
Creating Places for People - an urban design protocol for Australian Cities

Comments from
AGIC

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Creating Places for People - an urban design protocol for Australian Cities

The Australian Green Infrastructure Council (AGIC) commends and supports the development of *Creating Places for People - an urban design protocol for Australian Cities* by the federal Department of Infrastructure and Transport. The framework responds to a current policy shortfall in Australia for the adequate promotion of good urban design in our metropolitan and regional areas. The origin of this protocol within the Department is also viewed as an important signal to acknowledge the relevance of urban design to both infrastructure and transport.

It is particularly timely that comments on the protocol are requested at this time, as AGIC is currently nearing completion and the launch of the AGIC national Infrastructure Sustainability Rating Scheme that has been in progress for just over three years. There are many identified synergies between the AGIC Scheme and the urban design protocol. The AGIC Board was appreciative of the financial support provided by the Department. An investment in excess of \$3.0m to date has been made by industry stakeholders through cash and in kind to develop the scheme. AGIC has 89 member organisations employing over 70,000 people.

Background on AGIC's Infrastructure Sustainability Rating Scheme

AGIC is an industry-developed not-for-profit national association formed to advance sustainability outcomes in infrastructure. The principal means AGIC will achieve this will be through the development and operation of an industry-compiled voluntary rating award scheme. AGIC's Infrastructure Sustainability Rating Scheme aims to deliver outcomes beyond regulatory requirements, and support and encourage infrastructure projects and their stakeholders to innovate and deliver high value, sustainable outcomes.

The AGIC scheme will:

- Benchmark, advance and promote the concepts and knowledge of sustainable outcomes throughout the design, construction and life cycle of infrastructure solutions, and
- Recognise and reward organisations that deliver sustainable solutions in the design, construction and operation of our national infrastructure.

AGIC's rating scheme is intended to apply to the following infrastructure types:

- Roads and tunnels
- Railways and bridges
- Airports
- Ports and marinas
- Cycle and pedestrian pathways
- Distribution grids
- Water collection, distribution and treatment infrastructure
- Telecommunication infrastructure
- Civil engineering headworks of industrial plants.

The current draft of the Scheme consists of the following themes and categories:

Themes	Categories
Management and Governance	Management Systems
	Decision Making
	Procurement and Purchasing
	Knowledge Sharing & Capacity Building
	Climate Change Adaptation
Using Resources	Energy & Carbon
	Water
	Materials
Emissions, Pollution and Waste	Discharges to Air, Land & Water
	Land
	Waste
Ecosystems and Biodiversity	Ecosystems and Biodiversity
People and Place	Community Health, Well-being and Safety
	Natural & Cultural Heritage
	Stakeholder Participation
	Urban & Landscape Design
Innovation	Innovation

Current Status

AGIC engaged several consultants and other organisations to develop the categories within the rating scheme. These consultants recently completed their work and AGIC has been consolidating the material into a manual and rating tool in preparation for pilot trials. The first round of pilot trials recently commenced. This involves trialling the scheme on two projects – The Logan Water Main and the Eastern Busway, both in Queensland. The second round of pilot trials will commence in September and will involve about 10 projects across Australia.

Following the pilot trials, the rating tool and training manual will be updated in preparation for the national launch of the scheme in Parliament House Canberra on February 2012.

Relevance of AGIC's Infrastructure Sustainability Rating Scheme to the urban design protocol

The physical components of cities are principally buildings and infrastructure (together sometimes referred to as the built environment) and the natural environment. The AGIC Scheme specifically addresses infrastructure which is sometimes neglected when it comes to urban and landscape design.

Of most relevance to the *Creating Places for People - an urban design protocol for Australian Cities* is the AGIC Scheme category *Urban and Landscape Design*. This category has an emphasis on contextual design, appropriate design evaluation and a commitment to an integrated, multi-

disciplinary approach throughout all stages of any infrastructure development process. There are also many other categories that cover wider aspects of urban design such as stakeholder participation, heritage, health and well-being, biodiversity and water management.

Common areas between AGIC Scheme and protocol

On reviewing *Creating Places for People - an urban design protocol for Australian Cities*, AGIC have identified many common themes and approaches between that document and AGIC's. In particular, the three goals of "sustainability", "liveability" and "design" (page 8) align with the over-arching objectives of the AGIC scheme. The three supporting overarching principles of "leadership and governance principles", "design principles for people" and "design principles about place" are also consistent with the general intent of the AGIC Scheme.

There are many commonalities with the protocol also in terms of the 12 minor principles, with all 12 being addressed in some way, with some more relevant than others.

Where the AGIC Scheme and protocol differ

The following areas where the AGIC Scheme and protocol differ have been identified:

1. The *Urban and Landscape Design* category allows for significant reward to be given to infrastructure agencies and/or proponents with established and appropriate policies in place. Such a strong emphasis on policy development is anticipated to be effective in raising the general overall standard, which is currently relatively poor. It is suggested that the protocol should also support such policy development, both within the Major Cities Unit, as well as at state and local levels of government.
2. The AGIC scheme places a particular emphasis on addressing the physical context of a place, and ensuring that this is achieved through a demonstrated integrated analysis of the built, natural and community context. Although the protocol mentions "physical context" (page 11) it is suggested that further emphasis could be given to this matter, as well as social context. Comprehensive analysis is essential to understand the overall physical and social environment, documenting aspects such as biodiversity resources, heritage, landscape character, views, water resources, and overall the unique 'sense of place' of any location.
3. The AGIC scheme also highlights that urban design is a collaborative and multi-disciplinary process, with no one profession being responsible for all areas. It is suggested that this aspect of urban design could be more strongly put forth within the protocol, as it currently singles out architecture (page 5), without mentioning the important roles of other professions involved in urban design such as landscape architecture, town planning, environmental planning and engineering.
4. The need for an effective framework is also a requirement of the AGIC Scheme, with projects to be based on "project design objectives" (which provide the overall framework for what is envisaged for the design and its outcomes) and also "design principles" (the design rules and

processes required to achieve the project objectives and inform the design development). These design objectives and design principles are then used to create a benchmark to be consistently referred to throughout each phase of the infrastructure life-cycle. This concept of establishing such benchmarks could be considered during subsequent policy development to support the protocol.

Support of the goals and principles of urban design protocol

AGIC therefore supports the *Creating Places for People - an urban design protocol for Australian Cities*, and in particular the emphasis of the document on the sometimes neglected, yet essential areas of good urban design such as contextual design, life-cycle considerations, design excellence, design integration, connectedness, and enhancing the local environment and community.

However, as listed in the above section, we also encourage a greater focus on some aspects such as policy development, addressing both physical and social context, highlighting that urban design is a collaborative and multi-disciplinary process and the need for a strong benchmarking framework throughout all stages of any design process. It is also worth noting that design expertise is often poorly resourced within government authorities and projects, with greater funding and awareness needed to address this issue.

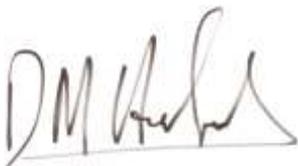
Ongoing discussion opportunities

AGIC would like to propose further discussion between AGIC and the Major Cities Unit to:

1. Identify means to assist each other in achieving common objectives.
2. Explore synergies and opportunities to further align the AGIC scheme to Australian best practice during the nation-wide project testing and resultant revisions of the scheme prior to launch.

Thank you for this opportunity to comment.

Yours faithfully



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Advancing Sustainability in Infrastructure