



Institute Response to Design Guidelines: Design Quality and Housing Choice

The Australian Institute of Landscape Architects – South Australian Chapter (AILA SA) is pleased to provide a response on the Draft Design Guidelines: Design Quality and Housing Choice (the Guidelines) to the Office for Design and Architecture SA. AILA SA has previously provided industry contribution towards the Planning Reform, Planning Development and Infrastructure (PDI) Bill, 30 Year Plan for Greater Adelaide Update and the Climate Change Strategy. AILA SA remains keen to engage collaboratively with the State Government and its agencies to ensure stronger communities and promote a more prosperous and sustainable future for South Australia.

Overview

AILA SA is part of AILA, the growing national advocacy body representing almost 3,000 active and engaged landscape architects. Committed to designing and creating a better Australia, landscape architects have the skills and expertise to solve macro issues with innovative, integrated solutions. Landscape architects contribute leadership, creativity and innovation as they strive to collaborate to achieve better health, environmental, social and economic outcomes. From citywide strategies to the redesign of local parks, landscape architects are building stronger communities through making places and spaces more sustainable and productive.

AILA SA believes these Draft Design Guidelines seek to uphold the importance of good design and the desire for, and relationship with a greater quality of life and resilience in driving change towards a new urban form. The Guidelines introduce many elements that contribute to an appealing way of life. The Guidelines must emphasise the importance of design as a critical tool to balance the competing demands of urban infill within Adelaide and its surrounding suburbs.

AILA SA commends Minister Rau for the leadership shown to elevate the updated of the 30 Year Plan for Greater Adelaide above a land use planning tool and to recognise and highlight the complexity of ingredients that must be considered to ensure the evolution of Adelaide's CBD, suburbs and neighbourhoods into liveable places for the future.

Landscape Architects do play an increasing role in shaping the urban form of Adelaide's neighbourhoods in support of this new urban form. AILA SA supports the greater recognition and value of public realm, streetscapes and public and private open spaces in the Guidelines.

Landscape Architects are professionally trained to influence and enable greater built outcomes through engaged planning, design and implementation. AILA SA has previously advocated for the recognition of Landscape Architects as an accredited profession that can positively contribute to quality built outcomes that demonstrate the State Government's broader aims and objectives.

The Guidelines are recognised by AILA SA as a supporting document issued in advance of the development of the Planning and Design Code, a key pillar of the wider PDI Act. AILA SA supports the



State Government's aspirations to challenge the development processes to enable better planning, design and integration of the built and natural environments to improve the comfort, quality, economic performance, value and health of a place, its residents and cumulatively the city.

AILA SA supports a greater focus on design quality in the built environment through this inclusion within the development assessment framework. Furthermore, AILA SA supports the recognition of the importance of design quality through the setting of Design Objectives, included in the recent Development Plan Amendments such as:

Development that enhances the public environment, provides activity and interest at street level and a high quality experience for residents, workers and visitors by:

- (a) enlivening building edges*
- (b) creating attractive, welcoming, safe and vibrant spaces*
- (c) improving public safety through passive surveillance*
- (d) creating interesting and lively pedestrian environments*
- (e) integrating public art into the development where it fronts the street and public spaces*
- (f) incorporating generous areas of high quality fit for purpose landscaping.*

AILA SA acknowledges the complexities in introducing the Guidelines document, and the likely tensions across different professions associated with the planning, design and construction of the built environment.

AILA provides the following comments and suggestions to support the aspiration for greater recognition of design quality in building stronger communities across South Australia.

Make it for the people

- The Guidelines aim to respond to all, however AILA SA considers this aim for such a wide audience may compromise the intent, language and detail within the guidelines.
- AILA SA recommends the Guidelines should be tailored to be a public document, aimed at raising the expectations of home buyers (the market) to a standard of living that quality design can provide.
- As a public document, prescriptive elements could be replaced with benchmarking of local and national projects that best demonstrate a quality of life through good design.
- The aspirations for quality of life can be translated from small scale infill development (majority of Adelaide's future development) to larger medium density development, in particular, targeting the 'missing middle'.
- Shared aspirations for developments of different scale will give greater continuity across the Guidelines, as well as balance for the small and the medium density as AILA SA believes the Guidelines are currently too heavily weighted on medium density development.
- The Guidelines should make clear from the outset that good design does not necessarily assume higher upfront costs.



- AILA SA reiterates Minister Rau's recent quote from an InDaily article on the Guidelines articulating their role in educating the public rather than being restricted in use by industry professionals:

"Those guidelines are not intended to be some sort of new age prescription that we are now applying to everybody," he says.

"They were actually intended, as far as I was concerned, to enable me to have a better conversation with other members of the public who don't spend their whole time involved in the development industry. So when I talk about design and they glaze over and go, you know, 'is he talking about dresses or something?' I can say – this is an example of good design and this is an example of bad design."

<http://citymag.indaily.com.au/commerce/devil-detail-planning-reforms/> (July6, 2017)

Make it unique to South Australia

- The Guidelines must champion the local characteristics and conditions of South Australia, as design should contribute to our unique sense of place.
- The Guidelines should recognise local environmental qualities such as the scale of the Adelaide plains and its regional areas, the impact of the foothills, our beaches the big sky, the importance of shade, our winter and summer weather conditions, the scarcity of water, our outdoor, urban lifestyle, accessibility, healthy communities, clean air, community services, walkable neighbourhoods, and established communities.
- In addition to the natural qualities of the Adelaide Plains (and regional South Australia), the Guidelines should recognise the established identity of our coastal suburbs, our post war suburbs, the renewal of industrial and port areas, the vibrancy of the CBD, as well as the emerging communities to the north and within the hills.
- The Guidelines should also forecast the qualities that we need in our communities, with direct links made to the targets and supporting detail of the 30-Year Plan for Greater Adelaide.
- In particular, the 6 targets set in the 30 Year Plan for Greater Adelaide could be linked with the aspirations for the Guidelines, articulating how through the better design of the built environment, each of the 6 targets can be advanced and met.

Bring the community along with the need for design quality

- Greater efforts could be made to build the understanding and expectations towards design quality with the local community. If the document is realigned to raise expectations, it should be promoted within our communities, in particular aligning values and expectations, and understanding the community's existing and desired future.
- The recent 30-Year Plan for Greater Adelaide engagement and subsequent publication was developed with stakeholders and the wider community. The final document is one that can be easily understood by the general public, AILA SA considers this a worthy model to replicate for broader engagement on the Guidelines.



Give the Guidelines a Place

- AILA SA believes a better connection needs to be made between the aspirations of the Guidelines and recently established targets, objectives and outcomes of the 30-Year Plan for Greater Adelaide – to elevate the Guidelines’ status.
- As a ‘public’ or community focused document, the Guidelines should establish aspirations and values with the community in the short term that can then be later interpreted through the Planning and Design Code. Currently the document appears too closely aligned with the technical needs of the Code, without promoting or explaining the need for Guidelines and the importance of design quality.

Technical Content

- AILA SA chooses not to provide a detailed response to each of the 6 headings, their description, performance outcomes, design suggestions or design solutions, but instead provides the following higher level comments.
- AILA SA is pleased to see a Chapter on Open Space and Landscape, as well as the inclusion of Private Open Space (Building Design) included in the Guidelines.
- AILA SA recommends the Guidelines be tailored to appeal to the general public, and promote aspirations than key performance standards.
- AILA SA believes the Guidelines could better inform ways that the design of the urban environment could adapt to a changing climate, as well as a lower carbon lifestyle.
- AILA SA acknowledges ‘Places for People’ and ‘Healthy by Design’ as two locally produced guidelines for the built environment that provide aspirations without prescription, and with demonstrated impact in the planning, design and implementation of a better built environment across South Australia

If ODASA wish to retain a focus on technical requirements, and in particular, if the guidelines are to translate into the detail of the proposed Planning and Design Code, AILA SA would be willing to assist with a further detailed critique of each of the technical recommendations of the Guidelines.

Conclusion

Adelaide was established from a legacy of good planning and design, starting with Colonel Light’s response to Adelaide’s natural conditions. The State Government’s recent update to the 30 Year Plan for Greater Adelaide sets forward a vision that builds on many of the unique characteristics of a lifestyle enjoyed by many across the Adelaide Plains. The Plan identifies directions, themes and targets for the next 30 years that will build on these characteristics and ensure Adelaide does not compromise the liveability of the cities, towns and suburbs. AILA SA is supportive of the State Government’s ambition to transform the State’s planning system, and is optimistic that the evolution will provide greater recognition for the importance of design quality and the need for greater collaboration amongst professions to achieve lasting change in the built environment.

The Design Guidelines are recognised as an important document to help begin to translate the wider strategic aspirations of the 30-Year Plan for Greater Adelaide into focused directions that can have a



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positive impact on local development and decision making. With so many pieces unresolved as the planning reform process continues to unfold, the Guidelines seem ambitious and perhaps are being unfairly judged without supporting information to set them in the hierarchy of strategic documents in the broader planning toolkit.

AILA SA understands the proposed Planning and Design Code aims to provide a more technical set of documents that can respond to the range of professions responsible for the design and assessment of the built environment, including the varying scale of development across South Australia. AILA SA remains willing to support DPTI and ODASA to develop the detail within the code.

AILA SA supports the development of Design Guidelines that target the level of detail tailored to the general public, that understand existing communities, that aligns with their values, and raises their aspirations, while challenging the premise that good design entails higher costs.

AILA SA hopes these comments are taken in good faith and looks forward to working collaboratively with the State Government on the emerging suite of Guidelines and on planning reform more generally in the future.

Please contact me if you have any questions or contact Sally Bolton – AILA SA State Manager by email - sally.bolton@aila.org.au if you require any additional information.

Yours Sincerely,

Ben Willsmore
AILA SA State President
4 August 2017