

When to get design advice

“Good design is a key aspect of sustainable development, is indivisible from good planning and should contribute to making places better for people.”

– Better Placed: An integrated design policy for the built environment of NSW (GANSW 2017)

Good design requires commitment, collaboration, and skill, but delivers great value to people who occupy the built environment in every aspect of their lives as well as to clients and investors.

The design process has many layers of consideration: understanding, analysing and then respecting and responding to the place; addressing the functional needs; managing detrimental impacts; controlling costs; building value; and creating places of enjoyment and delight.

How can design advice help?

Design advice helps to guide a project in the right direction to ensure the project’s vision and objectives are met.

Good design outcomes are the result of the inputs of many people – through thoughtful and meaningful collaboration, sharing of ideas, testing, reviewing, and refining. Design advice helps to guide projects through this process to achieve the right design outcomes.

Design advice is most effective when it is a strategic and integral part of the first stages of project planning and delivery. Strategic design advice relates to far more than the “look and feel” of a building or place. It considers aspects of the built environment which affect people and communities for the long term, including contextual fit, sustainability, adaptability, inclusivity, diversity, safety, comfort, liveability, and function.

When do we need design advice?

The design process starts when a project is first identified, right from the outset when an opportunity or need for change becomes apparent. Design advice is integral throughout the life of the project, guiding the design process to achieve the project outcomes.

At the early stages, strategic design advice helps to define a project, identify the vision and objectives, the challenges, and the opportunities to achieve the desired aspiration. Throughout the project the design process synthesises a

range of stakeholder perspectives, commitments, and concerns as well as the material, functional and technical aspects of creating or adapting buildings, places and spaces.

Urban interventions are achieved through complex processes over extended periods and incorporate many inputs. The final design “product” is the result of many interrelated factors including the quality of the project design brief, engagement with stakeholders, the design approach and process, and procurement and implementation strategies.

To fully realise the benefits of good design, strategic design advice needs to be embedded throughout the project, for example via:

- analysing and identifying site- and context-specific opportunities
- developing a shared vision and clear project objectives
- formulating a comprehensive design brief and ensuring that design quality is articulated from inception throughout the course of the project
- determining the right design methods, tools and approach for your project
- establishing procurement methods which will foster good quality design outcomes
- identifying and supporting design champions
- incorporating opportunities for iterative testing of design options, peer review, and design review processes, each of which can be tested against the project vision and objectives.

How can GANSW help?

GANSW can help by providing a range of design-related services, including:

- informal design advice on an issue-by-issue basis
- brief scoping and preparation
- embedding GANSW strategic design staff within project teams of other government agencies
- formal, or informal, design review processes
- desktop reviews of draft proposals or documents
- strategic frameworks
- advice on the Government Architect's Strategy and Design Excellence Prequalification Scheme.

Further information

For more information see Better Placed: An integrated design policy for the built environment of NSW (GANSW 2017) available on the GANSW website: ga.nsw.gov.au

Government Architect NSW

GANSW provides design leadership in architecture, urban design and landscape architecture. In this role, GANSW works across government, the private sector and the community to establish policy and practice guides for achieving good design. GANSW provides strategic advice across design, planning and development to support good policy, programs, projects and places.

Contact GANSW

GANSW makes every effort to keep its advice up to date. From time to time we will release new versions of these advisory notes. For further advice, or if you think there is information missing, please contact GANSW.

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