

## **HOUSING QUALITY FOR QUEENSLANDERS - TOWARDS APARTMENT DESIGN STANDARD**

*Ensuring residential quality and liveable communities in higher density housing in our state.*

The Australian Institute of Architects (AIA) is a strong advocate for higher density housing to accommodate population growth and provide residential diversity within the existing footprint of our cities and regional towns.<sup>i</sup>

Although urban densification will deliver significant social, economic and environmental benefits, any change to our built environment is a disruption that could provoke public opposition if not carefully designed. As a profession we are aware that public opinion of the built environment will be influenced by the worst instances of poor planning or building design and not by the most exemplary project.

We argue that increased residential density must be accompanied by minimum quality standards that ensure architects and developers design and deliver liveable, affordable and sustainable, multi-residential buildings and sites that provide a desirable quality of life for residents and attractive public amenity.

We advocate the introduction of apartment design standards in Queensland to avoid proliferation of multi-residential developments that fail to respond positively to Queensland's climate and residents' lifestyle expectations.

AIA (Qld) commends the inclusion of provisions for liveable communities, housing supply and diversity in Queensland State Planning Policies<sup>ii</sup>, and the *Density and Diversity Done Well* ideas competition. We also strongly support the *QDesign Manual* of urban design principles currently being prepared by the Office of Queensland Government Architect<sup>ii</sup>.

Nevertheless, we are concerned that Queensland lags behind other Australian states in establishing policies and advisory design quality guidelines for apartment buildings and other higher density housing in this state. On the other hand, Queensland is in a prime position to leap-frog the efforts of other states by developing forward-looking standards and design guidelines that address important liveability challenges associated with climate change, demographic shifts and technological advances.

The NSW government first introduced apartment design standards and guidelines in 2002<sup>iii</sup>, as a response to poor built outcomes in that state, and has continued to upgrade<sup>iv</sup> and expand<sup>v</sup> their guidelines. It is also reported that NSW is enacting a low rise medium density housing code modelled on their apartment design guidelines WA has recently prepared apartment design guidelines<sup>vi</sup> with similar scope to NSW.

After a groundswell of negative public opinion on apartment dwelling quality, Victoria reviewed the NSW results and introduced a performance-based guide<sup>vii</sup> that focused on siting and building arrangement, building performance and dwelling amenity, leaving issues of urban design quality to local planning instruments. The ACT has also initiated discussion of housing choices for a ‘sustainable, compact and well-connected city’<sup>viii</sup>.

While public disquiet in Queensland is more low-key for now, AIA (Qld) recognises a unique opportunity for Queensland policy makers, and the industry more broadly, to prevent looming negative community reaction to poorly-designed multiple-residential buildings, and ensure the continuation of the Queensland lifestyle that is enjoyed by residents and envied by interstate competitors.

AIA (Qld) represents architects throughout the state and we recognise the great diversity of climate, landscape and environment, culture and economy, including broad participation by small-to-medium enterprises in the development and construction of multiple-housing across our urban and regional center’s. This diversity, and these distinctive characteristics represent the Queensland advantage. We believe Queensland’s reputation for breaking the mould holds the key to developing innovative practices in achieving apartment design quality standards. For example, Queensland is well-placed to resolve the perennial tensions between concepts of ‘yield for profitability’ and ‘building form for climate-responsiveness and liveability’, to retain Queensland values.

We call on the Queensland Government, through the departments responsible for planning<sup>x</sup>, local government<sup>x</sup>, and housing<sup>xi</sup> to examine the need for Apartment Design Standards and Guidelines specifically addressing the Queensland context, in order to capitalise on Queensland’s unique environment.

As a minimum we believe such guidelines should provide Queensland-specific standards and performance metrics in response to the following issues:

- External provisions: responsibility to residents with usable communal open space; responsibility beyond the site to neighbors and public space (street); prevention of buildings expanding to the size of the lot at the expense of landscape and amenity.
- Internal considerations: dwelling privacy without isolation / community without loss of privacy; building entry; horizontal and vertical circulation systems for safety, sociality and mobility; accessibility; functional layout; private open space and outdoor living; room depth for daylighting and cross ventilation; windows size and placement, storage.
- Performance standards: visual and aural privacy, noise impacts; daylighting, solar access (and shading); natural ventilation; material performance; occupant choice in energy expenditure; energy efficiency.
- Servicing provisions: flexibility to respond to innovations in urban systems for waste and recycling; integrated water and storm water management; energy supply; vehicle ownership.
- Community aspirations: diversity, affordability, inclusivity, connectivity, resilience, identity.

The AIA (QLD) sees the development of apartment design quality standards and guidelines in Queensland as an important priority which requires industry-wide support. We are committed and open to working with government, industry and associated parties to raise awareness of the benefits of housing quality standards and as such we hope we can further discuss ways we can champion this issue together.



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- <sup>i</sup> AIA Multi-Residential Policy (2017). <http://www.architecture.com.au/docs/default-source/national-policy/multi-residential-standards-policy-2017>
- <sup>ii</sup> Qld State Planning Policy (2015). <https://planning.dilgp.qld.gov.au/planning/better-planning/state-planning>
- <sup>iii</sup> AIA (Qld) has viewed a draft version of this document in consultation.
- <sup>iii</sup> NSW State Environment Planning Policy no. 65 (SEPP 65). <https://www.legislation.nsw.gov.au/#/view/EPI/2002/530>
- <sup>iv</sup> NSW Apartment Design Guide (2015). <http://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/Policy-and-Legislation/Housing/Apartment-Design-Guide>
- <sup>v</sup> NSW Draft Medium Density Design Guide (2016). [http://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/~/\\_media/Files/DPE/Manuals-and-guides/draft-medium-density-design-guide-2016-10.ashx](http://www.planning.nsw.gov.au/~/_media/Files/DPE/Manuals-and-guides/draft-medium-density-design-guide-2016-10.ashx)
- <sup>vi</sup> WA State Planning Policy 7.3 and Draft Apartment Design Guide (2016). [https://www.planning.wa.gov.au/dop\\_pub\\_pdf/WAPC\\_Apartment\\_Design\\_Policy\\_DRAFT\\_.pdf](https://www.planning.wa.gov.au/dop_pub_pdf/WAPC_Apartment_Design_Policy_DRAFT_.pdf)
- <sup>vii</sup> Apartment Design Guidelines for Victoria (2017). [https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/\\_data/assets/pdf\\_file/0030/80994/Apartment-Design-Guidelines-for-Victoria\\_August-2017.pdf](https://www.planning.vic.gov.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0030/80994/Apartment-Design-Guidelines-for-Victoria_August-2017.pdf)
- <sup>viii</sup> Housing Choices-Your Say ACT (2017). <https://www.yoursay.act.gov.au/housing-choices>
- <sup>ix</sup> Department of State Development, Manufacturing, Infrastructure and Planning
- <sup>x</sup> Department of Local Government, Racing and Multicultural affairs
- <sup>xi</sup> Department of Housing and Public Works