry been considered in review and enhancement of future iterations of this document?

SCOPE

Have the Urban Open Space typologies been reviewed?

VISION



The Vision Statement is missing reference to: -

- Resilience- Climate Change and Heat Island responses of our landscape to these elements. This is different to sustainability. Our profession is leading this space through the preparation of Climate Positive Design modules and ongoing involvement and investment in global research and approaches.
- Productivity- Have the opportunities for open space being used temporarily for food, agricultural, harvesting, or for first nations cultural purposes been explored.
- Sufficiency- Are there a variety of adaptable spaces and amenities being provided to be inclusive of all community and age group needs. Was this considered?
- Biodiversity- Is the lack of habitat also potentially an area for review in terms of TCCs MIS Plant List and guidelines? and thus potentially enhancing of interconnecting canopies, and biodiverse understorey planting in place of 'Mow able' grass areas?

CLIMATE CHANGE

- Resilient plants within our climate should not only consider drought tolerant but water tolerant species also. Our climate is extreme.
- Is there any scope to utilise our lakes for irrigation purposes?
- Are you exploring opportunities to utilise onsite water storage for irrigation of urban open space areas?
- Is the use of synthetic grass good for the environment and heat island as an option for ovals and dog parks?
- Carbon footprint initiatives?

VALUES

There is no mention or regard for visual quality and aesthetics in this document. A major oversight, as nature and living infrastructure are key in providing psychological and physiological benefits to our communities, not to mention ACT Government's wellbeing marker.

PRINCIPLES

Unclear as to how the principle 'words' are integrated within the Principle, Objective Strategy areas, and thus how they will clarify and inform decision making. For example, the word 'sustainable' is broad and can be interpreted in many ways. Economic sustainability, product sustainability, environmental sustainability, demand sustainability all are forms of 'sustainability' whose objectives and outcomes are very different.



1. Clarity required for the term 'Architectural features and design elements', what is meant by this?
2. Table 7- How were the recreational inclusions listed in this table derived? Has any consideration for explorative or nature play been considered?
3. Public Space uses listed imply the same management strategy and cost implications, however, the uses and thus impacts and needs vary greatly between them.
4. Has there been any regard to the use of open space for environmental, engineering, or other functional purposes been captured? For example, the use and locality of open space to address overland flow, detention basins, habitat trees, protected ecologies, and thus how these are integrated into our open space framework.
5. The standard for ongoing maintenance of our public open space is not high. Many of the spaces are visually and asset compromised due to the lack of funding and resourcing. With your vision and the need to respond to climate change demands, has a new maintenance and funding model been explored? Has the ability for flexibility of stewardship and other forms of ACT Government financial support been explored to maintain and enhance our open space areas?
6. To realise your vision and that of the Urban Forest Document, has there been any investment in formulating new street typologies, root barriers, methods of rainwater penetration and other sponge city initiatives.
7. Plant palettes not only need to respond to drought conditions but also wet seasons, all are applicable in the dramatic demands and changes of our climate patterns.
8. Diversity of tree species- have other parts of your directorate and other ACT Government sectors been consulted as there appears to be some irregularity.

PARKS

- Have Park typologies been reviewed as part of this process?
- Have amenities associated with these park typologies been reviewed to capture and enhance the amenity for users? For example, toilets and lighting.
- Has their location in terms of planning and densification of the areas in which they are found been considered? This could then inform the amenity required, and encourage community to
- Are any existing parks to be upgraded and expanded because of your assessment matrix?
- Our neighbourhood parks in established urban areas lag in terms of amenity and inclusiveness, and do not reflect the population growth and needs of community in these areas. To achieve the government's vision of sustainable growth and wellbeing, these areas need to provide high quality, well-maintained, accessible and intergenerational play and exercise park facilities that encourage use and attract people to urban infill areas.
- Gender equal play spaces? Where has this been addressed or considered.



- Have different ‘Visual Characters’ of open space been assessed? How do these respond to our district strategies? Assuming this has occurred?

CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the above is a brief but insightful critique of the document presented. We at AILA would hope that the above inspires and emphasises the opportunities that collaboration with us would have value added to your process. Our institute proudly advocates for:

- Climate and Biodiversity Positive Design
- Country recognition and integration into our design processes
- Living Infrastructure and Sponge City initiatives and opportunities
- Heat Resilience and Impact reductions
- Carbon footprint minimisation
- Biodiversity in our open space areas

We believe that your vision aligns with much of what we are invested in achieving on a day-to-day basis through our research, design, and collaborative work. **Let’s work together and make a change.**