GOVERNMENT
ARCHITECT
NEW SOUTH WALES
URBAN DESIGN FOR REGIONAL NSW

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GOVERNMENT ARCHITECT NEW SOUTH WALES
IF WE CARE FOR COUNTRY IT WILL CARE FOR US
DESIGNING FOR PEOPLE - OVER 200 YEARS
The Government Architect has always been a voice for the public, advocating for high quality design outcomes for the people and communities of NSW.

No longer restricted to the boundary of the project site, the expertise of GANSW is now deployed at multiple scales including statewide policy scale through to city, precinct, public realm, and building scale.
A major change in the role of the Government Architect came in mid 2015. The office shifted its roles and responsibilities from one focused on the design and delivery of buildings and public spaces, to a role of strategic design advice.

GOVERNMENT ARCHITECT
NEW SOUTH WALES
Who we are

GA NSW is a small, multi-disciplinary team of qualified design professionals which supports the NSW Government.

GA NSW has a high-level of experience in government and industry and draws on a range of disciplines, including urban design, architecture, landscape architecture and planning.

Our focus is on the design quality of the built environment and the public domain. We play a key strategic and advocacy role providing independent advice.
Our role

GNSW has three roles aimed at delivering good design outcomes:

**Champion:** Promote, educate and advocate for design awareness and excellence on behalf of Government, its agencies and partners.

**Connect:** Foster public and private sector partnerships, collaboration and design coordination across built environment initiatives.

**Advise:** Provide strategic and independent advice and quality review to support best practice and outcomes for design projects.
What we do

- Spatial, strategic and delivery frameworks for complex government led precincts
- Policy including design excellence processes
- Design review panels and advice
- Project formation and definition
- Best practice processes for procurement
GOOD DESIGN IS GOVERNMENT POLICY
The NSW EP&A Act

The Act has been amended to include a new design object, elevating the role of design;

(f) to promote good design and amenity in the built environment

(g) to promote the sustainable management of built and cultural heritage (including Aboriginal cultural heritage)

(h) to promote proper construction and maintenance of buildings, including the protection of the health and safety of their occupants

GOVERNMENT ARCHITECT NEW SOUTH WALES
Design and Strategic Planning

- Global megatrends
- National planning agenda
- EP&A Act
- State Environmental Planning Policies
- Regional plans
- District plans
- Local Strategic Planning Statements
- Local environmental plan
- Local character statement
- Development control plan

Design comes in at all levels

Figure 1: Strategic planning framework
NSW Priorities

- Health
- Climate Resilience
- Rapidly growing population
- Changing lifestyles and demographics
- Infrastructure and urban renewal
- Biodiversity loss
- Providing consistent and timely review of major projects
Better Placed

Good design is government policy

Good design is fundamental in creating better places, considering the needs of people and the community

Better Placed is a policy for our collective aspirations, needs and expectations in designing NSW. It is about enhancing all aspects of our urban environments, to create better places, spaces and buildings, and thereby better cities, towns and suburbs.
Better Placed context

Better Placed sits at a nexus of State-wide priorities, the mechanisms of planning and the expertise of industry as a framework for our collective aspirations, needs and expectations for NSW.
Delivering Better Placed
Strategy for Action 2017-18

Delivering Better Placed - an integrated design policy for New South Wales

Creating a culture of design.

Capacity building - education and raising awareness

Influencing the ‘front end’ of major projects, when design can add most value

Improving the procurement of great places and good design

Influencing the planning process

Monitoring and evaluation to establish the benefits of Better Placed and good design

Establishing a State Design Review Panel
What is design?

Design is both a problem defining and problem solving activity that brings together many different pieces of information in order to identify and develop new opportunities.

Design should be understood as both a process put in place to do something, and an outcome of creating something.
Poor design is likely to have significant adverse environmental, social and even economic effects.

Poor design can make spaces and places into liabilities rather than being beneficial to the public.

Poor ‘fit’ and not responding to context
A community’s sense of place can be undermined and existing attractors devalued

Poor performance
An increased operating and maintenance cost burden for end users can occur

Poor for community
Community cohesion can be eroded and problems of social inequity can be reinforced.

Poor for people
People’s health can be undermined and their sense of risk and isolation increased

Poor functionality
Quality of life for people and communities, as well as their resilience to change

Poor value
Buildings and places can lose value and even detract from local value over time

Poor look and feel
Buildings and places can undermine the value and quality of the surrounding urban environment
The role of Better Placed

Better Placed focuses on people and how NSW communities live, work and enjoy the environment in which they live. From this premise, it sets a framework for defining and achieving better places for the people of NSW by:

**Advocating** for the importance of design for better places, spaces and outcomes.

**Supporting** industry and government to deliver good design.

**Enabling** effective design processes to be supported in the planning system.

The policy will:

*Raise awareness of what the NSW government means by good design in the built environment.*

*Provide clear, consistent, rigorous objectives to achieve good design throughout the development process.*

*Outline the value of design thinking and what is involved in supporting effective design process.*

*Provide a framework for examining places and reviewing proposals from a good design perspective.*

*Establish key concepts of design and shared terminology for the built environment.*

*Encourage a stronger design culture and active engagement in design.*
What is a well-designed built environment

- Healthy
- Responsive
- Integrated
- Equitable
- Resilient
Better Placed objectives for good design

OBJECTIVE 1. Better fit contextual, local and of its place

OBJECTIVE 2. Better performance sustainable, adaptable and durable

OBJECTIVE 3. Better for community inclusive, connected and diverse

OBJECTIVE 4. Better for people safe, comfortable and liveable

OBJECTIVE 5. Better working functional, efficient and fit for purpose

OBJECTIVE 6. Better value creating and adding value

OBJECTIVE 7. Better look and feel engaging, inviting and attractive
GREENER PLACES
What is green infrastructure?

It is the interconnected network of open spaces, natural systems and semi-natural systems including parks, river, street trees, bushland and private gardens that are strategically planned, designed and managed to support a good quality of life in urban environment.
Elements of green infrastructure

1. Green roofs and walls
2. Private and semi-private residential gardens
3. Squares and plazas
4. Streets
5. Parks and gardens
6. Greenways
7. Sports and recreational facilities
8. Natural green space
9. Agricultural and other productive land and farms
NSW Priorities

Greener Places advocates for Green Infrastructure to help respond to key challenges and directions for NSW including:

1. Health
2. Climate resilience
3. Rapidly growing population
4. Changing lifestyle and demographics
5. Infrastructure and urban renewal
6. Biodiversity loss
Green infrastructure is essential infrastructure. It needs to be accounted for in government asset management plans and community strategy plans, and considered as an asset in its own right.
Greener Places Principles of Green Infrastructure

Integration
Combining green infrastructure with urban development and grey infrastructure.

Connectivity
Creating an interconnected network of open space.

Multifunctionality
Delivering multiple ecosystem services simultaneously.

Participation
Involving stakeholders in development and implementation.
OCHRE PLACES
“If we care for country, it will care for us”

The Ochre Grid will map the overlapping relationships of Aboriginal culture and heritage within a landscape system. It will respect and protect sensitive sites.
DESIGN IN THE REGIONS
What is Urban Design for Regional NSW?

A response to the actions in the nine Regional Plans

Part of the Better Placed suite of documents

A response to issues raised by councils in Regional NSW
The Nine Regional Plans

Actions to prepare urban design guidelines

Figure 1: NSW Regions
The Nine Regional Plans

Actions to prepare guidelines for a healthy built environment
Better Placed

Better Placed is the integrated design policy for the built environment of NSW

Urban Design for Regional NSW draws upon the objectives of Better Placed

A series of Advisory Notes provide more detailed guidance on subjects such as urban design tools
Better Placed objectives for good design

**Objective 1.** Better fit
contextual, local and of its place

**Objective 2.** Better performance
sustainable, adaptable and durable

**Objective 3.** Better for community
inclusive, connected and diverse

**Objective 4.** Better for people
safe, comfortable and liveable

**Objective 5.** Better working
functional, efficient and fit for purpose

**Objective 6.** Better value
creating and adding value

**Objective 7.** Better look and feel
engaging, inviting and attractive
Who is the Guide for?

The success of the Guide depends on its adoption by multiple user groups and audiences in the NSW community.

It is proposed that the primary audience will be:

- Local and State Government
- Property Owners, Investors and Developers
- Community

**LOCAL AND STATE GOVERNMENTS**
- Can maximise the value of investment and reduce risk.
- Assists in delivering policy, and strategic and integrated goals.
- Design-based approaches can offer insight into difficult problems, and foster collaboration.

**PROPERTY OWNERS, INVESTORS, DEVELOPERS**
- Leads to increased land and property values, higher rentals, and returns.
- Lessens long-term costs such as maintenance.
- Enhances company reputation for repeat business.

**GOVERNMENT / POLITICAL LEADERS**
- Improves health and well-being, leading to happier, more productive and more comfortable inhabitants.

**THE COMMUNITY**
- Good design outcomes are accessible and inclusive, improving community cohesion and liveability.
- Featers civic pride, and culture.

**DESIGN PROFESSIONALS**
- Helps the design professional build capacity, awareness, skills and knowledge.
- Good designers are better participants in the process and are more attractive to clients, bringing repeat business, and collaborative opportunities.

**FUTURE GENERATIONS**
- What we design and construct now will be enjoyed, or not, by future generations. It is essential that we remember the long-term or permanence of built environment interventions.
Council Engagement

Survey sent out to all 95 councils in Regional NSW asking for responses on the urban challenges that they faced in achieving a high quality built environment.

All responses were analysed and distilled into the key trends for regional NSW.

The key trends were synthesised into 7 urban design priorities for regional NSW.
A summary of the key findings from initial engagements with councils

### 3.1 Key regional trends

| Key trends presented in the table below have emerged from the nine regional profiles and engagement with councils. The trends point toward seven urban design priorities for regional NSW - which are the basis for the advice in this part of the guide. |

#### Key Trends in Regional NSW

- **Under-represented nature, historic and cultural assets**
  - Historic and character buildings requiring restoration
  - Under-utilised heritage items and hidden landmarks
  - Low levels of representation and engagement with Aboriginal cultural heritage

- **Development Interfacing with native landscapes**
  - Opportunity to integrate natural environment features with new urban areas
  - Potential to make use of indigenous vegetation in landscaping schemes in public open spaces
  - Opportunity to use street tree plantings to enhance green corridors for biodiversity and recreation

- **Fluctuating social and economic activity in regional centres**
  - Opportunity for undersized drops to be used for temporary purposes
  - Competition for main street activity from new out-of-centre development
  - Highways bypassing town centres in some locations
  - Opportunity to provide attractive places and spaces for community events and gatherings
  - Potential for economic development initiatives to focus on unique or locally distinctive assets

- **High levels of car dependency**
  - Opportunity to enhance conditions for walking and cycling through improved and direct paths and routes
  - Potential for improved connections between town centres and surrounding suburbs
  - Future-proofing new urban areas for public transport services through street design and connectivity with existing neighborhoods

#### Seven Urban Design Priorities for Regional NSW

1. **Leveraging the historic and cultural assets of places**
2. **Integrating the natural environment**
3. **Reinvigorating main streets and town centers**
4. **Improving connectivity, walkability, and cycling**
5. **Balancing urban growth and density**
6. **Increasing options for diverse and healthy living**
7. **Responding to climate impacts**

- Market pressure for greenfield development on urban fringes
- Impacts of greenfield development on rural land and native landscapes
- Challenges in finding infrastructure and services for new urban areas
- Responding to community expectations for design quality of infill development
- Aging population
- Fluctuating populations (driven by a range of factors such as seasonal employment opportunities and tourism)
- Reduced average household sizes
- Seasonal traffic congestion and pressure on public facilities such as beaches, open spaces, facilities
- More housing choices to meet diverse household and changing population needs
- Well-located social housing with access to services
- Aboriginal housing needs
- Homelessness
- Temperature extremes
- Impacts on the environmental sensitivity of design
- Poorly located and oriented buildings
- Managing energy costs for heating and cooling
- Urban heat island effects
- Natural hazard risks – bushfire, flooding, drought, coastal erosion, snow and ice

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**Government Architect New South Wales**
Seven urban design priorities for regional NSW

This section of the guide discusses the seven regional urban design priorities in detail. Understanding what is important in undertaking urban design is crucial to ensure good outcomes and that projects respond to community needs.

1. leveraging the historic and cultural assets of places
2. integrating the natural environment
3. revitalising main streets and regional town centres
4. improving connectivity, walkability, and cycling
5. balancing urban growth and density
6. increasing options for diverse and healthy living
7. responding to climate impacts.

Typical project types
1. public realm and open spaces
2. town centres and main streets
3. infill development in existing neighbourhoods
4. greenfield development in new neighbourhoods.
A snapshot of one region

Central West and Orana Region

Located in the heart of NSW, the Central West and Orana Region contains a diversity of natural and built environments. The southern and eastern parts of the region are characterised by the varying topography of hills and mountains with higher rainfall, cooler temperatures, and fertile farming land. The northern and western areas are characterised by flatter slopes and plains, with less rainfall, supporting more extensive agricultural production. These differences in geography and climate broadly align with the proximity to the Great Dividing Range and beyond to Sydney.

Emerald settlement of this region occurred between the landwards remnant of the Blue Mountains, the western foothills of the Central Tablelands, the northern margin of the Mount Lofty Ranges and the coastal plains of southeastern coastal NSW. The settlement is a result of a pattern or settlement that occurred in the late 19th century, with a concentration of towns and villages that developed along the principal road networks and railway lines. These settlements were established to service the agricultural and pastoral activities of the region, which were mainly based on sheep and cattle grazing.

Today, Bathurst and Cowra are the major towns in the region, each with a population of around 20,000. Bathurst is the administrative centre of the region and is known for its historical buildings and charming streets. Cowra is a major town that is home to the former Japanese internment camp, which played a significant role in World War II.

Challenges and Opportunities for Urban Design

- Physical barriers - Urban environments and infrastructure design to optimise access and connectivity, and to minimise the impact of natural hazards
- Social barriers - Aligning provision and meeting the challenge of providing adequate services

Further information on the challenges and opportunities for urban design in the Central West and Orana Region can be found in the regional plan and strategy documents.

Government Architect
New South Wales
Structure of the Guide

Part One: Supporting regional growth in NSW

Part Two: Explaining Urban Design

Part Three: Regional priorities and project types
Applying urban design in regions

WHAT’S IMPORTANT (THE PRIORITIES)

1. Leveraging the historic and cultural assets of place
2. Integrating the natural environment
3. Revitalising main streets and regional town centres
4. Improving connectivity, walkability and cycling
5. Balancing urban growth and density
6. Increasing options for diverse and healthy living
7. Responding to climate impacts

TYPICAL PROJECT TYPES (THE APPLICATIONS)

PUBLIC REALM AND OPEN SPACE
TOWN CENTRES AND MAIN STREET
INFILL DEVELOPMENT IN EXISTING NEIGHBOURHOODS
GREENFIELD DEVELOPMENT IN NEW NEIGHBOURHOODS
Urban Design Guidance

- Public Realm and Open Space
- Town Centres and Main Streets
- Infill development in existing neighbourhoods
- Greenfield development in new neighbourhoods

Opportunities / Urban Design Guidance / Process / Examples
Public Realm and Open Space

Opportunities

- Green infrastructure networks through:
  - existing natural landscapes
  - regional parks and gardens
  - landscaped streetscapes
- Integrated natural elements
- Connectivity, walkability and cycling

Urban Design Guidance

- Prevailing regional weather conditions e.g.
  - extreme heat, coastal conditions
- Different recreational needs
- Active and passive recreation
- Improve safety and accessibility
Town Centres and Main Streets

Opportunities

- Leverage from the existing heritage and cultural assets of the place
- Future opportunity sites - e.g. car parks
- Improved public domain through dedicated spaces and places

Urban Design Guidance

- New buildings to respond sensitively to buildings/spaces of heritage significance
- Balance needs of vehicles and pedestrians
- Activate empty shop-fronts with retail improvement schemes
- Locate road by-passes with access points close to town to encourage visitation
Infill development in existing neighbourhoods

Opportunities

- Integrate a range of diverse housing types
- Identify new opportunities for open space - either small park or square

Urban Design Guidance

- Orientation of new buildings and spaces to optimise solar orientation
- Respond to the prevailing qualities of place which give it a distinct identity
- Orientate buildings to activate open spaces and streets
Greenfield development in new neighbourhoods

Opportunities

- Interconnected streets with a network of open space through green infrastructure
- Integrate with nearby local shops
- Respond to the existing positive qualities of the natural landscape and elements of the place

Urban Design Guidance

- Prevailing regional weather conditions eg. extreme heat, coastal conditions, shade in hotter months, solar access in cooler months
- Predominant topography
- Variety of lot sizes to allow diversity in housing types

GOVERNMENT ARCHITECT NEW SOUTH WALES
Case Studies

Case studies will be incorporated to illustrate the guidance and demonstrate best practice.

One case study from each region.

Will cover a range of different project types and processes.
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