



**Australian  
Institute of  
Architects**



Australian Institute of  
Landscape Architects



**Planning  
Institute  
Australia**  
New South Wales  
Division

The Hon Rob Stokes MP  
Minister for Planning and Public Spaces  
GPO Box 5341  
SYDNEY NSW 2001

26 May 2020

Dear Minister,

**RE: Living streets – improving green infrastructure and public domain to support human and environmental health**

As noted in previous correspondence from the Australian Institute of Architects (23 April 2020), we consider current circumstances present an extraordinary opportunity for the government to take visionary steps toward a better future underpinned by major positive transformations supporting health and wellbeing, the environment, and public enjoyment of our cities and towns.

Disruptions to normal daily life caused by COVID-19 restrictions have caused individuals and communities to recalibrate their relationships to their neighbourhood. More and more of us are using our local public spaces – parks, roads, streets etc – in more and new positive ways. To support continued enjoyment of these spaces and its myriad ongoing benefits as restrictions are eased, we urge the NSW Government to work with local governments to facilitate the development of ‘living streets’.

Living streets are the public ‘spaces in between’ that become places of value, activation and interaction in themselves when they are designed to prioritise people and provide vital green infrastructure. Approximately 50% of our metropolitan land area consists of these spaces.

Green infrastructure is critical to living streets. Canopy from trees planted in both public and private lands have dramatic positive impact on the quality of a streetscape; conversely their removal for development has a dramatic negative impact. As well as beautifying our towns and cities, the shading, cooling and air filtering effects of trees and other significant plantings deliver major health and environmental benefits.

As such, we support the NSW Premier’s priorities to:

- 1) Increase the proportion of homes in urban areas within 10 minutes’ walk of quality green, open and public space by 10 per cent by 2023; and
- 2) Increase the tree canopy and green cover across Greater Sydney by planting one million trees by 2022.

Creating living streets will contribute significantly to achieving these targets, but we note that neither these targets nor the quality of streetscape required to establish living streets will be achieved without significant changes in our approach to allocation, investment and design of public domains. Of particular concern to us are the ‘left out’ local streets that fall under the jurisdiction of local councils.

To succeed we need to consider questions of funding and governance, de-prioritisation of private cars, urban renewal, engineering policies, implementation of the missing middle policy and guidelines, conditions of development, utilities reform, and collaborative partnerships across all levels of government. To this end, the Australian Institute of Architects, the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects and the Planning Institute of Australia are currently collaborating on a research piece exploring these issues and including a suite of recommendations that we look forward to presenting to government for consideration.



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In the meantime, we commend the recent announcement of the Streets as Shared Places grant program and the pedestrianisation pilots to be rolled out in each of the three Greater Sydney cities, and we urge you to consider both extending the funding available and encouraging effective incorporation of green infrastructure in supported projects.

Please don't hesitate to get in touch if you would like to discuss this matter further.

Yours sincerely

Kathlyn Loseby FRAIA  
President, NSW Chapter  
Australian Institute of Architects

Lee Andrews  
NSW President  
Australian Institute of Landscape Architects

Juliet Grant  
NSW Division President  
Planning Institute Australia

CC – Marcus Ray, Group Deputy Secretary Planning and Assessment, DPIE  
Alex O'Mara, Deputy Secretary, Place, Design and Public Spaces, DPIE  
Dr Caroline Butler-Bowden, Executive Director, Public Spaces, DPIE  
Dr Sarah Hill, CEO, Greater Sydney Commission