



**\*\*\*Embargo: 7:30pm AEDT, Tuesday 24 March 2026\*\*\***

## 2026 Australian Urban Design Awards Winners Revealed

Today the winners of the **Australian Urban Design Awards** have been revealed showcasing the very best of urban design projects, leaders and initiatives that are improving the performance of our cities and the quality of life for communities.

The 12 winners from across the country set a new standard for intelligent urban design. They show how we can better shape our cities and produce better outcomes for communities, creating places that lift the human spirit, acknowledge the past, anticipate the future and enable a more sustainable existence.

Since 1996, the Australian Urban Design Awards have showcased the best building projects and initiatives that foster and sustain Australia's urban communities and the most exceptional thinkers and activists in urban design and city building. Urban design prioritises the quality of the public realm and is essential to the social, economic and cultural health of our cities and towns.

The Australian Urban Design Awards are co-convened by the Planning Institute of Australia, the Australian Institute of Architects and the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects – the peak bodies for what constitutes good urban design. The Australian Urban Design Awards unite the expertise of these three prominent institutes to champion the most intelligent innovators in urban design occurring across the country.

The intent and scope of the Australian Urban Design Awards is wide-ranging and attracts entries for initiatives, built projects, publications and individuals that are making a significant difference to the places, spaces, buildings and infrastructure of our cities and towns.

The 2026 Awards program attracted over 80 entries spanning the four categories newly established in 2025: **Built Outcomes, Research & Advocacy, Strategic Design & Policy and Urban Design Champions** which recognises exceptional individuals.

*“Planning reform, housing supply and major transport projects have shaped our cities, and the Australian Urban Design Awards, in recent years. This year's winners reflect a gentler approach to urban transformation: projects rooted in Indigenous and community leadership, ecological landscapes, and the creation of places for people to gather,”* said Katherine Sundermann, Chair of the Steering Committee for the Australian Urban Design Awards.

*“These projects reinforce a simple idea: urban transformation works best when it involves diverse people, responds to the specifics of place, and improves places over time.”*

*“I would like to thank our incredible jurors, including chairs of the Parliamentary Friends of Australian Urban Design, leading urban designers, government representatives and journalists, and the outgoing Steering Committee, whose work over the last three years has refreshed the Awards and returned them to their foundational purpose: promoting the value of urban design to professionals, decision-makers and the community alike.”*

The winners underscore the fact that our cities are never finished. They are an enduring artefact, and every living city needs to anticipate future change. Cities must be capable of growth and renewal - and not just at the urban fringe. These projects anticipate ongoing urban change and look to the future. They intelligently predict future needs, which is extremely rare.



As our cities inevitably evolve, changes can often be confronting for communities. However, these awarded projects show us that change can be positive when it serves the public interest.

The Australian Urban Design Awards winners are chosen by three juries of industry experts, each a leader in their respective field. The 2026 jurors are:

**Built Outcomes:**

- Matt Pullinger (Chair) | Director, Matthew Pullinger Architect
- Bill Tsakalos | City Architect and Director of Transformational Design, Blacktown City Council
- Emily Wong | Editor, Landscape Architecture Australia
- Leigh Woolley | Director, Leigh Woolley Architect

**Strategic Design & Policy and Research & Advocacy:**

- Anna Chauvel (Chair – Research & Advocacy) | Design and Place, Placemaking NSW
- Benjamin Driver (Chair – Strategic Design & Policy) | Senior Lecturer, Urban Development and Design, UNSW
- Bridget Smyth | City Architect and Executive Manager of City Design and Public Art, City of Sydney
- Cameron Caldwell | Federal Member for Fadden, Liberal National Party of Queensland

**Urban Design Champions:**

- Elizabeth Watson Brown (Chair) | Member for Ryan, Australian Greens
- Daniele Hromek | Director and Design Lead, Djinjama
- Jennie Officer | Director, Officer Woods Architects
- Ian Woodcock | Senior Lecturer in Urbanism, University of Sydney, School of Architecture, Design and Planning
- Tina Perinotto | Managing Editor, Fifth Estate

The Awards will be announced on Tuesday 24 March at Parliament House in Canberra. The program convenors thank Principal Partner, Bondor Metecno, and supporting Partner Dulux for making this event possible.

**The winners are (further project information and jury citations available on subsequent page of this media release):**

**BUILT OUTCOMES**

- **Winner**  
Balam Balam Place | Kennedy Nolan, Open Work, Finding Infinity (VIC)
- **Winner**  
Campbelltown Multi Storey Mobility Hub | Hill Thalys Architecture + Urban Projects (NSW)
- **Winner**  
St Kilda Pier Redevelopment | Jackson Clements Burrows Architects, Site Office Landscape Architecture and AW Maritime (VIC)

**RESEARCH & ADVOCACY**

- **Winner**  
Safer Cities program | Transport for NSW
- **Winner**  
The Grassening | 'The Grassening' Team
- **Winner**  
ULI Australia + Department of Transport & Planning (Victoria) Net Zero Imperative: Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) – Street Trees as Essential Infrastructure | The Urban Land Institute (ULI) Australia and the Department of Transport & Planning (Victoria)



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**STRATEGIC DESIGN & POLICY**

- **Winner**  
Doomadgee Future Planning Project | Doomadgee Aboriginal Shire Council, Circ Design, Meridian Urban
- **Winner**  
From Policy to Place: Vincent's Co-Funded Framework for Town Centre Transformation | City of Vincent and the local businesses of Vincent
- **Winner**  
NSW Housing Pattern Book | Government Architect NSW with the NSW DPHI Strategic Planning and Policy Team

**URBAN DESIGN CHAMPIONS**

- **Winner**  
Michael Rayner
- **Winner**  
Rob McGauran
- **Winner**  
Shelley Penn AM

**-ENDS-**

A media gallery with images of the awarded projects is available [here](#).

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## Australian Urban Design Awards Winners

### Winner – Built Outcomes

Balam Balam Place | Kennedy Nolan, Open Work, Finding Infinity



Balam Balam Place reimagines a formerly closed institutional site as an open, socially inclusive civic precinct that supports learning, creative production and everyday public life. The project's deliberate sense of incompleteness is a significant strength.

Spaces are flexible and adaptable, capable of accommodating community events and gatherings, while also offering simple places to pause and inhabit. Rather than saturating the site with built form, the solution privileges open space – an increasingly precious resource within a rapidly densifying suburb.

The jury commends the project for its sensitive approach to renewal. Existing heritage elements, including the nineteenth-century schoolhouse, anchor the project within the neighbourhood's layered history, while carefully composed contemporary buildings introduce spaces for learning and cultural production. Rather than imposing a singular architectural gesture, the project has arisen from a nuanced response to the varied needs, values and perspectives of this diverse and eclectic local community.

Architecture is welcoming while a generous, porous landscape establishes new pedestrian links and strengthens connections with surrounding public facilities. Sustainability is expressed both pragmatically and visibly through adaptive reuse of existing structures and the integration of solar panels.

Balam Balam Place demonstrates the value of well-executed urban renewal and provides a model for how underutilised inner-suburban sites can be remade as resilient landscapes to embrace history, support community, and provide for change over time.



**Winner – Built Outcomes**

Campbelltown Multi Storey Mobility Hub | Hill Thalys Architecture + Urban Projects



It is rare for a car park - so often constrained by building codes, efficiency metrics and pragmatic utility - to warrant recognition in a national urban design award. Rarer still is one that actively influences the morphology of a future city. This project achieves both.

It reconceives a purely utilitarian building typology as enduring civic infrastructure. Generous, adaptable and unexpectedly uplifting.

The synthesis of architecture and landscape is resolved with clarity and confidence, balancing rigour with moments of delight. The project demonstrates that even this most pragmatic building type can express civic presence, embed environmental performance and anticipate long-term transformation.

Daylit, naturally ventilated and animated by colour and planting, the structure transcends its function to become authentic city-making.

Generous landscaped setbacks establish a green threshold to the street, while a planted internal courtyard - threaded with vehicular ramps and anchored by mature trees - forms the heart of the project. Water sensitive urban design strategies are integral rather than applied. Passive irrigation, raingardens and endemic species provide shade, support biodiversity and set a benchmark for sustainable urban development.

Open-meshed facades draw sunlight and fresh air deep into the building, while enabling passive surveillance and a strong sense of safety. Generous ground-floor height anticipates adaptive reuse as the precinct intensifies. This is not simply infrastructure for cars, but a resilient, civic-minded and genuinely optimistic car “park”.



**Winner – Built Outcomes**

St Kilda Pier Redevelopment | Jackson Clements Burrows Architects, Site Office Landscape Architecture and AW Maritime (VIC)



Few Australian waterfronts have the gritty exuberance of St Kilda. As a metropolitan coastal focus, the renewal of its bayside pier revitalises a beloved Melbourne landmark and celebrates its cosmopolitan littoral shore.

In response to master planning over several decades, the pier redevelopment provides a vital component of enhanced public realm and consolidated coastal infrastructure. As an extension of the waterfront promenade, it re-engages the original linear alignment to introduce an embrace that offers intimate enclosure and protected spaces with expanded civic utility.

As a major piece of civil engineering the project embeds long term climate resilience with high public amenity, evidenced for instance through the feature wave wall to mitigate against over-topping whilst provide a sculptural seat of pre-cast concrete modules.

It stands as a civic exemplar of good design, including for its response to mitigating sea level rises, providing habitat protection, improving universal access, enhancing public recreation and consolidating pedestrian connectivity.

As a destination for culture, public recreation and swimming, this project elevates the technical to the poetic with its layered embrace of the bay, and creates a place that is both resilient and whimsical.



**Winner – Research & Advocacy**

Safer Cities program | Transport for NSW



The Safer Cities Program establishes a new benchmark for embedding gender equity and lived experience in urban design practice across NSW. As a \$30 million state-wide initiative, it moves beyond aspiration to demonstrate how perceptions of safety can be systematically implemented, measured and evaluated in public spaces and transport precincts.

At its core is a collaborative model positioning state and local government, communities and practitioners as co-authors of change. Working in partnership with 19 LGAs, the program has delivered 21 pilot projects and informed more than 400 place-based interventions. Through co-design with women, girls and gender diverse people, it translates lived experience into tangible upgrades, from lighting and accessibility improvements to wayfinding, amenities, public art and activation.

A defining strength is its clear shift from policy to action, underpinned by embedded evaluation. Implemented projects demonstrate measurable improvements in perceptions of safety, welcome, and autonomy.

Crucially, the initiative extends beyond individual sites. Through the publicly available Great Places Toolkit, Transport for NSW has equipped councils and practitioners with survey instruments, evaluation frameworks and gender-inclusive placemaking guidance, building capability across the urban design sector and establishing a durable precedent for inclusive public space design.



**Winner – Research & Advocacy**

The Grassening | 'The Grassening' Team



As Australian cities confront biodiversity loss, climate vulnerability and declining ecological literacy, The Grassening offers a timely and practical model for urban ecological repair. It addresses a persistent gap in urban design practice: how to reintroduce endangered local ecologies into everyday urban landscapes in ways that are evidence-based, publicly accessible and culturally grounded.

Focusing on the critically endangered Illawarra Lowland Grassy Woodland, the project translates ecological research into applied urban outcomes. Species selection, propagation and redistribution were underpinned by scientific knowledge and cultural protocol. Planting guidance, documentation and ongoing stewardship established a transferable framework capable of informing streetscapes, schools, cultural institutions and civic spaces.

The initiative brings together ecological science, landscape architecture, artistic practice and Indigenous knowledge within a coherent advocacy model. Engagement across public exhibitions, media platforms and university programs ensured accessibility to diverse audiences and strengthened disciplinary relevance.

Importantly, the project bridges cultural practice and applied delivery. Installation becomes education. Education becomes planting. Planting becomes ongoing care and engagement.

The Jury was ultimately impressed by how The Grassening demonstrates that small, research-driven, community-led interventions can shape urban design practice at scale, positioning advocacy as a legitimate and impactful design tool for resilient Australian cities.



## Winner – Research & Advocacy

ULI Australia + Department of Transport & Planning (Victoria) Net Zero Imperative: Technical Assistance Panel (TAP) – Street Trees as Essential Infrastructure | The Urban Land Institute (ULI) Australia and the Department of Transport & Planning (Victoria)



The Net Zero Imperative TAP delivers a profound and overdue shift in urban thinking: recognising street trees as essential infrastructure rather than discretionary amenity. While utilities such as sewer, water and power are protected as critical services, trees are routinely treated as secondary, competing for residual space, particularly below ground where the most consequential conflicts occur. This work makes visible that hidden contest and argues unequivocally for canopy as civic infrastructure, fundamental to public health, climate resilience and long-term liveability.

Through deep collaboration between government, industry, engineers, and designers, the TAP moves beyond advocacy to structural reform. Its “Tree First” approach positions canopy alongside utilities within planning policy, engineering standards and governance frameworks. Drawing on global and Australian case studies, technical testing and cross-sector engagement, it demonstrates that the barriers are not technical but institutional.

The TAP’s six clear, implementable reforms address statutory settings, street cross-sections, canopy targets and accountability mechanisms. By aligning policy ambition with delivery systems, it establishes a replicable blueprint for growth areas across Victoria and beyond.

This work sets a benchmark for embedding living systems into the foundations of urban development, advancing urban design as both discipline and public good.



**Winner – Strategic Design & Policy**

Doomadgee Future Planning Project | Doomadgee Aboriginal Shire Council, Circ Design, Meridian Urban



Doomadgee's Future Planning Project is at once ambitious and modest – understanding how meaningful and considered interventions can produce a greater whole.

The project positions itself on reconnecting community through a related set of public domain and community interventions over time which act to build the town centre as both a meeting place and a welcome and coherent destination for visitors.

The project demonstrates collaboration between First Nations youth and elders, community and multiple levels of government that are often rarely seen.

This research-based design and delivery model celebrates indigenous-led place making for the long-term health and vitality of rural communities.

The jury commends the aspiration and approach to the project as a case study and demonstration project for rural councils across Australia.



**Winner – Strategic Design & Policy**

From Policy to Place: Vincent's Co-Funded Framework for Town Centre Transformation | City of Vincent and the local businesses of Vincent



The City of Vincent's interventions represent more than the singular moments of tactical urbanism seen in any individual project - demonstrating long term strategic policy that has created an environment where community can express itself through participation in the creation of the public realm.

The model of policy-led, incremental projects within an established strategic policy and grants ecosystem provides regular visibility and change on the ground. The total number of realised interventions over 3 years is to be commended.

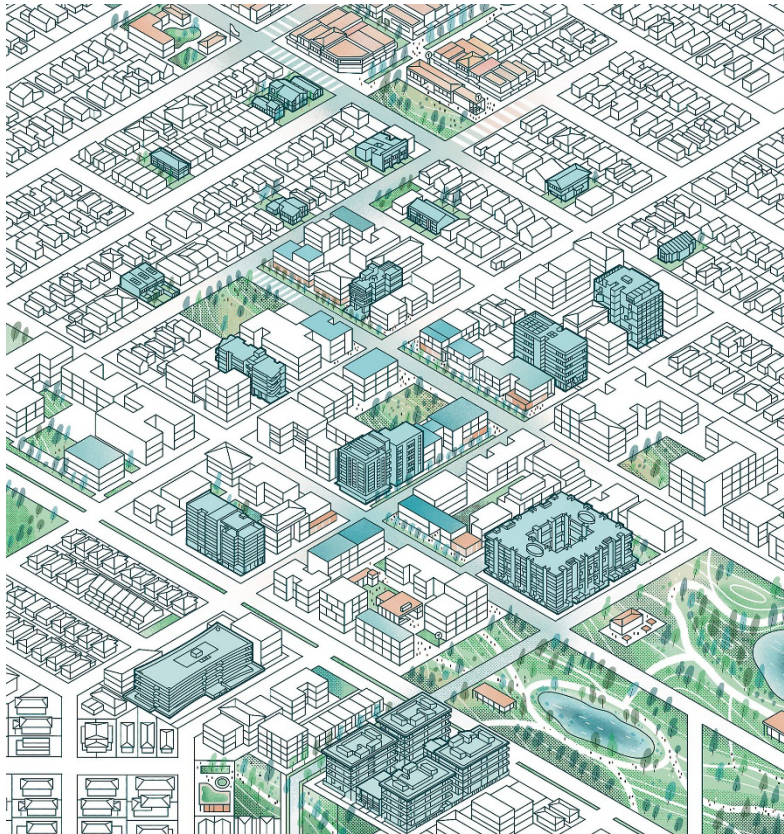
As a model for leveraging limited capital funding with private co-investment the Vibrant Public Spaces Policy establishes a model for local government in Australia by which councils and community can collaboratively build collective character and much-loved, local places.

The jury was impressed with the number and breadths of interventions achieved – particularly the demonstration of policy to project in so many forms yet on such limited funds.



**Winner - Strategic Design & Policy**

NSW Housing Pattern Book | Government Architect NSW with the NSW DPHI Strategic Planning and Policy Team



The NSW Housing Pattern Book sets an ambitious agenda for establishing “modest, flexible and affordable housing solutions” to address the chronic housing issues facing our cities.

The low and mid-rise patterns demonstrate and promote design quality within an environment requiring expediency – promoting the realisation of projects through streamlined planning pathways whilst embedding design quality as a primary driver and outcome.

The project is openly democratic – led by government and drawing on input from acclaimed designers from Australia and Internationally to represent flexible solutions which can become place-based and delivered by landowners, developers and builders big or small.

Whilst not promoting itself as the panacea to housing affordability, the NSW Housing Pattern Book contributes a significant voice to the solutions with the long-term aim of housing our society with dignity and amenity as we move from houses to denser forms of living



**Winner – Urban Design Champions**

Rob McGauran



Commitment to social equity via spatial imagination is how the Jury distinguished the work of Rob McGauran AM as an Urban Design Champion. Rob's 40-year career has addressed major social, urban, and environmental challenges. As co-founder of MGS Architects, co-shaping the practice over three decades, his guidance has influenced social housing, major buildings and university campuses, urban precincts, and cities across Australia. His work demonstrates how urban design thinking can foster social inclusion, civic innovation, economic resilience, environmental sustainability, and produce sheer delight.

Rob's significant contributions to Australia's built environments were recognised in 2025 by his appointment as a Member of the Order of Australia for his service to urban design, planning, development, and tertiary education. He is also a Life Fellow of the Australian Institute of Architects and a Fellow of the Victorian Planning and Environmental Law Association.

Alongside professional practice, Rob's commitment to spatial thinking as applied ethics has been effective in design review, professional advocacy, and a plethora of multi-sector advisory roles. Notably, Rob's advice to government on housing and development policy has helped secure major funding for affordable housing. Through research, policy leadership, innovative spatial thinking and award-winning projects, he has championed sustainable, socially inclusive approaches to shaping Australian cities during times of escalating challenges to ethical urbanism.



## Winner – Urban Design Champions

Michael Rayner



If Brisbane's image and vibrancy has risen significantly in the past few decades, and if urban planning is considered a key part of this, then Michael Rayner can take a generous share of the credit.

Michael has led or played a key role in several critical elements of the city's transformation. He's helped shift the thinking away from CBD centric planning to a 'rich tapestry' of interconnected urban precincts across the metropolis that resulted in a Knowledge Corridor. Regional centres such as Townsville, Cairns, Dalby and Winton have also shared from his contributions.

In his approach to solving problems Michael has demonstrated a creative and inclusive approach that's invited stakeholders from First Nations advisors to sociologists, urban economists and sustainability strategists to contribute.

He's also shared his many years of experience through his role as adjunct professor at University of Queensland and Griffith University and contributed to several charity and pro-bono design work for youth and victims of domestic violence.

Michael's work has been honoured with a long series of awards. He is Member of the Order of Australia, has won three Australian Urban Design Award Brisbane Lord Mayor's Lifetime Achievement Award and appointed as the Specialist Urban Design Advisor to Brisbane City Council.



**Winner – Urban Design Champions**

Shelley Penn AM



Shelley Penn is recognised by the breadth, depth, and conviction of her contributions to urban design in Australia.

In multiple roles across government and private sectors, diverse geographical locations and public projects of all types and scales, Shelley has steadfastly upheld the critical contribution urban design can make to enrich society, community and culture.

Shelley is also recognised for her exceptional ability to inspire others, particularly women, younger practitioners and colleagues. She has demonstrated that intelligent urban design thinking is not restricted to experience in large practice; proving that thoughtful, incisive and propositional design principles and methods of working - honed in small practice and small projects - can be transferable and scalable. Notably, she has helped to strengthen the contributions of others, unlocking, through the breadth of her work, the opportunities for them to add value.

Responding to the pressing need to find better ways to work and influence at scale, Shelley has dedicated her career to expanding the impact of architecture and urban design through strategic advocacy, design leadership and review, teaching, public policy and governance. Her wide-ranging work spans across government, public institutions and authorities. Shelley served as the National President of the Australian Institute of Architects and was made a Member of the Order of Australia in 2021. She has maintained independence and critical acuity and is held in the highest esteem by her peers.