

12 May 2016

Ms Allison Heller  
Manager Social Strategy  
City of Sydney  
Town Hall House  
456 Kent Street  
Sydney NSW 2000



**Australian Institute of Architects**

Dear Ms Heller

## **SOCIAL SUSTAINABILITY DISCUSSION PAPER**

I congratulate the City on this exemplary and forward-looking document.

The four strategic directions outlined in the document are both comprehensive and appropriate for the challenges faced by the City. Architecture and design are relevant to all of them:

### **An inclusive city**

I note particularly the need for a 'mix of housing for every budget'. This is critical to achieve social equity for the workforce on which the liveliness of the city depends. It is unacceptable to condemn the city's nurses, police officers, teachers and hospitality staff to long commutes to and from housing on the fringes of the metropolitan area.

I also endorse the concept of growth and development delivering public benefits along with private profits. Large city buildings should provide green spaces, generous forecourts and public art as part of their contribution to the city and its people.

### **A connected city**

As a result of SEPP 65 and the skills of our architects, New South Wales now has the best designed apartment buildings in Australia, providing a very high standard of amenity for residents living in the high-density city. The challenge is to extend that level of quality to the public realm. Apartment residents should be able to enjoy all the facilities of a healthy and active outdoor life, such as parks and walking and cycling paths, that are such a feature of the lower density residential areas of the city.

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A key strategy in creating a connected city is to create a walkable city in which footpaths are wide and free of clutter. Pedestrians need to be able to walk from one place to another in relative safety and on a route that is clearly separated from vehicle traffic.

### **A liveable city**

Transport is the necessary glue that holds a connected city together. The Institute is an enthusiastic supporter of the City – Randwick light rail project; we also consider that a light rail from Circular Quay to Barangaroo will strengthen the accessibility of the Walsh Bay arts precinct and the Barangaroo headland park.

The City and leading architects have a proud record in jointly providing award-winning public facilities, such as Darling Place, Paddington Reservoir Gardens, Alfred Park and Pool and the Surry Hills Library, that have added immeasurably to the public amenity of the city.

### **An engaged city**

I agree with the proposal: 'higher-density development offers benefits, including the opportunity for people to live close to jobs, transport and many services and facilities. But it must be designed and managed well to make it work'.

Design also has an important role to play in helping people to engage with the planning and decision-making processes that underpin the effective governance of the city. A skilful designer can produce easy-to-understand 3D imagery that explains the potential effects of a proposed building on the urban environment far more effectively than words on a page.

### **Case studies**

I note the inclusion of the New York City High Line as an exemplary case study in urban renewal. But there is another example close to hand in our own city. Even at the early stage of its development the **Goods Line** in Ultimo has created a relaxing and engaging walking path from Central that will eventually link this transport hub with Darling Harbour. It is ironic that the same state government that has proudly achieved this major piece of public infrastructure is also intent on demolishing one of the Goods Line's key destinations, the Powerhouse Museum, a proposal that is strongly opposed by the Institute.

Congratulations again on this discussion paper.

Yours sincerely



Shaun Carter  
**NSW President**