## Election 3

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>NSW Election 2019: Australian Institute of Architects – key issues survey</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Kate Concannon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Beyond Opal: a plan for improving building quality</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>Geoff Hanmer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Restitching the city by rethinking motorways</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Benjamin Driver</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>The climate change imperative and the built environment</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>David Haseler</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Abolish discretionary planning</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Kerwin Datu</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Good amenity is good policy</td>
<td>22</td>
<td>Michael Zanardo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Australian Outrage revisited</td>
<td>24</td>
<td>Glenn Harper</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A trail of heritage destruction</td>
<td>26</td>
<td>Noni Boyd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>From strip clubs to supermarkets: five years on from Sydney lockouts</td>
<td>28</td>
<td>Sarah Lawlor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Can we unlock the potential of our schools?</td>
<td>29</td>
<td>Kasia Podrygajlo</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Competitions – a perspective</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>Angelo Candalepas</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Quality and the public realm</td>
<td>32</td>
<td>Peter Mould</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

## Chapter 34

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Page</th>
<th>Author</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Messages from the NSW Chapter</td>
<td>34</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Change of guard in NSW</td>
<td>36</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Patrons’ news</td>
<td>38</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Patron’s showcase / Internal design competition drives innovation and creativitity at Mirvac Design</td>
<td>39</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Architecture Bulletin reflections and projections</td>
<td>40</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Provoke / Mirror of the profession</td>
<td>45</td>
<td>Angelo Candalepas</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Both the NSW and Australian parliaments go to elections this autumn. Whether they are likely to be hot button campaign issues or not, there are countless areas where architectural practice is frequently buffeted by shifts in government policy, or where architects have special insights to offer on policy in wider areas. The NSW Chapter has asked the major parties on their views across several of these. Eleven architects also offer their own opinions on topics from design competitions and construction failures to WestConnex and the lockout laws.
NSW Election 2019

Australian Institute of Architects — key issues survey

Compiled by Kate Concannon

The Institute developed its 2019 NSW election platform in consultation with member representatives and key allied professional bodies. This was presented to all major parties for reply. Our stated positions and recommendations are published here along with the responses we received.
1 Ensuring design quality in densification

To retain its status as a global city, Sydney – the engine room for Australia’s economy – must compete among the world’s best on measures of liveability, productivity and sustainability. With a growing population, the continued economic and social health of NSW requires intensification – not only expansion through greenfield development. With increasing housing density, the capacity of amenity and design quality is integral to ‘doing density well’. The Institute considers the following are requisite in current conditions to ensure intensification both occurs and occurs successfully:

- Establish a talent pool of *City Architects* at director level made available to all LGAs via GANSW and the Greater Sydney Commission
- Support implementation of the requirements set by *SEPP 65*, the apartment design guidelines and the medium density design guidelines within local government
- Mandate *design review panels* (DRP) in LGAs for projects meeting critical thresholds, with 40% of NSW councils to have an endorsed DRP by March 2020
- Undertake a *public education* campaign for the medium density housing code and design guide specifically including, more generally, the benefits of density done well.

What will your party do to facilitate increasing housing density and see that it is done well – with good infrastructure and services, good design and community buy-in?

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<td>The Greens will create neighbourhoods that meet the needs of local communities by making ecologically sustainable development the primary objective of the planning system, with a focus on meeting the challenges of climate change both in what we build and what we protect. We will be changing the law so that no part of the state can be targeted for more intense development until firm and funded commitments are made for quality public transport, green open space, schools, hospitals and community facilities.</td>
<td>A NSW Labor government will introduce the registration of engineers which will improve the design and building process and weed out incompetent or unqualified professionals. Further review into licencing schemes, such as those of architects or building designers would be the responsibility of the new building authority.</td>
<td>The Liberals and Nationals government are committed to improving design quality across the spectrum of different types of development. SEPP 65 has lifted the quality of apartment design. SEPP 65 is supported by the ADG, a detailed guidance document which provides tools for improving the design of residential apartment development. We have also elevated the importance of the office of the Government Architect, and have given the office a strategic role across government to provide independent, strategic advice and advocate for better design. This role has been seen through the delivery of <em>Better Placed</em> – an integrated design policy for the built environment in NSW.</td>
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Delivering well designed diverse and affordable housing

The provision of affordable and diverse housing across all communities in NSW is essential to ensuring citizens’ wellbeing, and the wellbeing of their communities – the manifold economic benefits are amply evidenced. Good design is critical to delivering affordable and diverse housing that improves liveability, fosters healthier communities, produces broad economic benefits and reduces operational and maintenance costs.

Actions that government can take include: incentivising build-to-rent housing and reforming planning and other policies that currently limit diversity (of building types and of financing/ownership models). Without reform people are forced into less than appropriate housing, are subject to housing stress, and cannot properly provide a living environment for their families. To ensure consumers know they are getting what they were promised, the Institute strongly recommends mandating architects ‘close the loop’ on completion of medium density projects, with certification from the original architect being required as part of defect inspections, final certification and release of funds.

What initiatives will you take to deliver affordable and diverse housing in established areas that are close to employment and transport etc? How will you ensure good design in this housing?

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<td>The Greens support urban consolidation which delivers high quality housing close to public transport, increases the scope for providing public services and makes communities more liveable and sustainable. However, local communities must be given meaningful opportunities to engage in the decision-making process. We will invest in more social housing that guarantees affordability by charging rent as a proportion of income. We will reform the social housing system towards that of countries like Sweden, Denmark and the Netherlands, where social housing serves households with a range of incomes and needs. We will encourage good design in terms of energy efficiency and amenity by enforcing a ‘zero carbon ready’ building code, as recommended by the Australian Sustainable Built Environment Council and ClimateWorks Australia. We support firm affordable housing targets of 30% for new developments across Greater Sydney to reduce the growing geographical divide in the city.</td>
<td>A NSW Labor government will: 1. Conduct a full audit of government-owned land and create the Affordable Housing Land Register (AHLR). This full audit of government land will identify holdings that could be developed for affordable housing 2. Deliver a 25% affordable housing mandate on government-owned land. Labor will work with stakeholders to ensure that land owned by the government, which is fast-tracked for development, will have a 25% mandate of affordable housing within our first term in government. We will end the practice of selling government-owned land to the highest bidder without obtaining the maximum social utility 3. Implement a 15% affordable housing mandate on privately developed land. Labor will work with stakeholders to introduce a mandate of 15% of new dwellings or floor space on privately developed land within our first term of government. 15% of dwellings designated as affordable housing will be available for rental or sale to low- and moderate-income households within our first term in government 4. Support federal Labor’s proposed reforms to negative gearing and halving capital gains tax discounts. 5. Raise the foreign investor stamp duty surcharge from 4% to 7% 6. Double the land tax surcharge from 0.75% to 1.5% 7. Tax properties that have been left vacant for more than six months.</td>
<td>The NSW Liberals &amp; Nationals government is currently delivering the biggest social housing building program in the country. The NSW government is building 23,500 new and replacement social and affordable housing dwellings over the next 10 years. Each home is internally designed and built to silver-level standard under the liveable housing design guidelines to ensure they are easily adaptable for residents with disabilities and those with limited mobility. Early in 2018, five additional councils were included in SEPP 70, to allow these councils to prepare affordable housing contribution schemes. In recognition of the statewide need for affordable housing, the government exhibited a proposal to expand SEPP 70 to all NSW local government areas in December 2018. The Greater Sydney region plan, prepared by the Greater Sydney Commission and released in March 2018, includes affordable rental housing targets generally in the range of 5% to 10% of new residential floor space, subject to viability. The NSW Liberals &amp; Nationals government and the commission are now investigating mechanisms to deliver the affordable rental housing targets.</td>
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### Ensuring effective building and construction

What action will you take to ensure adequate and economically sustainable building and construction regulations as well as effective enforcement of the standards they set?

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<td>The Greens will abolish the private certification system and will return to a system of publicly paid and publicly accountable building certifiers, employed by local councils with oversight by a statewide professional body.</td>
<td>NSW Labor has taken an informed and methodical approach to ensuring building and construction regulation is improved. A NSW Labor government will introduce a standalone building act to strengthen regulations, improve consumer protections and transparency around people’s rights, and raise professional standards. NSW Labor will also establish a NSW building authority to bring together and build on existing resources to ensure increased oversight and accountability of every person in the construction chain. These two key changes stem from the Independent Review of the Building Professionals Act 2005, conducted by Michael Lambert. 1. Introduce a chain of responsibility for everyone in the building process, including for building products, to permit product recalls, banning the use of non-conforming products, and empowering building inspections or audits. 2. Reform certification to ensure certifiers undertake their regulatory function without fear or favour, as well as ensuring that certifiers have the support they need to continue to play their crucial role in building, that the professionalism of certifiers is strengthened, and that the supply of certifiers into the system is improved. 3. Develop protocols (in consultation with local government) governing the relationship between certifiers and councils, setting out roles and responsibilities for compliance and enforcement, supported by an information strategy for building regulation. 4. Establish a taskforce to crack down on the incidence of phoenix companies which allow dodgy builders and developers to hide behind shell companies. 5. Review the efficacy and impacts of the strata building defects scheme.</td>
<td>The government is committed to achieving strong building and construction regulation in NSW. On 10 February 2019, the NSW government announced its response to the Shergold Weir Report and a package of reforms to improve the building and construction industry. The NSW government has committed to implementing the vast majority of the Shergold Weir Report’s recommendations. The NSW government will also introduce reforms to ensure that building practitioners owe a duty of care to owners’ corporations and subsequent titleholders of residential developments, as well as unsophisticated construction clients who are small businesses.</td>
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The architecture profession strives to continually improve practice and to produce buildings that serve the community functionally, environmentally and aesthetically, providing sustainable value for money. Without effective enforcement of appropriate compliance requirements in building and construction, quality design cannot reliably be delivered. Concerningly, ineffective controls mean diminished safety, quality and value more broadly both for consumer and developer clients and for consumers who occupy or otherwise use built spaces.
Leading by example: making government a good client

Good clients are integral to the delivery of great built outcomes for the community and institutional users. They recognise the importance of accounting for social value and social cost along with broader economic effects in assessing business cases; they select appropriate procurement methods; they clearly understand their terms and conditions and ensure that these are fair and conducive to optimal economic and beneficial outcomes that deliver great value for the community.

Government should provide a leading example of a good client. To this end we strongly advise mandatory participation in state review panels for government projects and more design-led planning focused on the delivery of high quality outcomes; rather than relying only on planning approvals, delivery timeframes or risk mitigation that do not address users’ real needs.

How would you make government a better client for design and construction projects?

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<td>The Greens support government being a best practice client in terms of building design sustainability and local contexts. We support stringent five-star green ratings or equivalent for public buildings and a government wide commitment to low and zero carbon buildings.</td>
<td>A NSW Labor government is determined that the planning and construction process bring about the best outcome for the users – which are our people. We are committed to putting people first. If it works for the people then it will work for everyone. That is why social impacts and opportunities will be at the heart of our government and procurement. There are a number of changes that will be made to the procurement policies of NSW and there will also be a number of interpretations of existing procurement policies that will be more clearly spelt out, with a view to longer term, social outcomes.</td>
<td>The NSW Liberals and Nationals government is committed to continuing to drive reform across government in the development, procurement and delivery of infrastructure and building projects as we deliver our $89.7 billion infrastructure pipeline over the next four years. In 2018, the NSW Liberals and Nationals government released the NSW government construction action plan: a 10-point commitment to the construction sector. The action plan recognises that the government can only achieve its infrastructure objectives in partnership with the private sector and takes a longer term view about the need to drive quality, innovation and cost effectiveness.</td>
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‘Good design in the built environment is achieved when buildings, urban areas and development precincts are functionally attuned to the needs of users and visitors; are economically and environmentally sustainable, minimising energy use; provide enjoyable and comfortable environment; and create places that enable people to work, recreate and relax in uplifting, encouraging and – where appropriate – exciting surroundings.’

– NSW Chapter
Would you increase the standing of the Government Architect, and where would you locate it within the structure of government?

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<td>The Government Architect is essential to provide sector wide leadership and best possible architectural outcomes for public buildings in NSW. We support increasing funding for the office and statutory independence with close agency links with both planning and Premier and Cabinet.</td>
<td>NSW Labor has committed to establishing a NSW building authority. One of the aims of the authority will be to bring together all professionals in the building and construction sector. The building authority will be tasked with dealing with structural and regulatory matters related to the building and construction industry, including making recommendations on AMR and internal government processes.</td>
<td>The work of Government Architect NSW will continue to play a significant role in the evolution of a more strategic-focused planning system in NSW and has already delivered a number of nationally significant, future-focused, expert publications. In 2017, GANSW released Better Placed, an integrated design policy for the built environment of NSW. Better Placed sets out objectives to enhance design quality and raise expectations and standards. These objectives are used by state and local governments, architects, designers, developers, planners, engineers, builders, industry groups and local communities and businesses to create better built environments. In collaboration with key stakeholders, GANSW is developing design guides, manuals, and case studies to describe the objectives in more detail according to scale, type and conditions.</td>
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6 Establishing automatic mutual recognition (AMR) for architects

Australian architects are already accredited under a national procedure adopted by all states, yet legacy red tape means that architects need to be separately registered in each state that they wish to work in as architects (the name ‘architect’ being protected by legislation).

A national automatic mutual recognition (AMR) scheme is required to improve mobility and productivity for the Australian architectural profession and to reduce administrative burdens and costs for architects. This will have positive flow-on effects for consumers of architectural services, removing an inhibition on trade between states. However, its introduction needs to be managed carefully and with attention to the variation that exists between state/territory architects acts’ requirements for maintaining registration.

How do you propose to establish AMR in NSW and facilitate a national scheme supported by national consistency in insurance, continuing professional development (CPD), and practice registration requirements?

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<td>The Greens support truly national recognition. We are happy to work with the profession to help promote support for this.</td>
<td>See Labor’s response for question 5.</td>
<td>The NSW government is committed to making NSW the easiest state to start and run a business. In August 2018, the NSW government announced its support for expanding the automatic mutual recognition (AMR) of licences to architects. NSW is seeking reciprocal support from other jurisdictions to develop and implement the necessary arrangements to expand AMR.</td>
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7 Respecting our cultural heritage

Our built environment is a significant aspect of our cultural heritage and national life and warrants considered, respectful protection. The Heritage Council is the state’s most qualified arbiter in this domain and both its expertise and its independence as a government agency must be appropriately observed by government in order to ensure this protection on behalf of the community. It has been concerning to the Institute to see recent examples of government disregarding the advice of the Heritage Council – notable cases being the decision not to confer heritage listing upon Sirius and the decision to use the sails of the Sydney Opera House for advertising a horse race. As custodian of many richly valuable heritage assets belonging to the people of NSW, the government must take firm action to prevent degradation of these assets and, further, must advocate for the value of their protection and invest in appropriate conservation.

Additionally, to help ensure the Heritage Council membership’s expert calibre is upheld, we strongly recommend that the Australian Institute of Architects be allocated an ex-officio position on the Council.

What do you consider is the correct relationship to exist between the Heritage Council and government? How would you realise this? What action will you take to protect the public’s heritage assets from degradation and to ensure their public benefit is preserved?
**GREENS**

The Greens NSW will work to ensure heritage laws and practices in NSW reflect our international commitments, including: the United Nations declaration on the rights of indigenous peoples; the ICOMOS Burra Charter for buildings, precincts, places or landscapes; the national standards for Australian museums and galleries for objects; the UNESCO convention for the safeguarding of intangible cultural heritage for practices; The UN convention on biological diversity; and the UN world heritage convention and its associated guidelines. We believe the Heritage Council should be an independent statutory body with the final say on the protection of all state heritage items.

**LIBERAL / NATIONALS**

The NSW government continues to respect our cultural heritage and use the expertise and advice of the Heritage Council as well as fund programs such as the NSW heritage grants program that helps communities recognise, value and care for their heritage, provides funding to improve identification and protection of the state’s heritage and assist owners conserve heritage items and to promote and celebrate NSW heritage.

**LABOR**

NSW Labor has a plan to protect and celebrate the state’s heritage. A NSW Labor Government will create the first Heritage Strategy for NSW, deliver specific laws to protect Aboriginal cultural heritage, close loopholes in heritage laws and ensure a transparent heritage listing decision-making process. Labor’s five-point plan to protect and celebrate our state’s heritage, will:

1. **Create the first NSW Heritage Strategy**
   The strategy will detail initiatives to protect and celebrate the state’s heritage over the next ten years. Preparation for it will include a NSW Heritage Summit as well as a review of:
   - The Heritage Act 1977 (NSW)
   - Management of the NSW Government’s heritage assets
   - Interaction between planning laws, planning policies and the Heritage Act
   - Funding and support for heritage conservation and maintenance.

   The NSW Heritage Summit will be held in the lead-up to the General Assembly of the International Council on Monuments and Sites, which will be held in Sydney in 2020. The Summit will provide a road-map for legislative reform and policies for better coordination among agencies which deal with heritage matters.

2. **Deliver an Aboriginal cultural heritage act to protect and promote Aboriginal cultural heritage**
   - NSW is the only state in Australia without standalone legislation to protect Aboriginal cultural heritage, but the Liberals and Nationals have never introduced a bill to Parliament.
   - Aboriginal cultural heritage requires dedicated legislation, and Labor will deliver it.

3. **Stop heritage ministers ignoring the Heritage Council’s recommendations for heritage listings**
   - Currently, the minister alone can decide whether an item is listed, rejected or reviewed by the Independent Planning Commission (IPC).
   - Labor will take immediate rejection off the table; if the minister doesn’t accept the recommendation it will go to the IPC for review. This review process will give the community a chance to have their say and provide greater transparency in the decision making process.

4. **End the misuse of financial hardship provisions by government**
   - In 2016, the Liberals and Nationals misused this provision to refuse to list the government-owned Sirius building. The claim that heritage listing the building would cause undue financial hardship for the government was rejected by the Land and Environment Court.
   - Labor will amend the Heritage Act to remove any doubt that financial hardship provisions are only to apply to individual property owners not the state government.

5. **Protect heritage sites, including to:**
   - Save Willow Grove and St George’s Terrace in Parramatta (and ensure they’re not demolished or sold off to property developers)
   - List the Sirius building on the State Heritage Register
   - Protect the North Parramatta precinct (including the Parramatta Female Factory historic precinct) and fast-track World Heritage listing
   - Keep the Powerhouse Museum in Ultimo and assist with its state heritage listing
   - Retain the historic Windsor Bridge
   - Support the Camden community to nominate the town centre for state heritage listing
   - Contribute $350,000 to upgrade the iconic Bondi Pavilion
   - Support the community to nominate Haberfield for state heritage listing
   - Work with the Heritage Council to clear the backlog of state heritage nominations.
Promoting Australian architects for public projects

Architecture is a global profession and the Institute supports architects working internationally. Many of our members have been very successful in exporting architectural services overseas and the Institute looks for continued support from government of architects earning export income. However, in regard to publicly funded projects for our important civic buildings, public open spaces and community infrastructure, Australian government agencies should match international practice. A majority of countries undertaking shortlisted design competition processes for their public projects actively mandate local architectural content.

The Australian Institute of Architects endorses the following via its buying local policy:
- Recognition that the Australian architectural profession provides innovative design leadership both locally and internationally
- Support for the retention of a strong Australian architectural skills base
- Recognition in government procurement of the role of good design in maximising economic benefits and creating a rich legacy of civic buildings and urban spaces
- Fair and open procurement practices that neither favour overseas architects over Australian architects nor disadvantage local firms
- A majority of Australian architects to be included in shortlisted design competitions for publicly funded projects (where Australian architects are defined as having a majority of Australian partners or directors)
- Strong government support for the promotion and export of Australian architectural services overseas.

Do you support the Institute’s ‘buy local’ policy? If so, what steps would you take to ensure that it is implemented during your term?

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| We do. The Greens do not ascribe to the view that the best design for iconic Australian buildings is necessarily achieved by an international design competition. We support the concept of Australian architects designing Australian buildings and responding to our unique cultural and environmental challenges and influences. We support a government-wide policy requiring the NSW agencies to work with the profession in Australia to continue to foster our local built identity. | A NSW Labor government will create a new act that will require local jobs and content to be written into all government procurement documents ensuring that the local economy is at the heart of major projects.

  Additionally the act will empower a minister to declare any project valued at more than $50 million ‘jobs significant’ – the trigger for the 50% local content mandate to kick in.

  But NSW Labor isn’t just going to rely on projects over $50 million to drive opportunity for local content and local jobs. As noted in our response to question 4, the fundamentals of the procurement process will be changed to align more specifically with our agenda to put the people of NSW first. Whether you’re an architect, a winemaker, a concreter or a steel manufacturer, NSW will approach procurement as an opportunity to put the people of NSW to work. | The NSW government has supported local architecture firms on many infrastructure and building projects and recognises the expertise and skill of Australian architects. The Liberals and Nationals government also recognises the capability of local suppliers and their contribution to the NSW economy and job creation.

  The government has an ongoing commitment to investing in high quality architecture and design and local content. The government has introduced a range of measures to support local businesses and make government procurement more accessible. For example, government agencies are required to seek at least one quote from a small or medium enterprise (SME) supplier for engagements valued up to $4 million. This includes any architectural services sourced through the scheme. |
9  Improving public procurement practices

In their understandable efforts to seek value for money professional engagement, public authorities including state and local government from time to time embark on procurement approaches that are commercially inappropriate, economically unsustainable, exploit small business, produce disadvantageous outcomes for the authority and its stakeholders and seek to benefit from work done by tenderers without fair remuneration.

Tendering practices can sometimes turn into ‘competitions’ that seek from architects an inordinate effort to prepare designs for projects without good engagement with user groups, the affected community or funders. This precludes their access to performance information critical to the success of a project. It also imposes an economic drag on business as firms do work that will have no economic benefit but rather adds to their business costs.

No other profession is asked to perform substantive work for no consideration as part of a tender to a public authority. The Institute, along with the government’s own experts, can provide good practice guidance to public authorities to tender in an economically sustainable manner that delivers, through properly elicited competition, the benefits clients seek.

What steps will you take to ensure that the procurement of architectural services is both fair to architects, particularly those operating in small businesses, and productive of economically sustainable results that achieve community benefits through properly advised early design processes?

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<td>See 8 and 5 above. We remain committed to good design and a quality design panel on all major NSW architectural projects.</td>
<td>See Labor’s response for question 8.</td>
<td>The NSW government recently released the Construction Action Plan. As part of the plan, the government recognises that bid costs can be high, and there can be an economic burden on business to prepare designs for projects through the tendering stage without remuneration. One of the commitments in the ten point plan is focused on reducing the cost of bidding, where appropriate. The recently released bid cost contributions policy sets out arrangements the government has adopted to determine if it will make a financial contribution to partially offset the cost of bidding for construction and infrastructure projects in NSW. It applies to projects over $100 million, and allows the government to consider contributing up to 50% of expected bid costs.</td>
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Simplifying planning approvals

The NSW state planning system is characterised by a complexity of oversight committees, jurisdictional overlap, special zonings, and special status overlays for projects. Simplification should be based on simple conformity to zoning, and accelerated approval should be granted to projects endorsed by registered architects and chartered engineers.

How will you simplify the planning controls to promote efficiency, quality and clarity?

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| NSW planning is an unholy mess with innumerable planning authorities, incoherent planning laws, destructive spot rezonings and the loss of public confidence. We support establishing a royal commission into the NSW planning system to force the NSW parliament to finally fix this mess. | A NSW Labor government will ensure that all major infrastructure projects valued at $1 billion or more are the subject of public planning inquiries to minimise disruption to local communities and to ensure full transparency.  
   NSW Labor will reform the building industry by:  
   • Introducing a single piece of legislation, a standalone building act to strengthen regulations, improve consumer protections and transparency around people’s rights as well as raise professional standards  
   • Establishing a single agency, the NSW building authority, reporting to a single minister to increase and streamline accountability of every person in the construction chain  
   • Introducing a chain of responsibility for everyone in the building process including for building products to permit product recalls, banning the use of non-conforming products and empowering building inspections or audits  
   • Preventing developers from being able to choose their own certifier to eradicate potential conflict of interest that has arisen between certifiers who are overdependent on developers whose work they are signing off on  
   • Introducing a registration scheme for engineers.  
   NSW Labor is committed to ending developer-led spot rezoning, or pre-gateway review process. This will stop developers going to the state government to seek a site-specific amendment to a council’s local environmental plan (LEP) after it has been rejected by a council.  
   NSW Labor is committed to scrapping the medium density code, which was introduced by the Liberal government in 2018, and allows for the inclusion of medium density housing, such as one- and two-storey dual occupancies and terraces as complying development under the state environment planning policy. Under the code, complying developments do not require a full development application to a council, instead only a complying development certificate issued by a certifier, taking away council and community input. The code will apply to all councils from July 2019. Labor, if elected, will not proceed with this code.  
   A NSW Labor government will scrap the remaining planned precincts and direct the Greater Sydney Commission to the drawing board. The existing targets deliberately disadvantage some parts of Sydney, forcing them to bear the brunt of rampant residential development while, under the Liberals, the GSC has favoured blue ribbon suburbs with lenient development limits while concentrating development in Western Sydney. |
Recent reforms to the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (EP&A Act) aimed to ensure a simpler, faster planning system while also building industry and community confidence in planning decisions and outcomes. The updates create a system that is easier to understand, navigate and use, with better information and intuitive online processes.

DPE has implemented the SEPP review program which is designed to reduce red tape, including reducing the number of SEPPs and updates to LEPs. The review will simplify, modernise and update policies and ensure they are located at the most appropriate level in the planning system. At the commencement of the review, there were 66 SEPPs. 16 SEPPs were initially repealed under stage 1 of the review. Stage 2 is currently underway and will produce fewer, more modern and simplified SEPPs, once complete.

Complying development codes
DPE is continuously monitoring the requirements for complying development to ensure it is effectively reducing red tape, costs and delays for low impact development and responds to community expectations.

Since 2017, the government has delivered four housing codes which are written in plain English, with explanatory diagrams to make it easier to obtain approval to build or renovate one and two storey houses. These codes tailor and simplify complying development controls to increase the take up of complying development and make it easier, faster and cheaper for home owners.

Faster housing approvals
The DPE has developed a series of guides to improve the development application process. For example, The DA best practice guide promotes a number of principles for councils to adopt to improve determination times and the Your guide to the development application process was released in May 2018 to help inexperienced and one-time applicants understand the development assessment process for housing DAs.
Beyond Opal

a plan for improving building quality

Geoff Hanmer

The structural failure of the Opal Tower has highlighted the poor quality of speculatively-built multi-unit housing in Australia. Research suggests that between 50% and 80% of multi-unit buildings have serious defects. Very few of these are structural; the vast majority of them are waterproofing. They may not generate headlines, but they do generate misery.

The current situation is a market failure. Insufficient regulation and insufficient oversight of both documentation and construction are producing poor buildings that will be a significant burden on the economy in the years to come.

One by one, the props have been kicked out under the traditional design, documentation, tendering and inspection process led by architects, especially in residential. Documentation now is often carried out by a mix of engineers, offshore documentation shops, building designers and structural shop drafters. There is no proper coordination.

Architects, attempting to make ends meet on inadequate fees, have been all too happy to reduce their workload. There has been a decline in the numbers of experienced architects able to teach graduates how to document and construct something that will not leak, especially in residential buildings. We are losing skills that will be hard to replace.

This is not a problem with certification; it is a problem across the board, including the construction industry and the design professions including architects. Buyers trust that a building certified to comply with the NCC (or having an architects name on it) will have acceptable quality, but architects know this is nonsense and should be saying so loud and long. The only actor able to correct a market failure is government.

Architects should demand governments improve the market so that the public get buildings that are fit for purpose. A start would be to fix Section F of the NCC to actually require a building to be waterproof (have a look at exactly what it says now). It would also need an architect to be responsible for designing, documenting and inspecting any Class 2 building with a rise of four or more storeys to ensure that it is waterproof. Another priority would be to improve trade training to ensure that all leading hands hold at least a Certificate 4 qualification from a reputable provider.

Geoff Hanmer is the managing director of ARINA, an architectural practice focused on higher education. His book The Quality Guide to Medium Density Housing was the result of research into residential building failures in the mid-1990s. He is an adjunct lecturer in structures and construction at UNSW and also an historian of construction and building.

‘Buyers trust that a building certified to comply with the NCC (or having an architects name on it) will have acceptable quality, but architects know this is nonsense and should be saying so loud and long. The only actor able to correct a market failure is government.’

NOTE

Clause FP1.4 of the NCC Volume 1, both the 2016 and impending 2019 editions, state that a ‘roof and external wall … must prevent the penetration of water that could cause (a) unhealthy or dangerous conditions, or loss of amenity for occupants; and (b) undue dampness or deterioration of building elements. ‘It does not categorically require the prevention of all water penetration.
So much of Sydney’s urban dialogue is dominated by just a few contested topics – population growth, building heights and density, and transport. As our population continues an upward trajectory to over eight million by 2050, they’ll no doubt remain hot topics.

Retrofitting our cities with higher-density living and associated services for this rate of change is a significant task; and the funds, time and political enthusiasm to do so are all limited – but we can’t afford not to do it well.

If funds are limited, we must prioritise benefits for the maximum number of users at the most efficient rate. This is not only economically prudent but underpins cities as reflections of our democracy – open to all, which flows on to social and environmental savings. This democracy or openness of cities is at risk if we continue to squeeze and hence limit the movement of its citizens.

For decades now we have been sold the idea that private vehicles are a right for all, and government policy has underpinned this by disproportionately funding the development of motorways and endless widening of roads to accommodate them – often at the expense of pedestrians, cyclists, landscape, public transport and often our quality of life. Motorways have cut great divisive valleys through our cities, greatly restricting how we use them.

Current state government policy across the country is very much the status quo – investing heavily in motorways promising congestion-busting relief. But as has been proven in cities around the world, no motorway project has even provided congestion relief for more than a year or two (if lucky). In fact, new motorways or widened roads create congestion. This is known as induced demand. On top of this many are privatised, requiring a fee for the privilege of being stuck in said congestion.

Now, this is in no way an anti-car ideal, rather a pro-city agenda – understanding the spatial needs and limitation of cities, and aiming to use them in a way that benefits the most, allowing us to live healthy and successful lives in cities. For this we search for balance.

So, the question reads ‘Are we using our urban movement corridors in the most efficient way?’

If we look at a 3.5 metre car lane, we can typically move 1500 vehicles an hour (not including accidents and congestion). With mostly one person per vehicle, this use of space is majorly inefficient. If we’re generous we’d say...
On the new widened M4 (at huge cost) we can boast a measly capacity of four lanes in either direction, or 7200 people an hour. In a city of 5,500,000 our single largest movement corridor is given over to just 7200 people in peak hour.

If we were to give a 3.5 metre lane to buses, it could move 9000 people an hour, per lane. For light rail make it 10,000+. But when we get serious and dedicate such corridors to heavy rail or metro, the waste of motorways is glaringly obvious. Instead of 1800 people in cars we could move 40,000 an hour, in each direction. We must re-balance.
we can optimally move 1800 people per lane, per hour. On the new widened M4 (at huge cost) we can boast a measly capacity of four lanes in either direction, or 7200 people an hour. In a city of 5,500,000 our single largest movement corridor is given over to just 7200 people in peak hour.

This is hardly what we might call accessible or democratic. On the numbers alone, this gross misuse of public land is shamefully exclusionary. So if we agree that we have a limited number of mass-movement corridors set aside in our cities, and that our public funds are limited, it’s obvious we need to be using this limited space in the most efficient way possible.

When we dedicate the same 3.5 metre lane of space to alternate uses the justification for motorways falls apart. From a starting point of 1800 people in cars, the very same lane as a footpath has a capacity of 19,000 pedestrians an hour. As a cycleway we could fit 7000 cyclists an hour, per lane.

If we were to give this 3.5 metre lane to buses, it could move 9000 people an hour, per lane. For light rail make it 10,000+. But when we get serious and dedicate such corridors to heavy rail or metro, the waste of motorways is glaringly obvious. Instead of 1800 people in cars we could move 40,000 an hour, in each direction.

We must re-balance.

Take the attached section of the widened M4 near Hill Road in Homebush. A vast, open hardscape. Over the 150 metre section depicted there is one footpath – an urban wasteland by any measure. The sheer number of car lanes is unsettling – and the capacity laughable. An immediate redress is needed.

Rather than spending billions on slow and expensive tunnelling for a West Metro, use this movement corridor for a combination of high capacity modes – take just one lane of the M4/WestConnex and install rail. In the same 3.5 metre lane we could transport more than 22 times the number of people an hour. With overpasses and underpasses located at regular intervals, stations are easily integrated at points ripe for interchange from feeder buses or light rail and soon, automated pooling.

This rebalance also aligns well to the advancement in automation. The potential of automated vehicles to transform the way we move in Sydney is vast – but risks making our congestion problems infinitely worse. If electric automated cars are allowed to dominate our cities as the combustion engine has until now, then the appeal will surely only induce more driving. Cleaner or not, we still don’t have the additional space or funds to make the room for more private cars. Every bit of city we demolish for wider motorways is less actual city to live in.

We must be ahead of the surge and harness automation to our advantage. As suggested above, repurpose the inside lane of the M4 for metro/heavy rail now. As car use is reduced, take the outside lane for buses or light rail and we can add a proper footpath with shade trees and a cycleway. This then releases huge quantities of currently alienated urban land to build housing and employment adjacent to this now quieter, greener and healthier corridor.

Finally, as single use private vehicle use reduces further over time, quarantine the last lane as a point-to-point, on-demand automated vehicle corridor. With all these measures combined we have a true, high capacity urban movement corridor that’s efficient and liveable. We can deliver multiple metro lines years early and at a fraction of the cost. The corridor which once only moved 7200 people in each direction per hour now moves more than 10 times as many.

Single use private vehicles would still be free to use the hundreds of thousands of kilometres of streets across the city – but for these high-capacity corridors we can no longer lend them to such an inefficient single use. The numbers speak for themselves.

Benjamin Driver is senior urban designer at Hill Thalis Architecture + Urban Projects.
The climate change imperative and the built environment

David Haseler
The United Nations intergovernmental panel on climate change (IPCC) October 2018 report concluded that limiting global warming to 1.5°C would ‘require rapid, far-reaching and unprecedented changes in all aspects of society’. A 2°C global warming scenario would have far reaching consequences for the environment and communities and for NSW, a state in the world’s driest inhabited continent, a scenario that we should take all necessary steps to avoid.

The IPCC report makes specific reference to changes that need to occur in the built environment, noting that ‘the urban and infrastructure system transition consistent with limiting global warming to 1.5°C with no or limited overshoot would imply, for example, changes in land and urban planning practices, as well as deeper emissions reductions in transport and buildings ...’

Infrastructure planning and construction in NSW is currently at increased levels not seen in previous decades. A shift in growth patterns in Sydney, our largest city, is visibly and controversially reshaping the built environment, with reduced growth at the perimeter. New transport infrastructure and a more consolidated city appear sound in principle, but how would our infrastructure and built environment projects fare in a threshold test which required greenhouse emissions containment and reduction to be demonstrated in relation to the IPCC report timeframes?

The Sydney Light Rail project is undeniably a significant public transport initiative and is the catalyst for a major revitalisation along its corridor, including George Street in the city centre. The removal of buses and other vehicles from the primary north–south spine has already transformed the character and function of George Street. Post construction, its greenhouse gas emissions will primarily be those of electric power generation, which can increasingly be drawn from renewable sources.

The new metro lines, under construction and in planning, are overdue initiatives to efficiently and sustainably connect the western districts of the city and are expected to initiate significant modal shift for sections of the city previously poorly served by public transport. But is the good of these not neutralised by the further entrenched vehicle use, invasive construction, portals intrusion and long term emissions enabled by WestConnex and NorthConnex?

The state government-funded Inner West Greenway project linking the Cooks River to Iron Cove aims to enhance local biodiversity, expand active transport options for local communities and be a demonstration project for the NSW government’s Green Grid. The project was conceived by local environmental groups in the early 2000s and is due for completion in 2021. Nearby, the M4 East stage of the WestConnex road project will open mid 2019.

These projects are of different scales and budgets, certainly, but share a common thread in considering the way we structure movement around our cities and our state.

Where we prioritise greenhouse gas emission producing systems over infrastructure that can reduce emissions we are making decisions against the science of climate change and the call for action. Infrastructure project selection in NSW needs to assess and prioritise greenhouse gas emissions reduction to ensure that new investment in the state is also an investment in the future of the planet.

The recent ruling of the chief justice of the Land Environment Court in the refusal of the Rocky Hill mine near Gloucester on the NSW mid-north coast represents a landmark juridical decision and is a model for decision making processes at this critical time for the environment. The chief justice makes specific reference to the IPCC special report on the impacts of global warming of 1.5°C above pre-industrial levels in his ruling. He concludes that while the government has not put in place prescriptive mechanisms guiding infrastructure and development in line with achieving its commitment to reduce greenhouse gas emissions (GHG) as a signatory to the Paris Agreement, the creation of a new mine ‘cannot assist in achieving the rapid and deep reductions in GHG emissions that are necessary...’ This ruling firmly places climate change on the table in the examination of the validity and viability of future energy projects in the state of NSW and highlights the broader responsibility and urgency for government and approval authorities in planning such projects.

The Climate Council study from October 2018 reports that NSW is lagging behind other states in the ‘renewable energy race’. Renewal energy projects, electric charging infrastructure and electric buses are on the agenda but the priorities need to be clearly set and the commitments made to make the critical NSW contribution to averting the worst that climate change will otherwise bring.

The NSW government must acknowledge and embrace the imperative for climate change action as a core principle informing infrastructure and public project selection. They must be active in requiring this imperative be addressed in our developing built environment.

David Haseler is a principal of FJMT Studio and head of FJMT Urban.

‘The Climate Council study from October 2018 reports that NSW is lagging behind other states in the “renewable energy race”. Renewal energy projects, electric charging infrastructure and electric buses are on the agenda but the priorities need be clearly set and the commitments made to avert the worst that climate change will otherwise bring.’
Abolish discretionary planning

The question is: should we abolish spot rezoning? And the answer is: yes. The public of NSW is suffering from shell shock, from a construction boom it was not braced for, and which has left its cities disfigured. Architects shrink from some of the connections but for much of the wider public the products of the boom are easily associated with a range of social scapegoats: excessive immigration, foreign investors, gentrifying hipsters, destruction of local history. We have to admit that the public trust in the evolution of the built environment is broken, and the thing that has broken that trust is spot rezoning. To restore democratic faith in NSW cities, we should abolish spot rezoning.

There are those who say that to attack spot rezoning is to correctly identify the problem but to mistake the cause. That we need spot rezoning to release us from the shackles of outdated local environmental plans (LEPs). Indeed, our whole LEP paradigm is outdated. But we must still abolish spot rezoning.

Those who wish to preserve spot rezoning argue that it allows sites to be seen in a greater context. This is merely to swap the values of the local government of the day with the values of the state government of the day. Neither of these sets of values is inherently virtuous. The only rezoning process that sees a site in its proper context is one that rezones the whole precinct, considering all sites at once without bias towards one or another.

What restores the public’s faith and trust is certainty. Regardless of how other aspects of the NSW planning regime are reshaped, certainty cannot be had while spot rezoning exists. Architects tolerate spot rezoning despite understanding its flaws because it suits our bottom line. But the fundamental principles at stake are becoming too great. Discretion in planning needs to be removed from both local and state levels of government, to provide the certainty in our cities’ futures that the NSW public needs.

Kerwin Datu

Design guides, where they are present in our planning system, have undeniably played a central role in improving built form outcomes in New South Wales. These guides are the documents which give meaning and shape to the black-and-white letters of our legislation to encourage and steer better design outcomes.

In terms of residential buildings, which represent the vast majority of new approvals in New South Wales, SEPP 65 and its apartment design guide has, by far, been the most successful policy in ‘raising the bar’ of design. This is particularly so for increasing the standard of the core residential amenities – those of light, air and privacy. Elevation of these attributes has created new housing stock that will provide better building performance and a better quality of life for our population for decades to come.

In stark contrast however legislation such as SEPP ARH Division 3 Boarding Houses has a distinct poverty of design guidance. Solar access to dwellings is not required, natural cross ventilation is not mentioned, and guidance on visual and acoustic privacy is nowhere to be found. This poorly conceived planning instrument has permitted a generation of buildings with dire residential amenity to come into being. But this need not be so. Density is not mutually exclusive with amenity, nor for that matter should dwelling size be. A genuine variety of housing options is needed to accommodate our diverse population, but surely this should not be at the expense of amenity for its occupants? Given the prevalence of ‘new generation’ boarding houses in recent years, specific guidance on their design quality is worthy of far more attention.

As our cities continue to grow taller and ‘thicker’, the value of design in achieving good residential amenity becomes increasingly obvious. Experience shows that without well-formulated, properly administered and upholdable design guidance, poor outcomes are inevitable and that other demands of development take greater priority. This approach is short-sighted. What should matter is the long-game of ensuring good amenity in housing for our communities into the future, and good policy that delivers design guidance has a key part to play in achieving this.

Michael Zanardo

Kerwin Datu is a practising architect as well as a qualified urban and economic geographer. He is also chair of the NSW Chapter’s editorial committee.

Michael Zanardo is a registered architect who specialises in urban design and the design of housing, particularly social and affordable housing.
Overhead wires, poles and pylons are a major element of visual confusion everywhere. Through thoughtless, careless siting and seemingly unending proliferation they cause unnecessary visual destruction of our surroundings.

The remedy is simple—place the wires underground and use slim steel poles for street lights instead of bulky wooden ones. This answer might cost a little more—desirable things often do!
Curated by the Sydney architect Don Gazzard, *Australian Outrage* was an Institute-endorsed exhibition and monograph. Opening at the Blaxland Gallery within Farmers Department Store on 28 May 1964, this travelling public exhibition consisted of a series of evocative photographs, mostly taken by David Potts and documented in alarming accuracy the plight of Australia’s built environment. Later becoming a monograph in 1966, *Australian Outrage* considered the appearance of various urban environments across Australia. With a focus on uncontrolled development by the (in)action of multiple governments, this groundbreaking visual study questioned the politics of the built environment with resultant urban decay and disfigurement. For NSW, this occurred at a time well before the NSW Environmental and Assessment Act, 1979 or even the current State Environment Planning Policy, 2011 (with its overused state significant developments and state significant infrastructures).

Considering many of the infrastructure projects currently underway across Sydney, which as entrepreneurial developments are described as having achieved ‘value capture’, comparison can indeed be drawn with *Australian Outrage*. Of concern with these new infrastructure projects is the loss of too much rich urban fabric, and when comparing this with the observations made by Don Gazzard in his 1966 monograph, history is blatantly repeating itself. With this level of recent change, the following visual essay is presented.

Glenn Harper is member of the NSW Chapter’s heritage committee and is senior associate at PTW Architects.

A copy of *Australian Outrage* can be viewed at the NSW Chapter on request.

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‘The fact that this book has been written is an illustration of a growing realization that although we are better off, we aren’t happy with our progress to the right sort of surroundings. Environmental decisions based on [...] economic considerations are not good enough.

*We must be careful, however, as our cities and suburbs change and redevelop, that we do not obliterate everything of the past. The bringing in of the new must not mean that everything old, regardless of merit, is destroyed.*’

— Don Gazzard, *Australian Outrage*, (Sydney: Ure Smith / Art and Australia, 1966), pp 21 and 29

Every NSW architectural practice was more than likely to have a copy of this book in their professional library by the late 1960s.
Bachelor Flats, Sydney City (c. 1939) by Emil Sodersten. This building (listed as a heritage item) was demolished in 2017 to make way for the proposed Martin Place metro station.

Mermaid tile mural, Sydney City (1963) by Douglas Annand. This inspired double height foyer mural was removed (assumed put into storage?) when the former P&O House was also demolished in 2017 to make way for the proposed Martin Place metro station.

Crows Nest post office, Crows Nest (c. 1965) attributed to the Department of Commonwealth. This building was demolished in 2018 to make way for the proposed Crows Nest metro station.

Millward Brown Building, North Sydney (1972) attributed to Gino Volpato and built for the Fischer Group of Companies. This building was demolished in 2018 to make way for the proposed Victoria Cross metro station.

Building on our past, creating a better future – NSW Government billboard located outside Central railway station.

Rich heritage always evolving – NSW government billboard located on Miller Street, North Sydney. All photos: Glenn Harper.
A trail of heritage destruction

Who Supports Sirius Heritage Listing?

YES!

NSW Heritage Council
National Trust
World Monuments Fund
ICOMOS
DOCOMOMO
Australian Institute of Architects
City of Sydney
Historic Houses Association
The Twentieth Century Heritage Society of NSW & ACT

NO!

NSW Heritage Minister, Gabrielle Upton

saveoursirius.org
Attending the DOCOMOMO international conference in Ljubljana last September served to reinforce my concerns that modern architectural heritage is still not well protected in NSW. This is not for lack of trying, nor is it for lack of legislation. Attempts to heritage list the Sirius building have highlighted where the problem lies. The NSW Heritage Council unanimously supported the heritage listing. As the government sought income from the sale of the site, the listing was rejected. As the Save our Sirius campaign has pointed out the tailored advice supporting the refusal did not tally with the views of any of leading expert bodies. This is not the first time that the minister has refused to include a twentieth century item on the state heritage register (SHR). Not taking the view of expert bodies is not confined to the built heritage, and is one of the issues that have come to light during investigations into the Murray–Darling environmental catastrophe.

Heritage legislation has existed in NSW for many years, and twentieth century heritage is now widely recognised up to a world heritage level. At a state level Australia’s twentieth century architectural heritage is not valued to the same degree as that of the nineteenth century. Resumption provisions initially imposed for reasons of public health are now used to override other considerations such as environmental heritage. The ability to turn off the Heritage Act for infrastructure projects has had a negative impact on twentieth century heritage.

We have recently seen the loss of 7 Elizabeth Street in the CBD, bachelor flats designed by Emil Sodersten (see image on page 25) with interiors by Marion Hall Best. Number 7 Elizabeth was included on the Institute’s list of nationally significant architecture and listed by the City of Sydney. Submissions by the City and the Institute were ignored. Sites are being routinely cleared of their twentieth century heritage as part of infrastructure projects, yet the land is only required for part of the construction phase – the destruction of part of the garden suburb of Haberfield, against the advice of the NSW Heritage Council, being a case in point. This destruction of 53 houses, many of which were heritage listed, in the Haberfield Conservation Area was described by the National Trust as the worst hit to heritage in our history. The suburb is the foremost example of Federation architecture in the state, yet not the slightest bit of notice was taken of the various submissions that sought a solution that also retained the heritage building stock.

An examination of the SHR listings indicates a second problem. Two thirds of the listings under the built category date from the nineteenth century, as the table below shows. Less than twenty buildings designed since 1960 have been listed. Listings by gold-medal winning architects are few and far between in comparison with their nineteenth century counterparts. If we compare the prominent post war architect Sydney Ancher with the late nineteenth century architectural firm headed up by George Allen Mansfield, there are 14 locally listed items by Ancher and his firm of Ancher Mortlock, Murray and Woolley. Of the Mansfields’ work there are 13 buildings on the state heritage register and 121 locally listed items.

The NSW Chapter’s regularly updated list of architectural heritage designed post-1900 has been widely utilised as the basis for heritage studies and has resulted in LEP and SHR listings. The success in getting inter-war and post war buildings on statutory heritage lists can be directly correlated to buildings identified in this register. Yet identified buildings, including designs that have achieved international recognition, continue to be destroyed. A recent application for demolition to Woollahra Council failed to even mention that the house in question was designed by a Pritzker Prize winner (Glenn Murcutt), or that the design had been included in the catalogue of his works in the award citation.

I would suggest that a lot more work needs to be done in promoting the state’s architectural heritage to the public so that the imbalance between the nineteenth and twentieth century listings can be evened out. I would also hope that NSW has learnt a lesson from the demolition of part of a major twentieth century architectural and planning achievement – the garden suburb of Haberfield – for a spoil dump.

Dr Noni Boyd is an architectural historian.
Between a series of vacant shops and construction sites, a smattering of flashing neon remnants remain, hinting at Kings Cross’ previous life. Now increasingly dominated by high-rise residential development and supermarket chains, five years after the introduction of lockout laws, Sydney’s inner-city nightscape is a very different place. There is renewed debate over the heavy-handed policy amidst growing ‘nanny-state’ sentiment, yet the repeal of lockout laws is on neither of the two major parties’ campaign agendas leading up to the 2019 state election.

The impact of the 2014 state policy can be felt far from the Cross. Queues spill out from Newtown venues, snaking down King Street, characterising the increased patronage of recent years as crowds shift towards one of the few inner-city locations excluded from the lockout area. As a result, violence previously associated with Kings Cross has been reported by the Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research to have been displaced to Newtown and surrounding areas. Along with reduced pedestrian activity in Kings Cross and widespread closures of night-time businesses, the social repercussions continue to be felt, as the historically diverse communities that defined the character of Kings Cross and Newtown are pushed further to the edges.

The Keep Sydney Open party (KSO) will appear on ballots for the first time this election, indicative of growing public discontent over the policy’s ongoing impact. Both KSO and City of Sydney have made submissions to the Review of the Liquor Amendment Act 2014, with recommendations that include concessions for small bars and low impact businesses, aimed to stimulate rather than suffocate the night-time economy. The social repercussions continue to be felt, as the historically diverse communities that defined the character of Kings Cross and Newtown are pushed further to the edges.

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In conversation with Emilya Colliver, a member of the advisory panel and owner of creative businesses Art Pharmacy and Culture Scouts, the self-described ‘cultural entrepreneur’ outlined the panel’s role in contributing a broader range of perspectives to night-time economy policy development, with an aim of representing and supporting diversity. From an arts and culture context, Colliver believes the city needs to ‘go deeper’ and diversify the night-time economy, rather than focusing on alcohol related activities. Colliver suggests the importance of the ‘fine-grain’ in compelling cultural spaces, where assemblages of local night-time venues and experiences create authentic community networks within a transforming city, a process difficult to artificially construct.

The gentrification of Kings Cross since 2014 has been fast-tracked, as gritty late-night dive bars and stripclubs were purged by a homogenising wave that swept the inner city suburb. Coupled with increasing property values in the wake of lockout laws and concurrent sales of significant public housing around Millers Point, Waterloo and the Rocks, an undercurrent of inequality endangers the social diversity that was always characteristic of inner city Sydney. Along with Kings Cross and Newtown, these places are now at risk of losing their unique character, influenced over a long history by various subcultures on which they are reliant upon to remain vibrant. In a crisis of affordability, Colliver hopes to guide policy that creates grassroots opportunities for creatives, especially in a market environment where creative need is regularly trumped by developer demand.

The NSW Government recently announced a $1.5 million boost to Sydney’s live music and nightlife economy, seemingly ignorant of the relationship between this struggling industry and its original political blow. As the campaigns of the major parties remain silent on lockout laws, I suspect baby-steps are all we’ll see; framed as a protection of public safety and followed by rapid gentrification and property development, there’s no political motive for repeal. The discussion around lockouts must now turn introspective. In our concern to preserve our stake as a ‘global city’, we are at risk of losing those elements of what made our city interesting. Perhaps it is a romanticised nostalgia of a place whose lights are now fading, but in the vestiges of its remaining stalwarts I am reminded of the Cross’s once dizzying draw, and hope the lessons from its demise are not lost.

Sarah Lawlor is a senior architect at FJMT studio and a member of the NSW Chapter’s editorial and education & research committees.
‘No longer content to be just the lucky country, Australia must become the clever country.’
– Former prime minister Bob Hawke’s speech delivered in Brisbane, 8 March, 1990

Twenty-eight years following Bob Hawke’s election speech, excellence in education is becoming recognised as a national priority. On the 14 June 2018, the NSW government announced the biggest investment in public education infrastructure in the history of NSW, promising to spend $6 billion on new schools and significant school upgrades over a four-year period across the state. This investment comes as an unparalleled opportunity for us to reimagine the way we think about schools, communities and architecture. Although re-imagining an education system is no easy feat, particularly from the lens of the built environment, a framework that can assist us with challenging the status quo of school design is the Design Guide for Schools prepared by the office of the Government Architect and released a month prior to the funding announcement.

It may come as no surprise that Australian schools are one of the most underutilised public assets. Fenced off from the community, our schools typically operate between 8:30am and 3:30pm and after hours they are off limits to the local residents. In my practice as an architect, I have observed how the school and community interaction is often limited to certain symbolic occasions, such as hiring of school hall facilities, career days and celebrations of Anzac Day, Australia Day, Mother’s Day and the like. It seems to deprive the students of diverse and authentic learning and the community of the benefits of interconnectedness.

To understand the possibilities of schools one has to assume a position that education lies at the core of the development of our communities and it has to continue adapting to the ever-changing environment around us.

Schools are places of first encounters between children and the world of adults, in-between spaces which prepare the students for their grown-up lives. What should we do if indeed we are crafting places that are interposed between home and world, or, in architectural terms, house/dwelling and town/city?

The recent framework for excellence in design developed by the office of the Government Architect seeks to inspire us to think beyond the school gates. The Design Guide for Schools celebrates creativity and endorses design as a tool that can unlock the potential of our communities. We are advised to respect the context, reflect the values and aspirations of the local communities and shape the sense of ownership and identity. Design is to balance security with accessibility and inclusiveness and encourage access for members of the community to shared facilities after hours. School, educators and community are to be involved in the vision and design brief for the school.

As architects we have to ask ourselves the question: can local schools become the beating hearts of our communities? Personally, I feel that closing the distance between architects and the end users of our projects is essential to shape the desired design outcomes. Schools should be made with the people who will use them. We should wish for the future in which the answer to the question ‘What’s the best school?’ is always ‘the local’.

Kasia Podrygajlo is an associate at JDH Architects and a member of the NSW Chapter editorial and education & research committees.
International architecture competitions have recently been the subject of debate. If the concept of ‘what we leave behind’ matters, then the precision with which we choose the works and the people to execute them should also matter. All the present proponents of the competition debate are faithful to the notion that the ‘best person’ to design the work should be sought. We appear to all disagree, however, on almost everything else.

THE PURPOSE OF THE PROCESS

Most governments these days know that if they chose to announce the funding of a public building they are unlikely to survive to enjoy the day of its opening. We, in the practice of architecture, are pawns in this game of announcements. Headlines and ‘good news’, are what governments seem to seek in a world of constant criticism. In this context, an international competition can provide such headlines; having an architectural star winning has hitherto provided the governments a perceived but false ‘credibility-by-association’ in the guise of a perceived probity.

Yet the safest choice of process to procure the world’s finest buildings did not elude historical patrons. This was in times when a building was being sought rather than an announcement. Most significant buildings in world history were straight commissions: the Parthenon, the Pantheon, St Paul’s Cathedral and even St Peter’s, Rome. Hagia Sophia, as with San Vitale in Ravenna too, was the result of singular patronage. Where excellence has been sought in a historical sense, process has been minimised.

More recently, The Guggenheim New York and Chandigarh, the Seagram Building and Ronchamp, the Castelvecchio Museum and the Kimbell were straight commissions. Ironically, the Guggenheim Bilbao would be now cast as equal to a straight commission considering the brevity of its process.

AN INTEREST IN PLACE

There exists the idea that practitioners here fear being usurped by overseas architects. This is not my fear. My fear is that recently, practitioners from abroad too, are cynical about the regime of competitions and are too ready to only ‘merchandise’ their wares. In recent times one might observe the paucity of quality in efforts from exotic architects.

The importance of interest in an ‘architecture-of-place’ is demonstrated in the study of why Utzon moved to Australia and why Pierre Jeanneret’s ashes are scattered in Chandigarh’s Sukhna Lake. It is has never been the case that the importing of skills spontaneously develops into outcomes of genius loci.

KNOWLEDGEABLE JURORS

Utzon is a signal reminder; his being overlooked in the Opera House competition versus what we have at Bennelong Point in Sydney. Saarinen’s late arrival into the jury may be the virtue. Being absent from earlier discussions aided Saarinen to simply judge the best work unaffected by discourse. A better reinforcement of this idea is seen in the University of Glasgow College of Arts competition, where the entries were anonymous but so were the jury members’ deliberations; otherwise a drafting junior’s drawings from the commercial practice may never have been chosen.

Extraordinary and unnatural is the burgeoning phenomenon of the paucity of highly regarded jurors on so many contemporary architecture competitions. This is
not to say that only a person that has experience practic-
ing as an architect truly understands the cultural dimen-
sions required to judge a work. But knowledge should be
key to any venture’s success and there may be higher
propensity for a practitioner having relevant knowledge
over a bureaucrat or academic. In the broadest of frequen-
cies, architecture is recognisable by all experts, and
decisions can indeed be more objective than the public
may imagine.

THE VALUE OF AUTONOMY

Recent competitions have included an expression of
interest that culminates in a decision of architects of merit
be it ‘merit in experience’ or ‘merit in a genre’ or other
forms. This process presumes that an architect who
recently completed a compelling piece of architecture will
automatically complete an equally compelling piece of
architecture again. Not all architects are the same,
however, and the concept of seeking a rare work of
architecture twice reduces, by calculation, that work’s
rarity. The possibility of a good outcome should never
eclipse the probability of a bad one.

Competitions may also promote a process which
seeks collaboration as an antidote to either a lack of
experience (capacity) or as a way of including local talent.
These competitions are not without a flavour of belittle-
ment. The promotion of collaborations with an interna-
tional flavour neither understands the autonomy of
design nor the importance of intellectual property in our
profession. It does not understand that some of the best
practitioners design alone or in very familiar or person-
alised groups; the result of which is seen in some of the
best work presently being developed in the world. This is
why the Pritzker does not have a laureate of multiple-firm
entities. The promotion of arrangements between parties
that would not otherwise operate together for the benefit
of an international collaboration may, in time, be found to
bring little to those that practice architecture in the
locality of the work; it may be found to offer little to the
work being produced too.

Time will show, I predict, that very few works – the
results of many types of presently-run competitions – will
remain in our consciousness. Few of these works will be
an enduring testament to our time. And this will not be
easily blamed on a lack of talent.

There have been too many examples of cultural
buildings where the selection process for an architect has
not prioritised merit alone; the subtleties of enduring and
sound cultural intentions had been eclipsed by aversions
of risk and the seeking of conventionalised outcomes.
Competitions that have culminated to provide great
works of architecture have hitherto presented more fragile
and less secure processes towards appropriate outcomes.
They themselves do not eliminate the cultural risk of
leaving us all with an enduring legacy of poor result.

Angelo Candalepas is the director of Candalepas Associates.

‘For the University of Glasgow College of Arts
competition the entries were anonymous but so
were the jury members’ deliberations; otherwise a
drafting junior’s drawings from the commercial
practice may never have been chosen.’
There has been much discussion about the quality of the public realm, as expressed through its institutions, its heritage and its architecture.

At the end of the 1980s when we saw a flourish of government projects in NSW during the bicentennial there was too a fundamental shift in economic/social philosophy. The economic rationalism or neoliberalism promoted by economists like Milton Friedman and manifested in the governments of Thatcher and Reagan became the pre-eminent thinking in Australia too. It was adopted by both sides of politics at state and federal levels, and was introduced into NSW by the Greiner government. Embodied in this thinking were the ideas of small government and the application of business principles into the delivery of government services in the name of efficiency.

What did this mean for architects? Within government it meant the restructuring of departments such as the Government Architects Branch, separating design from construction, installing project managers between the client and the design team, and progressively moving it towards a fully commercial model. To the profession more broadly, its engagement with government introduced competitive tendering, a quality assurance regime and contracts designed to shift risk away from government. A project with government now (federal, state, or local) often has more in its briefing about the nature of the contract (and its transferred risks) than the functional brief.

Forty years on we are seeing signs of popular disenchantment with those established models. The famous trickle down that was promised has been seen to trickle up. Under regulated market forces have produced greed driven corruption. We have seen government agencies charged with the protection and delivery of public projects being members of development lobby...
groups, blurring the lines of independence and accountability; and we have seen the continued sale of government ‘assets’ (public land and buildings), ostensibly to fund public services.

On the positive side we have seen investment in major public infrastructure. In Sydney we are seeing a second airport being built on land purchased for that purpose in 1975; new rail, metro (cancelled by the former labour government and now resurrected) and light rail lines. There is investment too in cultural institutions such as the Art Gallery of NSW, Australian Museum, the Opera House and more. This is paralleled with massive expenditure on new road systems, which will in the end be privately run on a profit basis through a toll system; user pays, one of the great principles of neoliberalism, is entrenched.

In NSW there have been some important initiatives. SEPP 65 has improved the design quality of apartments and enshrined principles that help people outside our profession understand that design quality goes beyond how a building looks, but also incorporates how it functions, the amenity it offers, and the way it works with its context.

The City of Sydney continues a multi-pronged approach to quality. It has a design excellence policy as an overarching ambition, and design excellence provisions in its planning instruments, mostly delivered through design competitions, and notably for commercial buildings. It is the patron of public projects whose excellence is evidenced by the number of architecture awards it has won, and it has a design advisory panel. The City shows that quality can be delivered if it is valued.

City architects have been appointed for Parramatta and Blacktown Councils and several councils have independent design review panels.

At the state level there remain several design review panels in a number of agencies. The office of the Government Architect has instituted a state review panel, based on successful panels in South Australia and Victoria, and embodies excellent research into process and robust guiding principles. It is mandating serious review of state projects and is enshrined into the planning approval process.

Are all these initiatives attempts to manage the excesses of rampant development or are they the natural result (at least at a state level) of the need to regulate the processes that 40 years ago were managed through more direct government procurement? More importantly are they enough to protect our heritage and deliver development which appropriately balances market needs with public good?

Recent events suggest not. The desire for commercial return on assets is natural in the market but has too become part of the business of government. This is seen at many levels; increasing commercial activity in our parks, asset sales, but more fundamentally the maximising of return to government over the quality of outcome. There is an assumed moral high ground in doing the best deal for government as it funds greater delivery of services, not personal or company gain, and that is true; but too often this means compromised outcomes such as reduced amenity or over development.

We are told the housing market is coming off the boil, and the economy is at threat from international pressures. As, or if, things begin to tighten we can expect the market to request a loosening of controls, we can also expect state governments, with lowering revenues, to question the need for some regulation where it is seen to be a cost to government or an impediment to development and the revenue it generates.

The processes in place have shown that excellence can be delivered within a commercial framework, but any process can be argued as red tape and an impediment to progress. The value of the public realm and public benefits can be overlooked in these arguments and design quality even when ingrained in the assessment process can be outweighed by other measures. There has always been talk of the balance between social, environmental, and economic imperatives, but too often it is the economic ones that have taken precedence. Greater density can be achieved, and well, but design quality and the protection of the public realm, like liberty, require constant vigilance.

Within the electorate there is urgent concern about the lack of action on climate change, court challenges to government projects, protests about overdevelopment, and campaigns to protect heritage. Let us hope this generates a shift in political thinking and the values that underpin good governance.

Peter Mould is a former NSW Government Architect.
Advocacy and activism

One of the constant complaints that we receive from members is the onerous and unfair nature of the public procurement of architectural services. From poorly written briefs, to proxy competitions, to excessive deliverables; there are a range of recurring problems and the anecdotal evidence is that they are getting worse. So we are investigating these issues and pursuing action to help establish firm, fair and reasonable commercial conditions for the profession.

Overview of problems:
- Tenders and EOI requiring design concepts without formalising a recognised competition process, and for no fee
- Proponents seeking to recover tender costs by charging a fee to access the tender documents
- Discrepancies between proponents’ and architects’ understanding of key terms (eg design concept), leading to discrepancies in deliverables expectations
- Inadequate or no budget guidance
- No protection of participants’ IP
- Limited information regarding assessment criteria or the weighting of criteria
- Excessive deliverables asked for open EOI or tenders
- Uninsurable contract conditions
- Poorly written and/or vague project briefs
- Risk shifting rather than risk reduction
- Excessive list of subconsultants to be briefed and engaged, including those traditionally engaged by the client
- Conditions of engagement not suitable to consultant engagement, poorly adapted from construction contracts
- … and there are many more.

The NSW procurement taskforce and a national procurement taskforce are looking at the issues and gathering the data. Our aim is to educate government agencies about what fair procurement looks like, how it will bring better outcomes and why it is in our mutual interest. In this respect we will work with the GANSW, who we believe share our desire to encourage government agencies to be better clients. At national level, a procurement policy is being formulated which will provide guidelines for EOI and RFTs. We will disseminate this policy to our membership so that you understand the Institute’s position, and encourage members to carefully assess whether a particular procurement process is fair and reasonable. We also plan to begin a process of informing members about specific tenders and competitions that do not conform to our policies via a ‘procurement alert’. And of course we want to recognise and promote clients who do procurement well.

However, for all this to have impact we also need members to also take a stand, and this is where our efforts are often let down. While architects continue to participate in unfair procurement, complaints will tend to fall on deaf ears. As a profession we need to work together and stop undermining each other. Let clients know when you think their procurement practices are unfair, and explain why, with the backing of the Institute’s written policy. Sometimes to choose to not participate in unfair, unreasonable tenders will be money well saved in the long term.

Finally, this is my last president’s message. My two years are up and I am extremely happy to have passed the presidential mantle onto the wonderful Kathlyn Loseby. It has been a very valuable and busy two years for me. It has expanded my worldview of architecture well beyond my own experiences and given me a much better understanding of all the factors that influence the architecture that we see around us. If there is one thought I would leave you with – it is that the real decisions that frame the built environment that we end up with happen well before the traditional role of the architect has even begun. Architects, with their skills in design thinking, have so much to offer in the realm of policy formulation, and if we are to realise that potential we need to imagine a profession that has genuine input into every aspect of strategic thinking. Because at the moment, those who are doing this role are not doing it very well.

Andrew Nimmo
Immediate past NSW Chapter President
Areas for action for the NSW Chapter

A new arrival is expected to be forthcoming with great ideas for the future. That might be the popular expectation, but it is not workable. It is not workable in the Institute because in large part it is members and their concerns and interests that will influence my plans! Members are doing business day in and day out and are the interface between the profession, its market(s) and its other stakeholders. It is from this interaction that opportunities and imperatives for action will come.

Nevertheless, I became aware of a few areas for action from just my first few days in this role and conversations had with Joshua Morrin, the immediate past executive director, and Andrew Nimmo, the immediate past chapter council president.

The top three, which will be topics of continued discussion with the president and council, as well as my colleagues across the Institute, are procurement, market profile and professional development.

Procurement of members’ services by several public authorities over recent months has been concerning. The approach taken has seemingly misunderstood the architectural process, required service to be done without remuneration, been economically inefficient and potentially placed at risk the moral rights of the author of any design done for the procurement.

Some of these procurements have had the flavour of competitions, or quasi competitions, without fair and equitable treatment of those who make submissions, and in disregard for the Institute’s policy on competitions. Some also seem to potentially step outside the law or what should be fair practice on the part of the authority.

I plan to address this as a matter of urgency over the first quarter of the year. The form this will take will emerge as I discuss the options with chapter council and the relevant chapter committees.

Market profile is related to the procurement challenge. We have long had the need to educate our market in the services we provide and their benefits to clients and users. Where members have expert clients – those familiar with building developments and architectural services – the challenge is lessened, yet challenges can remain there.

When I was practicing a major developer client offhandedly remarked that my team would ‘do the drawings’ without recognising the vast amount of coordination and re-engineering that would be required. I made him aware of this then and as we moved on I noted that he also dismissively looked to his legal team ‘to give us the words’ … Maybe that’s how all his professional providers were regarded!

For inexperienced organisations, understanding of the role and benefits of architects can be patchy. The Institute will do what it can here in conjunction with members to show and tell what architects bring to their business and communities.

Professional development will need to meet the legislated requirements for inclusion of practice management topics. Staff will work with the CPD committee to help members to achieve this.

Over the coming months I look forward to meeting members both formally and informally and introducing myself.

David Green
Executive Director, NSW
Change of guard in NSW

Introducing the new faces at the helm of key architectural institutions in New South Wales

Kathlyn Loseby
NSW Chapter President

Laura Cockburn
NSW Chapter Vice President

Before anything else I’d like to give a huge vote of thanks to Andrew Nimmo for leading the NSW Chapter as president for the last two years. With Andrew’s guidance the large, medium and small practice forums were revived, relationships with the practice networks were re-tuned, and the procurement taskforce was set up. He spearheaded many advocacy campaigns, including challenging the misuse of the Sydney Opera House sails for advertising and fighting unfair procurement practice.

Previous past president Shaun Carter is still advocating for Sirius and for good design. Theirs are both top acts to follow, and I look forward to championing three major issues of my presidency:

Procurement: It is fortuitous the first Bulletin issue is one where I am guest editor and my first as chapter president. This will be a major advocacy piece for the Institute in coming years.

Advocacy: Going forward, the Institute will continue Andrew’s important work with government and commercial organisations to improve their efficient engagement of architects as advisors, designers and administrators. We will strive to raise recognition of the breadth and depth of value that architects can bring clients and the community through good design.

Equality: Equality both in diversity for those who form our profession, and for our consideration of those who use and benefit from the built environment.

As you may know the Chapter president is a voluntary position. In committing to the role I was concerned about the time involved in representing the members but still being an effective chief operating officer for Crone and an involved parent. Fortunately, Laura Cockburn, director at Conrad Gargett, has accepted the role of the inaugural vice president. Laura will contribute to future issues of the Bulletin and will be across a range of member activities. Thank you Laura, I look forward to working with you and all our members. — Kathlyn Loseby

Kirsten Orr
Registrar, NSW Architects Registration Board

The NSW Architects Registration Board (NSW ARB) is pleased to announce that Dr Kirsten Orr has been appointed to the role of registrar. Kirsten, a registered architect, is expected to bring a unique balance of professional, academic and regulatory leadership to the role having previously worked as professor of architecture and dean of the School of Technology, Environment & Design at the University of Tasmania.

Kirsten also served as the NSW ARB’s academic board member between 2011 and 2012.

‘After more than 20 years in academia, I am excited to work outside the higher education context to advance the interests of the architectural profession and protect consumers of architectural services’, she said.

Beyond academia, Kirsten has been highly influential in the governance and regulation of the architectural profession. Between 2015 and 2016, Kirsten was chair of the national education committee of the Australian Institute of Architects and between 2016 and 2017 she was president of the Association of Architecture Schools of Australasia.

Since 2016, Kirsten has been a director of the Architects Accreditation Council of Australia (AACA) providing leadership in the development and delivery of the new Architecture Program Accreditation Procedure and the brokering of mutual recognition agreements with Malaysia, Singapore and the United Kingdom.

‘I am looking forward to drawing on these diverse experiences’, she said. ‘My deep understanding of the architectural profession, the university sector and the workings of state and federal government will be invaluable in my new role.’

NSW ARB president Dr Deborah Dearing said that Kirsten was chosen from a strong field of local and international applicants. ‘Her highly regarded experience within industry and university sector equips her well to realise our mission of registering architects, protecting consumers, informing the public and promoting architecture at a time when global trends and new technologies result in continual change’, said Deborah.

‘We welcome Kirsten to the role and look forward to her adding new insights and driving the progressive and innovating strategic program of our ambitious Board.’

Kirsten is particularly keen to promote a better understanding of architecture in the broader community through new partnerships and interdisciplinary collaborations with allied professions. ‘There are incredible opportunities to develop an expanded program about architecture’s role in improving the liveability of our cities’, she said.

Dr Kirsten Orr began her role as registrar from 4 February 2019 and succeeds previous registrar Timothy Horton.
The new design object Better Placed is supported by an evolving suite of practical guidance and tools, the most recent being the Design Guide for Heritage and the Environmental Design in Schools Manual.

Work continues on the finalisation of the Urban Design Guide for Regional NSW and associated case studies illustrating the key concepts in the guide.

The NSW state design review panel (SDRP) remains a priority as the pilot program enters its tenth month. 2019 will build on the 65 SDRP sessions held in 2018 during which 46 different projects were reviewed. Twenty-two of the 46 projects were schools and the remainder were student and affordable housing, hospitals, universities, public institutions, land releases, and private developments.

A current priority for the team is the preparation of the Movement and Place Guidelines and Practitioners Toolkit. Led by GANSW, the project is a collaboration between a range of government agencies, including TINSW, RMS and INSW, local government and industry. The program of work supports a cohesive approach to aligning integrated and efficient movement of people and goods while protecting and enhancing the amenity and quality of places.

To find out more visit: www.governmentarchitect.nsw.gov.au

Olivia Hyde
Joint Acting Government Architects, NSW

Ben Hewett

• The recruitment process for the role of NSW Government Architect is still being finalised following the resignation of the 23rd Government Architect Peter Poulet.
• It has been a very competitive process, and an announcement will be forthcoming once a new Government Architect is selected.
• In the interim the role of Acting Government Architect is being shared by members of the existing executive team. Olivia Hyde led the team for a five month period between October 2018 and March 2019 and Ben Hewett has now taken on the role until a new Government Architect is appointed later in the year.
• During this period GANSW continues its work to champion a culture of good design with a focus on public space.
• The team continues to focus on the implementation of Better Placed and the new object of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act to ‘promote good design and amenity’ and what these mean for the planning, development and major projects in NSW.
• The new design object and Better Placed are supported by an evolving suite of practical guidance and tools, the most recent being the Design Guide for Heritage and the Environmental Design in Schools Manual.
• Work continues on the finalisation of the Urban Design Guide for Regional NSW and associated case studies illustrating the key concepts in the guide.
• The NSW state design review panel (SDRP) remains a priority as the pilot program enters its tenth month. 2019 will build on the 65 SDRP sessions held in 2018 during which 46 different projects were reviewed. Twenty-two of the 46 projects were schools and the remainder were student and affordable housing, hospitals, universities, public institutions, land releases, and private developments.
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To find out more visit: www.governmentarchitect.nsw.gov.au

Francesca Hughes
Architecture Head of School, UTS

UTS’s new head of school of architecture, Professor Francesca Hughes, brings to the school’s already international and diverse faculty a new focus on the complex global questions that face architecture and its education. She argues that never has there been a more complex nor a more interesting time to rethink architectural education and its relations to industry. The multiple and intersecting contemporary crises of climate change, mass economic migration, environmental degradation and evolving social media and AI conflicts all require multidisciplinary responses in which architects will need to play a crucial role:

“Despite the marginalisation of the architect as an instrument of social and technological change in the last decade or so, I believe it is now precisely the architect’s and the landscape architect’s multidisciplinary skill set, humanist education and cross-digital fluency that will imagine, design and materialise answers to some of today’s most complex and seemingly irreversible problems.”

Having has recently moved from London to take up the position, Prof Hughes brings to the role more than 25 years experience in the field of architectural education, theory and practice. For the last two decades she has taught both design and history and theory at the Architectural Association and the Bartlett School of Architecture, UCL. Beyond London, she has lectured widely in the US, Australia and Europe and has acted as visiting professor and external examiner internationally in very different education contexts. Although the work of her art/architecture practice, Hughes Meyer Studio, has received RIBA awards, her prime medium has always been the drawn line and written word. Her design research and writings have focus on architecture’s transforming relations to technology in the last 150 years and the cultural construction of architecture’s many systems of measure.

This is most evident in two recent publications she has authored: The Architecture of Error: Matter, Measure and the Misadventures of Precision, a critique of architecture’s increasing fetishisation of precision; and Drawings that Count, a critique of reductive readings of context to the merely physical. Her all female edited volume in the late ‘90s, The Architect: Reconstructing her Practice, argued for the unique position the then extreme minority of women brought to architecture’s many forms of practice. This book since proved to be part of a watershed that saw many of its contributors, such as Elizabeth Diller, go on to become leaders in the profession. She is working on a new book examining the history of architecture’s role in and relations to computational design and digital fabrication.
Conybeare Morrison’s adaptative reuse in Paddington

Conybeare Morrison has recently completed the adaptative reuse of the state heritage-listed Scottish Hospital in Paddington for Presbyterian Aged Care, converting it into nine independent living units as part of a broader complex of residential aged care accommodation.

BKA’s koala sanctuary and Bayside Council amenities

BKA Newcastle develops the original concept (Jackson Teece) for a Koala Sanctuary at Anna Bay for Port Stephens Council. BKA Sydney wins two amenities buildings for Bayside Council.

Nicolas Thioulouse joins Mirvac Design

Mirvac Design welcomes Nicolas Thioulouse to the leadership team of directors to bolster its expertise in complex mixed use developments. Thioulouse was previously studio creative leader for Scentre Group, and prior to that with Woods Bagot.

Client’s praise for Tanner Kibble Denton Architects

TKD Architect’s passion for education projects is best summed up by the Australian Catholic University Canberra campus dean Patrick McArdle’s comments about the recently completed Veritas Building: “TKD incorporated all our dreams and wishes. They came to share our vision.”

Allen Jack+Cottier’s competition win

Allen Jack+Cottier has won a competition to design the new residence for the Anglican archbishop of Sydney. This significant building will celebrate the complexity and subtleties of an unusual brief to accommodate both the private life and public/civic roles that are associated with the archbishop’s position. The result is an exploration of all the nuances of creating a home where all feel welcome and at ease whether they be private family members, the broader church community or visiting church dignitaries.

NBRS Architecture – balance for better

Supporting the NBRS people focused goals, the leadership team has seen growth and a more balanced mix. New appointments have been: Macella Salzmann as studio principal – education, and David Heap as technical lead. Along with esteemed guests, NBRS celebrated International Women’s Day in style in the Seidler apartment. Speakers included: Mary-Lynne Taylor, Belinda Parker, Maria Atkinson AM, Nicola Ashurst, Kirsten Orr, and Samantha Polkinghorne. The celebration honoured our women and supported our balance of 50/50 male–female split.

Crone’s representative for Champions of Change

Meet interior’s principal Paul Brace, Crone’s representative among 10 industry leaders supporting the Architect Male Champions of Change. Recognising a lack of senior women in architectural practices, since 2015 this group works together to influence and change the status quo. 
In every company, creating and maintaining a culture of innovation and creativity, is a challenge that can’t be left to chance. The imperative to think outside the box is especially critical in fields where the more creative solution is often found when the design parameters are removed.

Mirvac Design promotes creativity by staging its own internal design competitions allowing its team of architects, interior designers, engineers, draftspeople and placemakers to explore what is possible rather than what is feasible.

One such competition, involving a brief to design an apartment with no walls, produced some remarkable entries and a surprise winner. The response, according to Mirvac’s general manager of design Diana Sarcasmo, has proven the worth of setting challenges that stimulate out of the box thinking.

‘We had more than 20 teams submit entries from the Mirvac Design team and some of the ideas were nothing short of brilliant’, said Ms Sarcasmo. ‘Perhaps the most exciting aspect of the exercise was the camaraderie and friendly rivalry across the many skill sets within Mirvac Design which seemed to spur them on to new heights of creativity.

‘That was certainly the case with the winning entry which came not from our architects or interior designers but a collaboration between a drafts person and a building services engineer, and that’s the kind of collaborative innovation we want to encourage.’

Magno Wall, the winning entry submitted by drafts person Joe Amato and engineer Mark Zwolsman, allows an apartment to be configured in multiple configurations using movable and transformable storage units. Rather than relying on an industrial railing system that limits movement to a single track and clutters the ceiling, Magno Wall uses an electromagnetic mesh in the ceiling in combination with movable storage units. A concealed wheel mechanism allows each partition to rotate, slide and pivot around the floor plate, and lock into place by switching the intelligent ceiling structure on and off.

For the designers, the chance to participate in a design competition ‘with no walls’ represented a welcome departure from the everyday, in which feasibility and compliance must inevitably rule.

‘A lot of the time we have to work within pre-defined ways with layouts based on a prescribed set of rules’, says Mark Zwolsman. ‘Our focus is on making the best use of space within the envelope but under the competition guidelines we got to throw away all of those rules and think outside the box to try new ways of doing things.’

The ideas flowed freely over several brainstorming sessions with Joe’s original spark of innovation and Mark’s tendency to over-engineer things leading to a design solution that may have gone beyond the possible to in fact deliver a feasible and radical new approach to flexible living. Patents pending!
Back in 1975–1976 the Institute of Architects was much more state based. We had freedom to go public on lots of issues. I ran the talks program generally held at North Sydney Council over the road from the Institute building and then became editor of the Architecture Bulletin. It was a looser publication in those days with hand drawn images and ads for upcoming talks. I recall interviewing the minister for planning and covering topical issues. My role then incorporated membership and PR and this involved meeting with ministers and running ideas competitions for key sites in Sydney. We did a competition for the Overseas Passenger Terminal and the Gateway site at Circular Quay as well as one for Circular Quay. I later on became president of the NSW Chapter by getting a number of younger people onto a ticket under the title active. Until this time the president first had to be secretary then treasurer then vice president and after about eight years you got to the top role. In 1982 we cut through this slow process to make the Institute more relevant to society. The aim was to get architecture onto the front pages which we succeeded in doing. This also flowed into early conferences with international speakers.

I think the Institute has become too nationally focused. I see very few media releases from the NSW Chapter these days. In my current job as CEO of the Urban Taskforce I put out over 100 media releases a year – that is two or more a week. And they lead to TV, radio and print coverage. The Institute should be a much more aggressive commentator on urban affairs in NSW. This is particularly so now that over 30% of homes in Sydney are in apartments and those over three floors must be designed by architects by law. The NSW Chapter must be at the front end of championing a more urban environment. There is a leadership vacuum in this area as suburban dwellers complain about overdevelopment. Even the Institute awards seem to favour detached houses for wealthy people rather than the growing number of apartment buildings which are more affordable.

I also detect that the Institute is a bit negative about the marketplace and particularly developers. Finally I encourage younger architects to get into leadership positions in the profession and become public advocates for a better more affordable built environment.

In its early life, Architecture Bulletin played a role as a source of information and communication with NSW members. In my time as editor, I shifted the focus towards providing a critical forum for the profession, both internally on projects and to public interest issues. The focus was topical, responsive, provocative and engaging. My monthly editorials explored the collective value, and articulated the public responsibility, of the profession. The broadsheet format was graphic – under the design guidance of a young James Grose – changed frequently and sought to stimulate interest in design issues confronting architects and the broader community. It was always immediate and hopefully relevant, and we had fun. Like all enduring publications, the focus has changed over time under differing editorial leadership. It’s great to see the more recent return to this broader interest in design issues and public responsibility.

My path to a stimulating and public life in architecture has emerged from this opportunity for involvement with the Bulletin for which I am grateful. It is only through a more publicly engaged profession that recognition of the value of architects and consequent opportunities will be realised. I believe the emerging generation of architects have this agenda at heart and encourage all to express this interest through collective action.

What is the real potential for Architecture Bulletin? I think there is an opportunity to now focus even more on agency, exploring the public responsibility and value of design – and be more accessible to a public audience. Perhaps it could become more akin to The Conversation – with more visual content, and with a concentration on architecture and urbanism, exploring and illustrating how these topics are fundamental to addressing the challenges of equity and a sustainable future for our communities.
Architectural Bulletin remains one of the few journals which I consistently examine, largely to better understand the evolving scenario of our profession. Its publications committee – now editorial committee – has always provided a lively forum for exploring architecture around the state, and has sought to convey relevant issues and related commentary in the Bulletin’s pages.

My colleague Philip Cox showed me, long ago, that one’s books and articles could establish in a very public way one’s expertise in diverse and interesting areas. The Bulletin has always clearly been a vehicle for architectural writers to expose ideas and attitudes to the profession, on occasion reaching a broader readership as newspaper articles.

Its precursor The Salon, edited between 1904 and 1913 by a fine and now largely forgotten architect George Sydney Jones, could advocate flat roofs and appropriate landscaped settings, and show real leadership and style amongst a then tiny profession.

Architecture Bulletin still has that role and responsibility in a field that, with urban growth and density, is becoming increasingly relevant. May the Bulletin long continue as a tangible, lasting account of our evolving profession and its current concerns.

Richard Francis-Jones
Chair, Editorial Committee, 2002–2005

Architecture Bulletin has always been a very important forum for the presentation, analysis and discussion of architectural and professional issues in NSW. We should be grateful it has managed to survived the many financial and existential challenges over the years.

It is an important publication, not only being a unique site for professional exchange and the debate of the key urban design, architectural and development issues in our state, but also because it can have a significant role in helping to foster the culture of architecture in NSW. Notwithstanding a healthy diversity, the work of the architects in this state has its own history, culture, character and direction. Perhaps this has never been stronger than it is now, but paradoxically it is also under more challenge than at any time in our history due to the multiple pressures of internationalisation, nationalisation and the intense speed of industry processes and expectations.

At this time, a publication that fosters and nurtures an authentic localised culture of architecture and urban design could not have greater value.
Matthew Pullinger  
Chair, Editorial Committee, 2005–2011

As the enduring document of record for the NSW Chapter, firmly anchored in issues rather than projects, Architecture Bulletin must continue to reflect the structure, diversity and breadth of the organisation it serves.

Architecture Bulletin is valued as one of the most important and tangible aspects of Institute membership. In about 2010, it also accounted for a significant portion of the annual Chapter budget – a classic tension. At the time the editorial committee navigated a range of themes, each presenting similar tensions.

Print or digital – member surveys revealed ongoing support for hardcopy publication. These same surveys also revealed ever-growing support for the digital alternative. In practice, both were circulated, allowing members to opt in or out.

Immediacy or exposition – issues of the day are presented alongside in-depth examination of enduring themes. Striving for timeliness and allowing for thoughtful, elaborated articles translated to six editions per year and relied – as always – on a boundless reservoir of volunteer contributors.

Self-publish or outsource – production was held close – seeking to maintain quality, content and ultimately, control. In the early era of print disruption, advertising revenue began to dwindle and was augmented with a patrons program, the altruism of which sustained the self-publish model and kept the journal cost neutral.

Joe Agius  
Chair, Editorial Committee, 2011–2013

Architecture Bulletin remains the key issues-based journal for the profession in NSW. The fact that it continues to focus on the issues of the day as opposed to projects distinguishes from all other publications – both hardcopy and online. In the current period we are in – one of image-saturated content, often devoid of any intellect – it is important the Bulletin continues to maintain its unique position.

It should be the key platform for thoughtful insight, debate and commentary on the significant issues affecting architecture, the built environment and practice in NSW. It should present a broad range of views and it should reflect the diversity of the profession.

There are many challenges for the Bulletin going forward not dissimilar to those facing other publications. The Bulletin could transition to include a strong online platform that enables deeper and richer content – in a variety of media. It could have an online presence that complements rather than replicates the hardcopy. It could converge with, or be a portal to the publications of other Institute Chapters. It could enable better conversations. Although it should retain a local focus, there are many issues that have a national or indeed global relevance.

Similarly, the profession locally is becoming more global. Although we should welcome this diversity, an immediate challenge for the profession is to ensure local design talent continues to be nurtured, expanded and given access to local design opportunity.
Shaun Carter  
Chair, Editorial Committee, 2013–2015

Architecture Bulletin is the record of architecture and architectural thinking. It beautifully captures each moment in time. As a continuum it documents the life and times of the profession but also how the profession is reflected in society and our response to these societal movements. I am a firm believer that Architecture Bulletin should continue as the record keeper. A place where thought as well as architecture, in longer form, can be dissected, discussed and documented.

Flux is the great constant of life, and so it is also with the Bulletin. In my time and chair of the Bulletin, the (re)emergence of a broad discussion of the value of the public domain, and how that is understood spatially was gaining momentum. This coupled with a fundamental understanding of sustainability weaving into architecture and city-making added weight to this substantial movement. This has only grown in years since. Social media plays an ever increasing part in this discussion where architects can engage with other professionals and political leaders to advocate for a city designed for the people and made with a priority on the public domain. The Bulletin adds the essential weight behind these social media discussions. Long may this continue, as it is a conversation we desperately need to have.

Being chair of the Bulletin was long seen as a stepping stone to the Chapter presidency. Wisely so I thought. As president you need to be across a broad cross section of profession and the Bulletin gave you that view. Like all committees it also hones your skills of working and leading others. For me the Bulletin was an exhilarating experience. Working with great minds on issues we believed in was a world away from practice, and all the better for it. The Bulletin, along with my time on the Gender Equity Taskforce (GET) were two of the most rewarding committee experiences.

More broadly, I saw Architecture Bulletin as the Four Corners or 7.30 Report of architecture. I felt then, as I do today, that it should be frank and fearless. It should talk truth to power; not only within our profession, but to our political leaders and associated professions. Architecture is always in a better place with the hygiene of light and air on any topic. I hope it continues in this vein.

Long may the Bulletin live!

Andrew Nimmo  
Chair, Editorial Committee, 2015–2017

There are very few documents of record left in Australia that have the longevity of the NSW Architecture Bulletin. 75 years is a significant timeframe. While it has at times covered built projects, this has not been its primary role. Rather it is a journal to discuss the issues around the profession of architecture. The Bulletin has always had free reign to move around the architecture discourse and I firmly believe that the committee at the time should be able to put their stamp on what they see as important.

Sometimes these issues have a particular time relevance, but often the subject is far more retrospective, providing a reflective analysis of a particular issue. This to me is the real value of the Bulletin. It has a level of relevance that means you tend to keep the old issues on the bookshelf and refer to them from time to time. I particularly like be reminded that many of the big issues of concern do not change that much over the years and keep popping up in the Bulletin at least once a decade. Few magazines have that kind of ongoing relevance.

I feel the biggest challenge for the Bulletin is whether to maintain a hardcopy format of the magazine. There are all sorts of very sensible reasons why the Bulletin should move to a digital format only, mostly around the cost pressures of production and postal charges. There is also currency to the belief that the print medium has had its day and millennials and their descendents will only read stuff on a screen anyway. To me that is crap. Certainly the Bulletin should have a proper digital platform, but if it loses the print version, then I think it will also lose its raison d’être.
Kerwin Datu  
Chair, Editorial Committee, 2018–present

Speaking as the first millennial to chair this committee, it would seem our new team has inherited an unusual set of expectations. May I assure Andrew and our other predecessors that we also value an Architecture Bulletin that is above all a hardcopy publication, as well as one that focuses on issues more than projects.

This is only right for a state-based publication. While the projects we wish to be known for dialogue with each other across Australia on the pages of the national magazines, the issues we confront in our work tend to be shaped by the states and the urban and commercial culture of each metropolitan area. We need state-based publications for the same reason we need state-based Chapters – to fight the fires close to the source.

I believe the moves made by the NSW Chapter staff especially editor and designer Ricardo Felipe to bring the title in-house and pare down the visual layout of the printed pages help bring the text to the fore and allow readers to concentrate fully on the arguments being presented. We certainly must push on with a renewed online format but again I believe we should seek for this also to make written arguments attractive and engaging onscreen.

Once committed to a publication about issues more than projects, I believe we should make another distinction – between intellectual escapism and intellectual confrontation – and aim for the latter. It’s possible to discuss important issues in ways that simply indulge our own druthers. We need to be more wary of that. It is important for the Bulletin to discuss the issues that affect architects and architecture. But we should strive to discuss more often the issues that affect society overall and the extent to which architects have an impactful contribution to make to those issues as a profession.

To this end we are discussing what architects might be able to say to address a number of social topics that may appear in issues soon, such as climate change, renewable energy, infrastructure planning, migration, racial and gender diversity and mental health. Though we also intend to confront more architectural topics that architects nevertheless often shy from, such as how advances in construction automation, materials science and BIM might undermine aspects of architectural practice, and the invasion of new business models into the property industry such as shared workspace providers and subscription-based housing.

I am grateful to the previous chairs and editors for taking up our invitation to reflect again on the position of the Bulletin in our professional community. Having been a reader on and off for 20 years I recognise as they do the cyclical nature of the topics the industry has faced. On some of these however I am depressed by the lack of progress Australia and NSW have made, which I think sets the stage for some of the directions I would like to see the Bulletin pursue.
I was told by a colleague recently that the work of developers and ‘the rules’ has ruined the architecture of our city. I disagree. I believe the work of unthinking architects has ruined the architecture of our city.

It has become increasingly difficult to distinguish the bad from the good. This has something to do with the messages we send ourselves through the many disingenuous exponents of our work: marketing, awards, publications, accolades, uninformed praises.

There is always a need for any group of experts to concern themselves about the standards set by the profession in which they operate. It was as a consequence of many observations made over the past 10 years that I wondered if we can ever again hold a mirror to ourselves as a profession. We seem to complain a lot about everything. We complain about education, we complain about how hard it is to run contracts, we complain about clients, we complain about fees, we complain about the standards of construction and we complain about the profession itself. But it’s time for us to notice that we too are the subject of these complaints and the industry in which we have cast ourselves is an industry that is of our making. There is no need to complain, for instance, that we have given away our insurable rights in contracts when we choose to sign those contracts on the same day. There is no need to complain that there are too many awards but then jostle for position at the barrier to enter as many categories as possible.

Hypocrisy comes from the Middle English: from Old French ypocrisie, via ecclesiastical Latin, from Greek hupokrisis ‘acting of a theatrical part’, from hupokrinesthai ‘play a part, pretend’, from hupo ‘under’ + krinen ‘decide, judge’.

In universities, standards are set by the lowest mark that is given. In professional life, however, standards are set by the best work offered. In the ancient lament, the judgement of that which is judged is in question. How well placed have we all become to give critique to ourselves about what we do? For too long, the concept of elitism has been eschewed in the face of a feigned humility … And how annoying has this ‘fake humility’ become when the only thing offered by it is the inability of the standers-by to give critique as a result?

We have eschewed the raising of peers to a level of higher order in the same way as schools in the 1990s were giving every student a medal for turning up; we did not wish to offend those that were mediocre in the face of those that were not; even mediocrity, however, has its standards.

There is a persistent and thinly veiled commitment on architecture in our time and, cynically, I observe that this is manifest in the observable desire by our clients to ‘monetise’ (or so they call it) our talents. At worst, we ‘monetise’ our talents ourselves and there appears to be much interest within our own profession to seek personal advantage within this phenomenon.

I argue many times that the outcomes we should seek relate to the intangibility, the subtle qualities of that which is built rather than its quantification and its measurement. Precision should come with indescribability in any work of art.

It is only just palpable that there is a culture of architects working in a coherent profession here. And yet every one of us has felt the presence of those great dead architects and artist affect our work. We are individually aware of the presence of Seidler, of Allen, of Madigan, of Lloyd Rees, of Sulman of Wilkinson of Corrigan, of Delitat, and these are just the ones that come to mind. Are we worthy of their legacy? They seem to haunt every one of us in some way and yet we never discuss them in the context of their worth and our need to have had them in our lives.

Is that because our work is not able to face their efforts as pioneers? Is it because we know that we have made them turn in their graves as a consequence of what we ascribe against their names every year?

The question most present for me in my daily professional fears is vested in this distortion of today’s many distractions, awards, accolades, presentations, theories, propositions, technologies, fashions, self-publications and anger. Are these distortions and distractions failing us?

And with the presence of so many distractions, my contention is that the work we are presently producing as an industry is not as well rounded as we think. I believe we have a collective tendency toward a deep delusion. These blurry images appeal to us too much and the work, after the rain, after the haze from the CGIs moves on, is too often empty and one-dimensional like the society we may therefore be creating.

I wonder if we have deceived ourselves with our methods of self-appraisal. If so, I wonder if we have a force that is strong enough to unify a resistance to any delusion about our worth such that the next few years can emerge as ones which are perhaps demonstrative of our cultural and artistic abilities and intents.

I wonder if it’s worth even raising these points. There is always someone around who, without caveat, will extoll the virtues of all present offerings — unknowing that so long as we are not self-doubting and self-critical, we will produce our worst societies and as a consequence our worst works of art.

Angelo Candalepas is the director of Candalepas Associates. This text is a version of a speech delivered at the opening of a recent Symposium of Architects curated by Wendy Lewin and Angelo Candalepas at the Art Gallery of New South Wales.

Provoke is an opinion series of Architecture Bulletin. To respond to a Provoke piece, please email bulletin@architecture.com.au. The next Provoke writer for the rest of Volume 76 will be Jennifer McMaster.