Not Sydney

THE COUNTRY AND REGIONAL ISSUE

REGIONAL PRACTICE
The battle for a better built environment

IN CONVERSATION
Peter Stutchbury
Tricia Helyar + Virginia Wong See

THE END OF THE LINE
Opportunities for the Newcastle rail corridor
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Sydney is so big and so important. The state government is based in Sydney, the big decisions are made there. And from this perspective it is very easy to see architecture as a big city profession. Yet there is a lot more to New South Wales that is not Sydney.

There has always been the romantic attitude to innovation and invention that we see evident in rural architecture, from the significant woobshiel structures to the ubiquitous Southern Cross windmill, and that has produced raw and honest architecture that continues to inspire many of our best architects. But beyond this romanticism is the understanding that developing a high quality built environment - design, place making and urban design - is just as relevant for country and regional areas of NSW, as it is for Sydney.

Regional architecture has to work with region specific issues, such as limitations of materials, resources and greater extremes in climate. There is also the bigger picture issue of the perception of architecture and the profession, with big city firms favoured for large-scale and prestigious work, while the smaller regional practices share what is left.

However, partnering in true collaboration between a larger city based firm and a smaller regional based firm should always be an option and has many benefits, including strengthening regional firms through giving them the experience on larger commissions that they need to win future work.

This issue of Architects Bulletin is dedicated to regional NSW architecture and architects so that we can delve into some of the stories that are not happening in Sydney.

Sarah Aldridge tackles the challenges for regional practices to find work locally and considers the Institute’s role in supporting members. We take a look at a new pilot program that tackles the challenges for regional NSW architecture and architects so that this issue of Architecture Bulletin is dedicated to regional NSW architecture and architects so that we can delve into some of the stories that are not happening in Sydney.

CHAPTER NEWS
Hannah McKissock-Davis
Andrew Nimmo

Glen Spicer is the director of EJE Architecture in Newcastle and the Gold Coast. He is the previous Chair of the Newcastle Division of the Institute and a member of Newcastle City Council’s Urban Design Consultative Group.

Professor Philip Cox AO is the founding partner of the multi award-winning practice, Cox Architects & Planners. He is a Professor of Architecture at the University of NSW.

Philip Dews was a trainee in the Government Architect’s Office while Leif Kristensen was there and wrote three books on the Sydney Opera House, including a biography of Utzon. He has published accounts of two other Prädikat Snape recipients along with individual studies of Australian architectural culture.

Mark Fenwick has 35 years of experience as an architect. He recently launched Placemark Consultants in Newcastle which specialises in heritage and cultural consultancy relating to architecture.

Penny Fuller is a founding partner of Sydney based design studio Silvester Fuller and Honorary Associate at University of Technology, Sydney in the Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building.

Dillon Kombumerri is the Principle Architect for Indigenous Design in the NSW Government Architect’s Office.

Caphe Kabanu is a registered architect at the NSW Government Architects Office with over 30 years’ project based experience.

Emma Lee has worked for TKD Architects since 2015, becoming an Associate with the practice in 2008 and Senior Associate in 2012. In 2015 Emma was nominated and accepted by the ARA as an APE Examiner.

Lisa Moone launched her own freelance design consultancy in 1991. She also manages the David Moore photographic archive and curates the occasional exhibition.

Andrew Nimmo is a director at lalumino architects and an adjunct professor for the Faculty of Architecture Design and Planning at the University of Sydney. He is the Chair of the NSW Chapter Editorial Committee.

Jad Silvester is a founding partner of Sydney based design studio Silvester Fuller and co-director of digital design and fabrication studio Laminar.
The previous issue of this journal focused on the strategic potential of architecture and design to influence the massive transformation that is taking place in the Greater Sydney region. This issue presents a balancing view of the equal importance of the positive effect of our members’ work in regional towns and cities. Although I wasn’t able to attend the presentation of this year’s Country Division Awards, a glance at the handsome printed record of the event confirms me that the work of regional architects is the equal of any in the state. Every intervention of design sensibility into regional domestic and public spaces is an advertisement for the benign influence of architecture and its positive effects on human well-being.

Well done to everyone involved. Keep up the good work.

There has been progress on a number of fronts in the big picture built environment space recently, particularly:

**Coalition for NSW Planning Reform**

This loose grouping of like-minded built environment organisations, including ourselves, PIA, AILA, the Property Council and the Sydney Business Chamber, first came together in August 2007 to lobby the then Labor government. We had several wins along the way – the delegation of major project assessments to regional planning authorities.

The coalition is therefore proposing that Minister Stokes moves quickly to implement these reforms while also laying the groundwork for the eventual re-introduction of the new planning bill.

**Greater Sydney Commission**

While welcoming the government’s recent announcement of the shape of the Greater Sydney Commission, I note that design is conspicuously absent from the scheme. I have written to the Department of Planning and Environment recommending four inter-related proposals:

- **Built Environment Committee**
  As the principal focus of the Commission’s work is the re-configuration of the built environment of the region we have recommended the creation of a built environment committee sitting alongside the Commission’s other committees to focus on this essential task.

- **Observer status for the Government Architect’s Office (GAO)**
  It is clear that the GAO will be adopting a more strategic role in the future, giving it the opportunity to provide advice on the achievement of design excellence across government and public sector agencies. It would share observer status with Infrastructure NSW and UrbanGrowth NSW.

- **Design review panel**
  The Commission’s Sydney Planning Panel will determine major developments currently assessed by the Sydney East and West Joint Regional Planning Panels. We therefore propose a design review panel to provide both strategic advice and design advice on specific development proposals to the panel, following the procedures outlined in the SEPP 65 Apartment Design Guide. We recommend that the panel is chaired by the GAO, as is currently the process in South Australia.

**Shaun Carter**

NSW President

There was broad community and industry acceptance of the White Paper reforms, specifically in areas such as strategic planning, community participation and infrastructure delivery. It was mainly in the area of development assessment that the major differences and contentions arose.

**CHAPTER NEWS**

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  - **Proposed**
    - **Design review panel**

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    - **Observer status for the Design Review Panel**

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 Newfoundland Division

The Newfoundland Division has had another active quarter providing services to our 300 members. For so far this year, the Newfoundland Division has held 17 local events for our members, with all being well received and attended.

Our ArchiMEET CPD event was held at the Newfoundland Museum this month and 50 members attended. Also, the Newfoundland Division PALS Course was held again this year and the course has been well supported by our members seeking architectural registration.

Day Two saw Hannah Teile and David Trevalia provide inspiration for exceptional yet modest local buildings born from collaborative working practices, an understanding of place and strong client relationships. Andrew Burns wrapped up the final day with the question, “How can you respond to a place you don’t understand?” and reflecting the core Country Division belief that good regional practices have a bright future in the impending expansion of our regional towns and cities.

Sarah Eltridge Chair, Country Division

CRONE Architects

The construction of the Orange Regional Museum is now well under way, with the base building component due for completion in December 2015. CRONE Architects’ vision will respectfully integrate a new building within the existing Civic Precinct while strengthening current public domain conditions within the site.

The design, which has been strongly supported by the local community, will house a new contemporary museum and cultural centre space along with visitor’s information and café.

The museum will celebrate the history of the greater Orange Region through both temporary and permanent exhibition spaces.

CRONE Architects are working on several significant regional NSW projects. At Charles Sturt University in Wagga Wagga and Albury, traditional learning spaces have been adapted and redesigned, to embrace the latest in digital learning and encourage flexible, adaptable, collaborative learning spaces which facilitate the latest pedagogical teaching practices.

Also in Wagga Wagga, the development and expansion of the Courthouse continues and stage one is due for completion in early 2016. This project to expand the court complex to meet the current and projected needs has responded to the architectural character of the original building and presents a positive and lasting transformation of a significant civic facility.

At Goombooroo station outside Tarmouth, TKD Architects have been involved in a series projects since 2007. The current project sees the introduction of large new buildings and the transformation and adaptive reuse of the historic wool store and shearing shed to accommodate a new hospitality and events venue.
Regional Practice

As Chair of the Institute’s NSW Country Division, Sarah Aldridge is acutely aware of the challenges that the profession faces in the regions. She takes a look at how the figures stack up and where the opportunities for engagement may lie.

Approximately 20% of NSW members’ practices are located outside the metropolitan area of Sydney. Of that 20%, approximately 10% operate in the Newcastle and Central Coast areas with the remaining 10% scattered across the rest of the state. These figures reveal quite a small number of practices that do not rely on work in Sydney or Newcastle for their living. This small minority faces an array of challenges when it comes to finding work and public perception of the profession.

So how do we raise awareness in regional areas about the value of architecture to the built environment with a limited or non-existent architectural presence? The low number of architects practising in regional communities, particularly west of the dividing range, is partly symptomatic of the general difficulty in attracting professionals to inland rural communities, but is also related to a lack of sustainable workload. It is unsurprising then that many regional practitioners are found in clusters along the east coast where the larger population centres and stable employment are located.

EMPLOYING LOCALLY

Bearing in mind the lack of regional universities offering architectural education, all regional practitioners have studied, and often lived and worked, in cities across Australia and abroad. It is strange therefore that the perception of regional practitioners as being low-skilled and unable to deliver complex projects, often persists.

The use of city architects for many regional projects endangers the viability of regional architects. If all the high budget, high profile projects are the domain of city architects, what future is there for regional architects? Of course the small size of most regional practices restricts their production capacity, but in collaboration with a larger city practice the regional practice is of huge benefit to a project. The involvement of a local architect, with the advantage of local knowledge and geographical proximity, on all regional projects would go a long way to providing a core workload for regional practitioners.

So apart from practice size, what are the barriers to regional practices winning these prime commissions? To be able to tender for public works, however modest, practices are often required to hold $20 million of PI insurance, have formal QA certification and written OHS documents, and have experience working for a public body on projects of a similar nature. Most regional practices are unable to fulfill these criteria, even though they may be capable of doing the work. The BER scheme attracted plenty of criticism, this was largely directed at the project management fees for public schools, not the architects of the independent school projects or the buildings they delivered.

But why is it important to retain and nurture the presence of regional architects? According to a recent article by Matt Wade in the Sydney Morning Herald more than two thirds of Australia’s population lives in one of the seven major cities, with more than 40% living in either Sydney or Melbourne. Compare this to Japan where according to IMF figures less than 10% of Japan’s population lives in Tokyo.

Cost vs Quality

In areas where there is the desire to engage an architect, there are still significant economic factors at play. With the high costs of land and construction relative to the market value of a completed development, the spotlight often falls on architects’ fees as a potential area of cost saving. And rather than looking to shave a bit off the architects’ fees, the service of an architect becomes more attainable to a larger proportion of the community, thus raising the impact of architects on the built environment.

In August of this year the NSW government launched Jobs for NSW an initiative to direct $190m of funds to areas of NSW that will provide the greatest economic impact in terms of job creation. A minimum of 30% of this fund will be directed to regional areas. Surely this is something that we need to be involved with to ensure that some of these funds are directed towards architects and job creation in the construction industry? It is clear that regional practice will be crucial to the necessary expansion of our regional economy. We just need to make sure that we do a good enough job that our future regional towns do not inspire another volume of Robin Boyd’s The Australian Ugliness.

Bearing in mind the lack of regional education our future regional towns do not inspire another volume of Robin Boyd’s The Australian Ugliness.

Sarah Aldridge
Directo, SPHCEstudio
Chair, NSW Country Division Committee, Australian Institute of Architects

In The Future

But is this enough? Other professions seem to be able to attract significant government funding to encourage employment in regional and rural areas. The Department of Health offers the General Practice Rural Incentive Program where GPs working in rural areas are paid an annual incentive of up to $60,000, depending on the location of their practice.

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The Institute

So what are we doing as an Institute to address some of the issues affecting regional architects? The Division has established a Special Projects grant program to fund initiatives by regional members that promote the value of architecture to the community. Country Division runs seminars and workshops across the state throughout the year on topics of regional interest, often in conjunction with a free public event such as Architects on Show or a public exhibition. This kind of grass roots advocacy helps raise awareness of architects and the positive impact they can have on communities. Country Division also runs awards programs, the entry for which are exhibited online and around the state to the public. The awards categories are tailored to respond to the type of work being carried out by regional practices, for example promoting low cost housing with an award for project under $350,000 and the Vision Award for visionary projects that push the boundaries of regional architecture.

The Australian Ugliness

Chair, NSW Country Division Committee, Australian Institute of Architects

Footnotes

1. Based on AIA NSW membership figures from November 2015.
2. The problems with Sydney and Melbourne, that’s just too big, Matt Wade, Sydney Morning Herald, 7 November 2015.
4. Details of this year’s grant recipients can be found on the Institute’s website: architecture.com.au/country/state/nsw/awards
Newcastle's built environment has changed significantly over the past 40 years and the heavy rail line had become a barrier between the two halves of the city: the old CBD Hunter Street (the longest main street in the country) and the Honeysuckle mixed use precinct (consisting of modern commercial buildings, restaurants, bars and a large number of residential apartments).

With only two vehicular crossings from the western end of Newcastle to the end of the rail line at Newcastle Station and only four pedestrian overpasses, the inconvenience for thousands crossing the line on a daily basis had become intolerable. The small number of passengers travelling on the trains for the last two stops encouraged the NSW Government to truncate the line back to Wickham and replace it with a new light rail system and a station located at the emerging business district in Newcastle West.

Since the truncation of the heavy rail line in 2014, steady growth has begun in Newcastle West focused around the new Newcastle Train Station. This allows the old CBD east of Civic to gentrify into the city’s premium mixed use residential quarter with its tree lined streets, boutique businesses, heritage architecture and a beach lifestyle to boot. Already several of the older commercial buildings have been redeveloped into Newcastle Station and only four pedestrian overpasses, the inconvenience for thousands crossing the line on a daily basis had become intolerable. The small number of passengers travelling on the trains for the last two stops encouraged the NSW Government to truncate the line back to Wickham and replace it with a new light rail system and a station located at the emerging business district in Newcastle West.

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In October Chapter Council went on the road and landed in Bathurst, coinciding with the NSW Country Division Awards night and four day conference. During my time in Bathurst I also attended the Country Division AGM where I heard about the Special Projects Grant program. The grant funds come from money set aside by the Country Division over a number of years, with the aim of providing an avenue for members to promote the profession of architecture in regional NSW as well as to engage with the AIA. The funds on offer are not enormous, $14,000 per year, but the projects are required to be completed and funds expended within the calendar year.

This year they received 11 applications and divided the available funds between two proposals, Cameron Anderson’s application entitled Architects OUTback and Brent Dunn’s Architect OUTback.

Anderson’s proposal caught my attention, as it seemed to distill some of the unique issues critical to practicing architecture in the country. There are great swathes of regional NSW where there are no permanent architects in practice. It is not that the people are not interested in architecture or do not have a need for the services of an architect. It is just that many country towns simply do not generate enough continuous work to sustain an architectural practice. This in turn leads to an assumption that architects are not available or interested in working in these areas, and opportunities are lost to the mediocrity of project homes and amateur designers. It provides a feedback where the bar for design is set low, and remains low.

In these remote areas potential architectural projects will also be heavily influenced by the seasonal ups and downs of farming, where projects may need to be put on hold for a number of years until conditions improve. Thus project timeframes may also be very different than in the city, but that does not mean that the client has lost interest, it is just that time has a different pace.

Anderson’s proposal is for a “design advisory and research program that aims to promote the value of architecture and architect related services in the Western Country/Outback regions of NSW that currently do not benefit from permanent architectural representation.”

It is intended as a pilot program designed to test the demand for architectural services and to market what it is that architects do. It includes a free design advisory service to provide initial advice on options, feasibility, construction, sustainability and authority regulations. The proposal is for two architects from different practices to head up the initial pilot.

For the initial program an architectural road trip is planned starting in Mudgee where Anderson practices, moving through Coonabarabran, Coonamble, Walgett and ending in Bourke.

Moving forward, Anderson sees the program developing into a permanent initiative enabling architects to service a large number of regional centres where the initial advice might be pro-bono, with travel and expenses funded through other avenues, including strategic alliances with local councils and community groups.

The proposal is also to collect data and research that could assist the Country Division in understanding how to provide an on-going architectural service where there are no permanent local registered architects.

While free design advice and data collection is the proposal, the aim is very practical – to pick up clients and projects, and to market the services of the architects.

Anderson painted a picture for me of a regular architectural road trip where the architect touches base with a number of on-going clients and their project needs. Each project in itself would not be sustainable for the architect to service, however when grouped together as part of a series of rolling consultations, the aim is to ultimately make them viable.

The proposal is idealistic but also very practical, and potentially provides an avenue for architectural services that is currently overlooked.

Andrew Nimmo
Director, lahznimmo architects

FOOTNOTES
1. Cameron Anderson, Architects OUTback, NSW Country Division AIA - 2015 Special Projects

Andrew Nimmo takes a look at a new pilot program that has been awarded funding to bring architectural services to remote areas of NSW.
Tricia Helyar: I grew up on the north coast of New South Wales but went to university in Sydney and practiced there for about 20 years. I had always intended to go back to the coast but it takes a while to establish yourself and then the cycle of jobs tends to lock you in for two-three years. But there came a crystal moment in my practice about five years ago when I was between clients and thought if I didn’t go now I will have to wait at least another three years for an opportunity. So I moved to Bellingen. Moving there felt like coming home.

Virginia Wong See: My partner Hamish and I are a bit similar to Tricia in that we weren’t originally from Sydney. I had grown up in Canberra and Hamish had grown up in exhibition housing. I stayed in Sydney for 30 years but never intended to live there for that long! Our reasons for leaving Sydney were part family lifestyle and part practice. Our daughter is a keen horse rider and this started taking us out of the city every weekend – until at a certain point we looked at each other and thought what are we doing, should we be living somewhere else.

Now I work four days a week and go horse riding every Wednesday. Horse riding is my best design day and very important to let me think. So it was a lifestyle choice, but the other reason was that we had been working in Sydney on a lot of similar projects for a long time. Terrace renovations seemed to be the core of our work, and while there was plenty of it, it was all quite similar. Our work outside Sydney now offers a lot more variety.

“Terrace renovations seemed to be the core of our work, and while there was plenty of it, it was all quite similar. Our work outside Sydney now offers a lot more variety.”

Virginica Wong See

Virginia Helyar: The further inland you go the easier it probably is to establish yourself. In the beginning we took whatever came in; a sundek or veranda extension; but within 12 months we started to get some larger projects. We don’t advertise. In smaller environments people know each other – for example we went to Moree for one project and came back with four. It’s been four years now and we have great variety, mainly residential and some community work, but we still do the little projects if people ask for them. In the regions you tend to become more of a general practitioner; you really feel like you are free to help people in the community.

Tricia: There is also a very supportive environment in the regions between architects. There are times when work is a bit slow but when we get together, even the four other practices in Bellingen, it’s a collegiate environment. We are competing, but not really.

Virginia: We have had the same experience. There are four of us in Armidale but we are all offering very different services so it doesn’t really feel like we are competing. If a job come in and we weren’t comfortable with it you could refer to the other architects quite easily. Country Division has also been an incredibly supportive environment for me in this regard. I didn’t even know it existed and I felt a bit suspicious at first, but the organisation itself made up of a really helpful, friendly group of people. It’s actually fun to attend the annual conference and one of the main reasons I go is to catch up with friends.

Callantha: What is the nature of work in regional areas, can you talk a bit about the challenges, differences and rewards?

Virginia: The budgets available for projects are a lot lower than they are in Sydney. Our work is very accessible - we have never worked on a house over a million dollars. All of our buildings can be built by local builders because we are offering very cost-effective construction methods. People generally have a greater awareness of what things are worth and expect value for money. Farmers are very practical in the way they look at things. If you show them a £2,000 you are going to be laughed at. Property prices are not what they are in Sydney and it is easy to overcapitalise. For this reason we always talk about an exit strategy with our clients. If something happens in their lives and they can’t afford to keep the building we don’t think they should be paying back £100,000 for a building they don’t own anymore.

Tricia: The demographics on the north coast are quite different to the big properties on the western plains. The retirees I am working with are predominantly young, have been successful in their careers and sold out of Sydney for a tree-change. Existing housing stock is not of great quality so they are either adding on or knocking down and rebuilding. They are conscious they are overcapitalising but they don’t intend to leave their houses and so for them it is a lot of expense. At the other end of the spectrum affordability is a huge factor. You hear of people extreme measures people take to get into the housing market, for example living in their car for a couple of years whilst they are working or studying to save a deposit. One of the issues in Bellingen is that there is not enough diversity in housing stock. Much of what is available is three or four bedroom houses and there aren’t enough smaller places available for people to enter the market.

Virginia: The affordable housing award is also a really important category. It seems to be hard for architects to tell the truth about budgets but it’s something we need to learn to talk about. We have built our own projects and know how much things cost and how precious money is. When you look at the way some architects design, really

Virginia: There are a few of us who probably don’t do affordable housing, but there are probably more architects on the North Coast than there is demand. It’s been around five years, but I still need Sydney work and have a Sydney office.

Tricia: When we get together, even the four other practices in Bellingen, it’s a collegiate environment. We are competing, but not really.

Virginia: There is a huge amount of work out there that people are unaware of. Every country town has work and whether it’s private, community or public buildings, there’s plenty of work across the country. It is easier for architects to work in regional areas – even collaboratively – we will end up with much stronger regional design outcomes within the built environment overall.

Callantha: What do you think about the future of practice in the regions?

Virginia: There is also a very supportive environment in the regions between architects. There are times when work is a bit slow but when we get together, even the four other practices in Bellingen, it’s a collegiate environment. We are competing, but not really.

Tricia Helyar

Callantha: I find it interesting that our work is so diverse. Callantha: What do you think about the future of practice in the regions?

Virginia: There is the capacity to develop these relationships.

For a full transcript of this interview please visit architecturebulletin.com.au. 
IN FOCUS

Closing the Gap in Country

The Aboriginal Child and Family Centre building program, facilitated by the NSW Government Architect’s Office, is championing the role of architecture in supporting regional communities. Dillon Kombumerri and Cathy Kubang discuss their latest award winning project.

With next year’s International Architecture Biennale in Venice bringing attention to the widening gap between architecture and society there is growing concern that architecture is losing relevancy – as Alejandro Aravena proposes, “architecture has in recent decades been transformed into spectacle on the one hand, yet made dispensable on the other”.1

In light of this critique, the recent efforts of the Government Architect’s Office (GAO) in regional NSW provide an interesting juncture of design, function and community. In 2011 the GAO was engaged by Family and Community Services to develop design guidelines for a unique program of Aboriginal Child and Family Centres (ACFC) within NSW. This program was to be used as an essential tool for Aboriginal community consultation, brief definition and to benchmark design concepts.

The six ACFCs designed by GAO that followed are a result of the 2008 Closing the Gap initiative, a strategy that aims to reduce Indigenous disadvantage with respect to life expectancy, child mortality, access to early childhood education, educational achievement, and employment outcomes. This strategy was pivotal in overcoming shortfalls of past one size fits all government interventions.

As part of this building program, Indigenous team leader Dillon Kombumerri, established a collaborative design studio which included both Indigenous and non-Indigenous project architects. In order to provide a trusted first contact with the Local Reference Groups (LRGs), the GAO’s Michael Mussman, also of Indigenous heritage, acted as the LRG liaison contact - an important initiative to recognise the particular communication needs of the various communities involved.

One product of the program is the Gunnedah ACFC, designed by the GAO’s Cathy Kubang which won this year’s Blacket Prize. The centre is named Winanga-Li, a Kamilaroi word meaning to hear, to listen, to remember. Reflecting this ethos the centre provides an early start diagnosis service with access to a range of specialists; it serves the Indigenous and mainstream community. The service includes parent education, family support, health programs, cultural programs and referral to specialist services. The childcare centre is similarly open to the general public however it also incorporates traditional language and culture.

All six ACFCs have been designed with a strong reference to place within a culturally welcoming environment. One of the biggest challenges was overcoming an understandable level of scepticism that this project could deliver on its Closing the Gap aspirations given the well documented history of failed government interventions on similar initiatives.

“One of the biggest challenges was overcoming an understandable level of scepticism that this project could deliver on its Closing the Gap aspirations given the well documented history of failed government interventions on similar initiatives.”

overcoming an understandable level of scepticism that this project could deliver on its Closing the Gap aspirations given the well documented history of failed government interventions on similar initiatives.

Winanga-Li’s plan form took shape from reference to the Walaby Trap, a landscape element beneath Forespine Hill, which features in local Indigenous history. The topography of sacred hills erupting from the surrounding plains nearby has been reflected in roof forms and exterior building colour. The entry forecourt encloses an existing tree which harbours a yarning circle. The central social and information community hub forms the main entry and is located between the childcare and family health facilities. The building is orientated north, overlooking dressage arenas located next to the showground and a community garden.

Acknowledgement to community has seen the incorporation of a gathering/yarning area defined by the poplar leafed eucalypt at the front. This tree offers shade and temperature moderation in what can be a scorchingly hot climate. There is a level of connectedness between the facilities for both childcare and family health and the entry allowing viewing in and out. The childcare kitchen also opens to the front decked area to cater to gatherings and celebrations. The community gathering areas can also operate when the centre is closed. The hub connection between childcare and family health facilities is an important focus, not only securing access to the childcare, but a place where information about services and programs is disseminated. This is also a place of celebration and display of local Indigenous cultural items.

A magnificent possum fur cloak, typical of ceremonial occasions, is disseminated. This is also a place of celebration and display of local Indigenous cultural items. A magnificent possum fur cloak, typical of ceremonial occasions, is also a place of celebration and display of local Indigenous cultural items.

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still used in naming ceremonies is exhibited within the family health centre.

The childcare playrooms have been designed to open to generous north facing verandahs and outdoor play areas. The verandahs have been enhanced with coloured blades at ceiling level. Where possible windows have been set at child-height so that the children can engage with the comings and goings of the centre and community gathering spaces. Conversely visitors can view into the childcare area.

A humble budget resulted in a strategy to reinvent traditional low cost construction materials and methods to deliver a welcoming, simply but thoughtfully detailed, purpose designed non institutional building. It is domestic scale constructed of lightweight materials maximising use of local products where possible. Available materials - timber framing, metal and fibrous cement cladding and metal roofing - have been creatively used to provide shade and colour.

A significant component of Closing the Gap is to achieve commitment and buy in from the local community. The GAO worked to achieve genuine grass roots consultation throughout the design process. At times this required the project architect to step aside and provide opportunities for the local community to control decision making. For example, in the case of Winanga-Li the LRG controlled furniture selection and purchase from local suppliers – a service which the GAO would normally include. Winanga-Li is also separately managing procurement of additions to accommodate additional functions of out of hours school care. This is seen as an affirmation of confidence through community ownership.

The success of any project is only as good as the team involved. The GAO was very fortunate to be able to collaborate with the local community led by Wayne Griffith, the local Elder and Manager of Winanga-Li, and the Department of Family and Community Services project manager Lance Bright. Griffith recently commented on the local community’s embracing of the Gunnedah ACFC, “[it] has certainly met the brief of becoming a place of belonging for our Kamilaroi children and their families … In the seven months since we commenced operating, we have supported over 300 community members, formed over 30 formal and informal partnerships with service providers most of whom work out of our centre, and our early learning and child care service has been fully enrolled and has a waiting list – clear evidence that the centre is accepted by our community.”

Cathy Kubany, Project Architect and Dillon Kombumerri, Expertise Leader Architectural Services

**FOOTNOTES**

1. Alejandro Aravena (by AD editorial team), Arch Daily, 18 July 2015

**Government Architect’s Office on**

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**NSW Aboriginal Child and Family Centre Gunnedah, NSW Government Architect’s Office.**

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**NSW Aboriginal Child and Family Centre Gunnedah, NSW Government Architect’s Office.**
The Blacket Prize

In 1964 the Blacket Prize was introduced by the NSW Chapter to recognise buildings erected in country NSW. This timeline illustrates the six winning projects designed by architects based outside of Sydney. Despite the award’s focus on regional architecture, the Blacket Prize has been predominantly awarded to Sydney-based practices.

1960
Taree Technical College, Taree
NSW Government Architect Mr E H Farmer
1965
C.B. Alexander Presbyterian Agricultural College, Tocal, Paterson
Ian McKay & Philip Cox (Architects in Association)

1961
The Rothbury Estate Winery, Pokolbin
P. Dobson Allen, Jack + Cottier. Architects, partner in charge Keith Cottier
1966
Clubba Hall Frensham School, Mittagong
Allan, Jack + Cottier
1962
Union Building, University of Newcastle
Ancher, Mortlock, Murray & Woolley

1963
Two Houses, Mt Irvine
Glenn Murcutt
1967
Staff House, University of Newcastle
Ancher, Mortlock, Murray & Woolley

1964
Taree Technical College, Taree
NSW Government Architect Mr E H Farmer
1968
Warren Library
Edwards Madigan Torzillo & Partners

1965
C.B. Alexander Presbyterian Agricultural College, Tocal, Paterson
Ian McKay & Philip Cox (Architects in Association)
1969
Union Building, University of Newcastle
Ancher, Mortlock, Murray & Woolley

1966
Clubba Hall Frensham School, Mittagong
Allan, Jack + Cottier
1970
The Rothbury Estate Winery, Pokolbin
P. Dobson Allen, Jack + Cottier. Architects, partner in charge Keith Cottier

1967
Union Building, University of Newcastle
Ancher, Mortlock, Murray & Woolley
1971
Suters Residence, Newcastle (own house)
Brian Suters

1968
Joint Winners: Albury Government Offices, Albury
NSW Government Architect Mr E H Farmer
1972
Two Houses, Mt Irvine
Glenn Murcutt

1969
Staff House, University of Newcastle
Ancher, Mortlock, Murray & Woolley
1973
The Anchorage, Terrigal
Allan Jack + Cottier Partnership

1970
The Rothbury Estate Winery, Pokolbin
P. Dobson Allen, Jack + Cottier. Architects, partner in charge Keith Cottier
1974
Design Faculty Building, University of Newcastle
Stutchbury and Pape/EJE Architecture

1971
Aboriginal Cultural Museum, Brewarrina
NSW Government Architect L D Kelly
1975
The Anchorage, Terrigal
Allan Jack + Cottier Partnership

1972
Matcham House, Matcham
Robert Pulsar, Kendale Architect Design Pty Ltd [Gooford]
1976
Claremont residence, Bellingen
Stutchbury and Pape Partnership

1973
Wyong Courthouse, Wyong
Lindsay Kelly and Rebecca Hearty, Government Architect.
PWD, in association with Campbell Luscombe Associates
1977
The Anchorage, Terrigal
Allan Jack + Cottier Partnership

1974
Design Faculty Building, University of Newcastle
Stutchbury and Pape/EJE Architecture
1978
The Anchorage, Terrigal
Allan Jack + Cottier Partnership

1975
Aboriginal Cultural Museum, Brewarrina
NSW Government Architect L D Kelly
1979
Deepwater Woolshed, Wagga Wagga
NSW Government Architect’s Office

1976
Claremont residence, Bellingen
Stutchbury and Pape Partnership
1980
Suters Residence, Newcastle (own house)
Brian Suters

1977
Farmhouse, Kempsey
Glenn Murcutt
1981
Kronenberg House, Killcare
Alec Tzannes Associates

1978
Kronenberg House, Killcare
Alec Tzannes Associates
1982
Shellharbour Workers Club, Shellharbour
Caroline Plcock Architects + Richard Goodwin Architects

1979
Dangar Island House (own house)
Terry Dorrough Architect [Dangar Island]
1983
Bangalay, Upper Kangaroo Valley
Stutchbury & Pape

1980
Deepwater Woolshed, Wagga Wagga
NSW Government Architect’s Office
1984
Garangula Gallery, Harden
Fender Katsalidis Mirams Architects

1981
House for 5, Dudley
Rod Seymour Architects Pty Ltd [Newcastle]
1985
NSW Aboriginal Child and Family Centre, Gunnedah
NSW Government Architect’s Office

1982
Kronenberg House, Killcare
Alec Tzannes Associates
1986
Claremont residence, Bellingen
Stutchbury and Pape Partnership

1983
Birabahn Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander Centre University of Newcastle
Richard Leplastrier, Peter Stutchbury and Sue Harper
1987
Glasshouse, Hastings Cultural Centre, Port Macquarie
Tonkin Zulaikha Greer

1984
Shellharbour Workers Club, Shellharbour
Caroline Plcock Architects + Richard Goodwin Architects
1988
NSW Aboriginal Child and Family Centre, Gunnedah
NSW Government Architect’s Office

1985
Deepwater Woolshed, Wagga Wagga
NSW Government Architect’s Office
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Dangar Island House (own house)
Terry Dorrough Architect [Dangar Island]

1986
Bangalay, Upper Kangaroo Valley
Stutchbury & Pape
1990
Blue Mountains River Run, Magalang
Valley Mason Architects [Dora Creek]

1987
Shelharbour Workers Club, Shellharbour
Caroline Plcock Architects + Richard Goodwin Architects
1991
Kalkite House, Snowy Mountains
James Stockell Architect

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Fender Katsalidis Mirams Architects

2012
Garangula Gallery, Harden
Fender Katsalidis Mirams Architects
2016
Garangula Gallery, Harden
Fender Katsalidis Mirams Architects
Shaun Carter (SC): Your philosophy of architecture seems to fundamentally relate to site and place. You, more than most, seek a fundamental understanding of country. Deepwater Woolshed might be considered a revolutionary building in regards to the woolshed type, but I suspect you really just thought about it from that position that you approach all your architecture. Would that be a fair thing to say?

Peter Stutchbury (PS): Deepwater Woolshed, in many ways, was a key project for our team. It helped validate our process along with revealing the unpretentious aesthetic of accurate integrated decisions. I was fortunate to work with Sacha Zehnder on this project.

We spent three days at the site, and it was good that we did because the prevailing breezes that come down from the north-east turn on a small mountain called Mount Albert near the site then coming in from the west is very unexpected. So we had to design the wool shed according to some very precise site conditions and then we just basically looked at the patterns of the site. Growing up on the family farm I had an understanding of the functional nature of a shearing shed.

So we systematically went through the building and made functional decisions about its workings. And in a funny way it got to the point where the functional decisions were providing the aesthetic qualities, there was a wonderful sympathy between the two. It was never a competition of thoughts and to me it was quite a revelation - a step up in design, not a step down. It was the opportunity to design a building, the way one truly understands how to design a building, which no one has ever really assessed.

One of the shears came up to me and said, “Do you have any idea how beautiful it is to use this?” In the morning we get the sun and in the afternoon we get the shade, he said, “It’s perfect.” And we put the water tanks on the south-east corner where there’s the most shade and you make those decisions. And they seem obvious, but it’s the way you inform a building and the building benefits from that, that’s the great lesson. In terms of making architecture there is another special thing, which I think is wisdom - which is the one thing we all struggle to find.

I think as you move into a more public building or private residence the ambitions of those decisions is the understanding of scale and light. That’s the ambition. That functional strategy is really interesting. For instance, we put the shearer’s rest area on the north-east corner. So it had the morning sun, but it didn’t have the afternoon sun because it can be bloody hot.

I think that functional strategy is really interesting. For instance, we put the shearer’s rest area on the north-east corner. So it had the morning sun, but it didn’t have the afternoon sun because it can be bloody hot.

So you’re designing woolsheds for people and sheep, rather than just getting the wool off them. It seems a more empathetic way of designing. You mentioned that it taught you a few lessons as you went along. Could you tell us about those lessons, and could perhaps some of the functional or programmatic elements that you needed to solve inform an architectural language. Would that be accurate?

PS: Exactly right. What I learnt (without trying to learn it), what I discovered really, was that if you’re forthcoming enough to make clear, clear decisions, your architectural skill will negotiate those into architecture. You don’t need to make an architectural decision first, you can make it as part of the process of making or designing the building. So, if the early decisions are clear, strong and functional decisions the later decisions seemed to belong in harmony; rather than sing out of tune.

I think you are going to have to relearn them all. Functional decisions are the understanding of scale and light. That’s the ambition. That functional strategy is really interesting.

PS: That is what makes sense to me. I don’t get style. I can’t manage or follow that method. Country, I’m starting to appreciate that language: “It is what it is.” Once I started to understand that construct, I learnt how to see it upwards. That each one of us is better than the last. Which is not how the Aboriginal see it, they don’t see it as better or worse, but as a refinement, getting cleaner and clearer. It is something Western culture doesn’t seem to understand, we miss the fundamental process of respect.

SC: One’s infinite and one is finite. You are looking to the fundamental concepts rather than style?

PS: That is what makes sense to me. I don’t get style. I can’t manage or follow that method. Country, I’m starting to appreciate that language: “It is what it is.” Once I started to understand that construct, I learnt how to see it. Putting people up in tall towers and expecting them to have an integrated urban life is not how I think it should happen. Take Paris, Paris urban life is maximum six stories, street contact is maintained.

SC: It is a very civilized way of living in Paris.

PS: Yes, very civilized. Copenhagen very civilized. St Petersburg very civilized. They all have a scale which is visually manageable. So my regional work, the inland work, the desert work they’re all connected, but they’re all different because the places are all emotionally different … I talk about place, and I talk about managing it and understanding it and making sure the building negotiates the challenges of belonging, it’s poetry. And that is also what happened with the wool shed: the new wool shed we are doing at Armidale it is different from the one we did at Wagga Wagga.

SC: It’s a different place.

PS: It’s different country and so our functional response remains but our qualitative response

I talk about place, and I talk about managing it and understanding it and making sure the building negotiates the challenges of belonging, it’s poetry.
differ. Using the same technical aspects, but moderating how it sits and manages its local environment.

SC: If I look at the wool shed; at the hangar and it seems to give you a great liberty. Having followed your work for many years, I feel like you know better than most about the elemental nature of putting a building together. Not just pure construction – you can get that from a book – but fundamentally understanding how you can look at a material or a proprietary item and you can think of many different ways to use them. The chicken-house louvres for example, your ability to make, compose and put things together. It gives you a great licence to be inventive.

PS: That’s a really interesting comment. I did a talk on this the other day, on elemental - when you manage the elemental, the advantage is experimentation.

SC: I guess being elemental and fundamental is about knowing the rules. Once you know and understand those rules, you can break them.

PS: If you don’t understand prose and punctuation, then your poetry makes less sense. Perhaps it can be distilled to one word, and that word is respect. Once we learn to respect the land and people, I think our work and our nature - the nature of who we are - becomes incredibly responsible. It’s not sustainability we should be aiming for it is responsibility.

For a full transcript of this interview please visit architecturebulletin.com.au
Reinventing the Town Hall

Civic buildings have historically provided an architectural backbone to many regional communities, but over time this role has been diluted or lost, and many no longer retain their original purpose. Mark Fenwick takes a look at recent developments in Maitland and Lismore, where the town hall is being remodelled.

The town hall is often at the civic heart of a town, and in regional areas it would make sense for this place for community congregation to prevail, set in many regions the influence of these buildings has waned. Along with the privatisation of the postal service and the repurposing of banks, our regional communities (like the cities) have lost many of the civic buildings that originally served them.

Historically the town hall was seen as a place for the decision makers’ orations, for musical and dance performances, debate halls and the walls, fundraising events, perhaps a pipe organ, emergency relief, protests, elections and free speech. Town halls located in NSW grew in number but then often filled with administrative functions, over flowing into other buildings and limiting community use. Later, in the mid-20th century many sat idle, looking for a new use after local government areas were merged and centralised.

Two halls recently looking to reinvent themselves are Maitland Town Hall and Lismore City Hall. Both places are regional centres, both on a river with a history of destructive floods and both amalgamated with neighbouring areas then proclaimed as a city, Maitland in 1945 and Lismore in 1946.

Maitland Town Hall

In the late 19th century the West Maitland Municipal Council advertised a design competition for a centennial hall, attracting thirty-five entries. These were judged by George McKenzie of Newcastle (once Thelander, Deamer & McKenzie of Maitland and Newcastle) This Brutalist structure was set back from and apart from the original building, but connected to it at first floor level by a concrete and glass walled bridge. In 1890 the hall was licensed for public entertainment and proceedings, the stage was finished in 1891. A wide range of cultural and social events made it a focal point for West Maitland and its hinterland. Since these years the hall has hosted Dame Nellie Melba in 1909, Paderewski, Nellie Stewart in 1911, boxing in the 1930s, Maitland Repertory Society, the local Gilberts and Sullivan Society, dance and supper nights, vaccinations, flood relief, flower shows, public meetings, vaudeville, choirs, Meals-on-Wheels and politicians including Edmund Barton in 1898 and Robert Menzies in 1961.

The council chambers are still used by council for regular meetings and the smaller ancillary rooms are in regular use by community and training groups. The town hall has a flat floor auditorium with a moderate sized stage, regularly hired for use as a dance hall, function, exhibition space, school exams, ceremonies, assembly room and occasionally as a performance space. The auditorium floor is a rare surviving example of a fully sprung timber floor, excellent for dancing.

The current project to upgrade the auditorium and performance space is a collaboration between the council and the Government Architect’s Office, who also have provided specialist heritage services. It is being funded ($2 million) by the NSW Government through the Hunter Infrastructure and Investment Fund. The scope for the auditorium includes the stage house upgrade for safety, equipment upgrade and improved ease of its operation, new rigging over the stage, lighting, curtains and limited make-good refurbishment of heritage interiors. This project is nearing completion. The aim is to attract performing arts events, improve flexibility for the use of the space, all helping to maintain a valuable community asset and enhance its commercial viability. Having the new, very successful Maitland Regional Art Gallery across the street will help.

Lismore City Hall

In 1960 the Stocks Park site was selected for the Lismore City Hall and Douglas G. Board of FJ Board & Son (Douglas) was chosen to design it. At the time of tender Mayor Alderman C.J. Campbell demonstrated how things had changed since 1928 when he reassured the rate payers, saying “the proposed building would not be magnificent by any means, but it would not make extravagant use of the people’s money.” Then later balancing it with “there is little doubt that in this building we have the nucleus for the future cultural development of Lismore and its people.”

Local journalists tried to be positive. “The exterior has been kept almost severely plain... to avoid a ‘hot’ appearance for the large building, all ground level walls have been recessed 11 feet to form colonnades.” The entry was made more interesting with the inclusion of a high level 81 ton folded slat canop, referred to in the newspapers as a fluted portico. The new Lismore City Hall opened in January 1965.

The lower level interior finishes were robust, anticipating a flood. However, upstairs the auditorium featured vertical meranti wall lining with maple plywood rectangular panels and north coast hardwood parquetry floors. From the Opening Day Booklet we can note the pride: the building’s “acoustics were given expert treatment”, it was air conditioned, the main auditorium could seat 843 with 80 extra if required, the space below could sit 256, or 208 at tables and 80 in the theatrette, beside the Refreshments Kiosk. The Mayor forecast “Balls, Stage Productions, Orchestral Concerts, Ballet, Conferences, etc”, noting that there was a grand piano and specialised stage lighting, including cyclorama. The booklet also expressed regret that “Council, on the grounds of cost had to abandon its intention to construct a full stage house”. The good news came from the Minister for Lands and Member for Lismore who reassured teenagers that they “could perform the current dance craze - the stomp - without fear of stress to the structure”.

Community expectations changed, the hall ran down and it was severely damaged by hail in 2004. It was on the brink of redundancy. Northern Rivers Performing Arts (NORPA) has been the Manager of the facility and the major tenant for about 20 years. This has been a cultural alliance between the council and NORPA, with shared goals for creating a cultural hub around the City Hall. NORPA pushed for an upgrade to facilitate more uses, local talent and attract performances to Lismore that rejected the hall as a suitable venue. The council sought funding and a design, and was successful with a Commonwealth Government regional infrastructure grant for approximately $4.9 million. Arts NSW provided $100,000 toward NORPA’s new theatre lighting.

The Lismore based practice Dominic Finlay Jones Architects (DFJArch) was successful with their submission. With the collaborative assistance of Phil Ward of Phillips Smith Cornwall Architects, Brisbane (particularly for the auditorium and the acoustics) they undertook the project in 2012-13.

Their engagement with the council, other stakeholders and users identified the current shortcomings. The criticisms focused on very poor acoustics, extreme difficulties in importing a show back into house, difficult inequitable public access and an inadequately small foyer (150 people and then overflooding). It needed to be more flexible, attract a wider range of uses and larger productions, high quality acts. The back stage entry was “just a door and railing, sometimes props and equipment had to be back stage entry was “just a door and railing, sometimes props and equipment had to be
winched or craned up to the door" (above the floods).

The DFJArch team challenged aspects of the Brief, brought innovative and pro-active alternatives to the project, within the $6.3 million budget. From their statement, they carried out a detailed analysis of the building and identified under-utilised space; they did not pursue the new additions for the foyer but added comprehensive back-of-house infrastructure. They were very conscious about respecting the latent character of the original 1960s building, but also mindful that their designed additions needed to be clear, contemporary and complementary. They saw value in the existing fabric, took a re-use approach to "bring the building into the 21st Century with a relatively light hand."

The City Hall re-emerged with Frankenstein in July 2013, performed by the Sydney Ensemble Theatre, giving Lismore audiences' their first chance to see the hall's renovations, which includes covered outdoor spaces, new seating, improved acoustics, a redesigned foyer, bar and improved access. 6

As examples of new possibilities, The City Hall recently hosted a medical conference and will stage Kinship by Bangarra Dance Theatre in November.

DFJArch believe that Lismore City Hall’s acoustically overhauled four distinct multi-use spaces, supported by industry back-of-house facilities, have seen it realise its potential as the Northern Rivers' pre-eminent performance venue. Others agree, the project has been awarded three architectural awards, one engineering excellence award, a commendation from the property industry and acknowledgement from the MBA.

SYMBOLS
Perhaps Town Halls are a community’s symbol for coming of age, like a pre-19th century social debutant, or the 1970s couple who took dancing lessons and borrowed a suit for the Ball. For a town or city it can present prestige or status and acknowledge success.

As a community meeting place the town hall faces the competition found in local clubs with large auditoria, dozens of new school BER multi-purpose buildings and connected communities, the inventiveness of local libraries in engaging with community or the impressively diverse activities offered, for all ages by regional art galleries.

Town halls need to identify their contemporary community role and define their purpose, with a view to filling any gaps and maintaining their importance, particularly in this user-pays era.

Mark Forsewick
Director, Placemark Consultants

FOOTNOTES
2. CMP Annexure F: Maitland Town Hall Historical Study Ian Jack and Jyoti Somerville for MCC August 1999
3. Jack and Somerville
4. Jack and Somerville
5. Discussions with Dominic Finlay Jones and references to their statement.

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“It’s difficult to manage projects because we’re overloaded with information.”
The Regional Attraction

The projects, the travel, the weather and perhaps most importantly the community engagement - there are many rewards and challenges unique to working outside of Sydney, and there are many city practices engaged in regional work. We asked three Sydney-based firms to share their experiences and adventures from designing in the regions.

PAUL BERKEMEIER

My childhood was spent on the move, as my engineer father moved between major civil projects, from western Victoria, to the Snowy, the Central Coast and many places in between. Each new place we lived was a new adventure and I grew to love the diversity of regional Australia, and the quality of its buildings. These experiences remained in my subconscious until I made the inevitable decision to study architecture and later establish my own practice.

After several years on major city projects, studying in the United States and working in Japan, it was an exciting challenge to be shortlisted for the design competition for the Shearers Hall of Fame at Hay. Collaborating with our landscape architect, Jane Irwin, we embarked on an intensive study of landscape, place, history, architecture and settlement patterns of the Hay plain and Murrumbidgee River. This knowledge informed our design and enabled us to work closely with the community to make a building that was not only of the place, but also quickly embraced by the town. In the process we found many highly skilled trades who revelled in the challenge of working on an unusual and complex structure.

A decade later, the Maitland Regional Art Gallery gave us a chance to work on High Street, one of the best and most intact main streets in Australia, with a superb collection of buildings from the early years of the 19th century to the mid 20th century. Peppermint with $2 shops and vacant premises, the gallery gave us an opportunity to bring new life to the town. Six years after opening the gallery has had a transformative impact on the town, with record numbers of visitors to ever changing exhibitions. We essentially owned the new building. We essentially embraced the building typology within these types of communities.

SILVESTER FULLER

Our first built project after opening our new design studio, Silvester Fuller, was to he the Dapto Anglican Church Auditorium (DACA). The project we envisioned was to be the first of a new generation of buildings for the Parish and a model for future buildings. We had recently returned from living and working overseas. Our work there involved a lot of travel and we were fortunate to be working on projects in places such as New York and Mauritius. It seemed fitting that our first project back in Australia should involve some kind of travel, even if only a two hour drive down the highway south of Sydney.

Working in regional areas is a very rewarding experience. It is possible to have a greater impact than you otherwise might in a more design rich city centre. There are of course challenges involved too and in many ways you are required to work harder to achieve a good design outcome.

Presented with a brief for a suburban black-box theatre, the design response repositions the church as a gathering point for the community. DACA is a reinterpretation of the traditional church within a contemporary social, environmental and economic context. The modest budget demanded construction simplicity combined with spatial clarity and efficiency to produce a building that is easily identifiable while deliberately standing apart from its neighbours.

A number of groups within the church community were engaged to complete specific tasks with the ambition of establishing early ownership of the new building. We essentially had 400 clients all of whom were contributing in some way to realise this project. Sometimes this meant that elements were not finished exactly as we had intended but more important is the pride and sense of ownership the parish and community now have.

It was a pleasure to work with such insightful, collaborative and generous clients, the success of the project is indeed a great credit to them. If you are ever passing by drop in and have a coffee in the cafe. They are open and welcome visitors every day of the week and we hear that Rev. Stephen Semenchuk now gives a better architectural tour than we do!

Following on from DACA we have now been commissioned by the Anglican Diocese of Sydney to work on a number of new church sites and to re-envision the future of the church building typology within these types of communities.

Penny Fuller and Jad Silvester

Director, Paul Berkemeier Architect

DACA is a reinterpretation of the traditional church as a gathering point for the community. It was a pleasure to work with such insightful, collaborative and generous clients, the success of the project is indeed a great credit to them.
Goonoo Goonoo has always an element of excitement associated with it. It all started with flying to and from site visits in Tamworth by private jet. Despite it sounding madly extravagant, it actually meant we started our day with a client meeting in the sky and also wrapped up the day with another client meeting on the way back to Sydney. If the site meeting ran late, we simply called the pilot to delay departure; it really was highly efficient use of our time. Flying commercially recently, we actually missed our return flight. Thankfully it was not the last flight of the day, but we all hailed the days of flying by private jet.

Initially a private residential project incorporating alterations and additions to the heritage homestead (c.1860), and other heritage structures; a change of ownership resulted in a substantially expanded brief for Goonoo Goonoo: a new restaurant with commercial kitchen to service the adapted wool store as a function room, renovated cottages for self-contained visitor accommodation and renovation of the existing chapel for marriage ceremonies. The local community of Tamworth took a keen interest in the initial development and now the substantially public nature of the current redevelopment has received even greater community support. I am proud to be involved with a development that will positively contribute to the tourism industry of Tamworth and the New England Region.

Recent site visits have included an overnight stay at the new main homestead, with the owner cooking us a big country breakfast of eggs, bacon and tomatoes. When doing the documentation for this project seven years ago, I never imagined I would wake up in that room, looking out the window I had added to capture eastern views over the mountains. It was quite a special feeling. Working in rural and remote NSW means we have to be prepared for a little spontaneity. On one occasion the station manager picked us up and took us on a lovely tour - proudly showing us his crops and new calves. I have learned about agricultural operations and the role of the station manager, jack/jillaroos and other employees, and their relationship with the owner. I have also learned that conversation with the station manager is always dominated by the weather. And, although their daily activity is governed by the weather, our site visits are not. They go ahead hail, rain or shine. I have never been as cold, in my life, as on site at Tamworth mid-winter. The local wildlife also adds to the excitement, the most recent encounter being with territorial wasps. They had a nest in a room we were trying to measure with the builder and I clearly remember thinking "these wasps seriously do not like Sydney-siders!"

Emma Lee
Senior Associate, TKD Architects

IN FOCUS
The western elevation of Goonoo Goonoo Station Woolstore and Shearing Shed. Photo: Sean Williams, TKD Architects

Render for the western elevation of the Woolstore including the restaurant addition (currently under construction), TKD Architects. Courtesy: TKD Architects
He was a boy from the bush, a passionate believer in all things Australian. Both his parents had come from pastoral backgrounds and Ian seemed to have the power of the Australian landscape flowing through his blood.

My first encounter with Ian was in the office of Bruce Rickard in a Phillip Street terrace opposite the Public Works Department. Ian was the maverick of a group of friends chomping around Bruce, including Neville Grozman, Tony Moore, Mike Dumpy and many others. Locally, the group was called the Sydney School for their general beliefs in the use of common brickwork and timber that seemed to flaunt the principles of modernism, as determined by the Bauhaus.

The Sydney School stood for nationalism and much to the shock of the locals, the “insect” – supported simply by two trusses – finally landed to sit gently on the ridgeline. There it was embraced by the magnificent angophoras that twisted from the rocks.

Ian had created a small wooden sanctuary: a dwelling evocative of an insect alighting on a rock.

Much to the shock of the locals, the “insect” – supported simply by two trusses – finally landed to sit gently on the ridgeline. There it was embraced by the magnificent angophoras that twisted from the rocks.

Ian McKay, who had by then married my mother Jenny, was aware that Dad was looking for a camping alternative when he stumbled across the bush block above Lobster Beach. Dad snatched it up in an instant. However it took some persuading from Mum to agree to engage Ian as the architect for his bush retreat.

Deeply conscious of his role as custodian of an extraordinary landscape, Dad (who previously had yearned for a “lean-to with luxury”) came up with a reference point for Ian: he wanted a dwelling evocative of an insect alighting on a rock.

While my three siblings and I still looked forward to our annual camping trips it was becoming clear that Dad’s enthusiasm was wearing thin.

Ian McKay: Lobster Bay House

In 1969 photographer David Moore commissioned Ian McKay to design a family retreat which most now simply call Lobster Bay House. Lisa Moore, daughter of David Moore, pens a very personal experience of growing up with this house.

It was joyous working with Ian on this project and we both knew we had achieved something new and fresh in the history of Australian architecture. The nuances of Asia were mixed with the influences of the barn at Tocal designed by colonial architect Edmund Thomas Blacket. The timber structure was developed with Professor Stan Shaw from UNSW.

There were many other projects we did together – Wooden Food Centre (now demolished, as is Emerald Hill), Blacktown Presbyterian Church amongst some. Eventually we agreed to separate, philosophically we were heading in different directions. Swinger Hill was the last job commissioned jointly.

He was a true Australian – Icaric, Doric in his beliefs, eyes squinted to the vast Australian horizon, ever-searching for meaning in life and nature through western and eastern philosophies. He was a great architect.

Philip Cox
Professor Philip Cox AO
Founding partner, Cox Architects and Planners

While my three siblings and I still looked forward to our annual camping trips it was becoming clear that Dad’s enthusiasm was wearing thin.

Ian McKay: Lobster Bay House

In 1969 photographer David Moore commissioned Ian McKay to design a family retreat which most now simply call Lobster Bay House. Lisa Moore, daughter of David Moore, pens a very personal experience of growing up with this house.
Kristensen's Danish background and experience, precocious facility with a pencil manifested itself such an early stage, Kristensen's confidence and impaired, one of which was for Greenland. At accommodation and hostels for the mentally projects, principally schools, aged care detailing for a varied range of challenging Henning Graversen. Here he Kristensen joined the prominent office of Architects Registration Board examination. of Fine Arts School of Architecture, he left in Accepted in the 1956 intake of thirty-five to tiny fishing village on the west coast of Jutland. Kristensen's direction as an architect was set the neglected needs of mentally community, its intimate scale and measured Marsden Hospital for 300 severely handicapped children at Parramatta. Working closely with Dr. Alan N. Jennings its director, Kristensen produced a world class facility which received the coveted Sir John Sulman Medal from the NSW Chapter of the RAIA for 1969-70. Marsden is arguably the finest example of Danish Modernism completed in Australia. It is impressive for a variety of reasons: predominantly in cream brick the complex of buildings is broken down into individual units that impart a special humanism to what otherwise might have been a confronting and alienating institution. Marsden reflects the highest qualities of Danish Modern design such as you find in the Louisiana Museum, while, at the same time drawing on Denmark's unique folk architecture tradition. Kristensen was a mature designer when he arrived in Sydney. Marsden, like Utzon's Kingo courtyard housing is composed of repeated floating horizontal and vertical wall elements that move in step around the central open space in a staggered chain, with Utzon's later replaced by an oval. We find a similar sense of community in a democratic society which has melded the site is left unoccupied by buildings to preserve the Iron Bark trees. Landscape and architecture are united via a series of courtyards that reduce buildings to a necklace of small, non-massive, units that overlook Toongabbie Creek. Kristensen left NSW Public Works in 1969 for private practice to further his involvement in social architecture for the aged. A number of projects were completed, notably, Towradgi Park Aged Care Facility, Juliania Village at Miranda for Dutch migrants, Norby Retirement village, and Abel Tasman village. Juliania Village received a 1982 RAIA Merit Award for its response to aspects of individuality and community, its intimate scale and measured pace—in the words of the Jury: "It just seems to do all the right things."

In the late 1980s, Kristensen renewed his connection with the Sydney Opera House in a series of accommodation reviews the most significant being the TheatreWorks performing arts museum proposal 1989-95, for a high-tech interactive performing arts museum, a scheme for a permanent exhibition space adjacent to the Royal Botanic Gardens, 1990, The Studio, 1995-98, Western Foyer connection between the Playhouse and Drama Theatre, 1989-98, the Playhouse stage and backstage upgrade, 1989-92, and Concert Hall Performers' Assembly Room, 1989-99. With second wife, Christine Wing, in 1967 Kristensen moved to 5 acres of bushland at Arcadia, a Sydney version of Wright's Broadacre on Fagan Road, and built a house and architecture studio there. With brick walls and floors, and timber lined tile skillion roofs, it is a wonderful house that, on the inside, feels as though someone was thrown a protective brick bouquet around your shoulders. A true terrace-house, it has an outside terrace under an explosion of purple wisteria which, in summer, became the focus of domestic living. It is a truly beautiful masterpiece, easily, but incorrectly mistaken as Sydney School, it harks back to Danish values that Kristensen never entirely abandoned.

Kristensen was not given to compromise. New acquaintances were struck by the confusing mixture of European sophistication and the cheery pose of working tradesman. At school, girls compared him to Clark Gable. The journey from Agger to Arcadia left Kristensen largely unchanged, and much the same is true for his architecture.

Philip Drew Architectural historian and critic

The unique benefits of the Markilux MX-1 Compact awning are drawing strong demand from architects and designers seeking a shading solution with a sleek, unobtrusive profile. Regarded as the “little sister” to Markilux’ MX-1 awning, the key point of difference offered by the “compact” version lies in the size of its cassette, meaning the Markilux MX-1 Compact is only 38 cm deep. The result is a pared back profile ideally suited for applications where space is restricted and an uncluttered finish is required. Despite its diminutive size, the MX-1 Compact is packed with features. Suited to applications where a maximum width of 700 cm and maximum projection 415 cm apply, the awning features state-of-the-art folding arm technology, including virtually seamless, friction-free operation. The system includes a highly tear-resistant bionic tendon, constructed using high tech fibres for optimised power transference to the front profile. The awning is operated by radio-controlled motor, while also optionally available is Silentec technology, offering an extremely quiet radio-controlled motor. Additional options include the Markilux Vibrabox, designed to enable a radio-controlled motor-driven awning retraction if the wind becomes too strong, a light and wind sensor (with optional rain sensor) and the Sun’s solar-powered sunlight sensor, which enables the awning to react to sunlight. The MX-1 Compact can also be customised with optional features such as LED lighting or by mixing the colour combination of the cassette and front panel from a palette of on-trend colours. www.markilux.com.au
NEW 200 GEORGE STREET PROJECT TO FEATURE SOMFY FAÇADE CONTROL SOLUTION

200 George Street occupies a coveted dress circle location overlooking Circular Quay on Sydney Harbour. Designed by leading architects FJMT, 200 George Street was part of a City of Sydney Design Excellence competition and will be home to project developer and builders Mirvac and EY, better known as Ernst and Young.

The façade of the building is visually striking and also one of its most innovative elements; this is the first project in the southern hemisphere to use a closed cavity façade. A closed cavity façade takes the high performance of a traditional double skin façade, as used on projects such as One Bligh Street, and brings it into a more space efficient solution.

Engineering group Permasteelisa, which specialises in architectural envelopes, has developed a unique moisture and maintenance free integrated façade panel unit that features built-in solar shading. In the case of 200 George Street, it is the timber blinds and clear glazing of this solution that will give 200 George Street façade a warm and inviting finish, unlike anything else on the Sydney skyline.

“Sofmy has been working closely with Permasteelisa to design, supply, install and commission a façade control solution that befits such a cutting edge project”, says Sofmy Oceana’s Commercial Specification Manager, Alistair Groce. Adding, “Utilising KNX and a building-wide IP network, the Sofmy solution offers sun-tracking, shadow management and integrated web based remote controls. This ensures the occupants of the building will always have the right amount of natural light while balancing the needs of glare control and energy efficiency.”

The Sofmy Electrical Services Team has been working on the electrical connection of the Sofmy motors and the components of the blind control system and will soon enter the critical commissioning phase of the project which is due for completion in early 2016.

200 George St recently had a major milestone, in which the building topped out and the upper floor façade installation will soon be completed, a momentous occasion for everyone at Sofmy and Permasteelisa who have worked so hard on this project.

For further information on the progress of the 200 George St project, visit the Sofmy Architecture website,

www.sofmy-architecture.com.au

STORMTECH SOLUTIONS ENHANCE CANCER TREATMENT + RECOVERY CENTRE

Customised solutions from drainage design specialist Stormtech have played a key role in creating a harmonious and serene space at the Olivia Newton-John Cancer & Wellness Centre in Heidelberg, Victoria.

Stormtech was appointed to fit all drainage systems for the centre’s courtyard, including its water features and balconies.

Designed by Jackson Architecture + McConnell Smith Johnson, the centre was built to maximise energy efficiency outputs and to minimise environmental impacts.

“The result is something truly remarkable in both design and function, its purpose even more inspiring,” a spokesperson for the project said.

“In such a place of healing, every little bit counts. And this is where Stormtech used its unique expertise and knowledge to create a fixture that is every bit as important to the creation of this building as it is to its purpose. Central to the design of this Wellness Centre is the continual access, and visual connection to the central courtyard that is gently wrapped around and nurtured by the building façade.”

Custom fabricated to fit this innovative structure, Stormtech developed 72mm wide and 20mm deep troughs and wedgewire grates, made from 316 marine grade stainless steel, which were specifically designed to follow the buildings curves, including straight and curved sections.

“Happiness and good health go hand-in-hand. Additionally, good architecture and design have the ability to create environments that are enjoyable and agreeable to spend time in. Nourish is this more important than in the design of spaces that support cancer patient treatment and recovery.”

“The Olivia Newton-John Cancer & Wellness Centre takes this reasoning to its logical conclusion in the most innovative and unique way. The Centre is a dedicated healthcare precinct providing a range of specialist cancer services, including cancer treatment, education, training and research to the community.”

“The courtyard’s design was intended to promote wellness through restorative offerings of light, air, distraction and sustainability, connecting therapeutic and treatment environments with nature. This is why finding a company that could ensure the future success and functionality of the courtyard was crucial. Stormtech was the obvious answer.”

“Good design is not only essential to good living, it is paramount to the wellbeing of the mind, spirit and body. The designers of the Olivia Newton-John Cancer & Wellness Centre realised this potential, understanding that even the smallest of wheels must turn in order for the result to be achieved. Stormtech has ensured that these will always keep on turning.”

The building was designed by Jackson Architecture + McConnell Smith Johnson for Austin Health, and was built to maximise energy efficiency outputs and to minimise environmental impacts. The result is something truly remarkable in both design and function, its purpose even more inspiring.

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