Editorial

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Sydney as an international entity is defined by the Harbour Bridge, Opera House and most recently by the 2000 Olympiad. The focus of this *Urban Design International* edition, however, shifts to where the creative energy is currently being processed, as witnessed by our diverse range of articles that combine academic theory, research, practice and narrative.

Our topics have global relevance and range from gentrification to road design to philosophical debate on design theory. The style of presentation is equally mixed. This is the combined result of reference to the original remit of *Urban Design International* to link academia, practice and research; and an indication of where design activity is now happening in Sydney.

Sydney is Australia's largest city and economic capital of the state of New South Wales. The city has an Aboriginal presence dating back from 30 000–15 000 BC but its colonial history is more recent, punctuated by Captain James Cook landing at Botany Bay in 1770, and the establishment of the infamous penal colony at Sydney Cove by Captain Arthur Phillip in 1788. The transportation of convicts had ceased by 1840 and, 2 years later, Sydney was formally recognised as a city.

Our icons followed much later – the Harbour Bridge, a project born of the Depression, opened in 1932. The Opera House, result of an international design competition won by Dane Jørn Utzon, followed 41 years later and at the turn of the 21st Millennium, Sydney played spectacular host to the highly successful Games of the XXVII Olympiad.

Now a sprawling city of over 4 million people, Sydney is fringed by the ocean to the east and cupped by mountains to the west, with the CBD as fulcrum. Each day another 110 people arrive, and an extra 40 homes are built. The city is cosmopolitan and vibrant, with an enviable

quality of life. Our beaches, surf and sunshine are legendary.

Yet even here reality 'bites'. This year, again, rainfall has been scarce and Sydney's reservoirs have fallen below 40% capacity for the first time ever. Increasingly stringent water restrictions are becoming a way of life. Sydneysiders are taking up the challenge: *The Sydney Morning Herald* ran a mid-year 'Campaign for Sydney' that focussed on water, air, urban development and transport. The campaign highlighted political weaknesses that have led to consistent underinvestment in infrastructure, restricted innovation in areas such as water recycling, and resulted in poorly considered housing layout and design. Our public transport is widely acknowledged to be 'in crisis', while urban leaders are criticised for dragging their heels on a big picture urban strategy.

These harsh truths might dull the glitz of Sydney, but they don't restrain the global passion for the city, or the commitment of our authors or ourselves. Our Sydney is introduced by Peter John Cantrill and Philip Thalís, both part-time lecturers who are also award winning practitioners. Cantrill and Thalís propose that 'the history of the development of a city is better understood as the accumulation of urban projects'. Using this framework, they examine and illustrate a range of urban projects, which they argue have characterised Sydney's relatively short history as well as its form and structure.

The next paper, by Raeburn Chapman, the Senior Manager for Urban Design at the Roads and Traffic Authority of New South Wales, 'discusses the lessons learnt in Sydney by moving away from a traditional engineering approach and instead adopting an urban design approach to the development of road and related transport infrastructure'. Chapman illustrates these lessons

with a number of case studies of recent road and road-related projects that have aimed to integrate and enhance the urban fabric rather than dividing it in a way which would once have been commonplace.

Suburban detached housing, where 'the summer smells of chlorine and chiko rolls at the pool and backyard *barbies* and boiling bitumen on bare feet' was the ideal in post second world war Australia, and the default for nearly five decades following. With this in mind, Associate Professor, Michael Bounds of the University of Western Sydney and Senior Lecturer, Alan Morris of the School of Social Science and Policy at the University of New South Wales, examine 'the re-emergence of the high-density, post-fordist inner-city neighbourhood', in the context of 'economic restructuring and deindustrialisation, demographic changes, the transformation of Australia's class structure and shifts in the perceptions of what is considered desirable urban design and living'.

Bounds and Morris' case study is Pyrmont Ultimo, adjoining historic neighbourhoods on Sydney harbour. These suburbs have undergone transformation from insalubrious working class housing mixed in with rough woolsheds and dirty wharves to prized high-density apartments favoured by young professionals who enjoy proximity to the pulse, lifestyle and jobs of the city centre.

Catherine DeLorenzo, Director of Research Students and Senior Lecturer in Architecture in the Faculty of the Built Environment at the University of New South Wales, reminds us that while water is 'elemental to the experience of being in Sydney', it is 'a precious resource not to be wasted', particularly in the current drought. DeLorenzo explores water as a theme in public art in Sydney, and its evolution from 'intrinsic material (as in a fountain)' to 'strong environmental and cultural imperatives'. As part of the paper, DeLorenzo takes readers on a tour of many of Sydney's major public art installations, and associated public places.

Next is a case study of the restructure of the campus of the University of New South Wales. Not only is this an example of urban design in

practice, but an illustration of urban design transforming the image of the University and significantly upgrading its standing for local and international academic communities alike. The author of this paper, David Chesterman, is a consultant of long-standing and high regard in the local design community. He has provided a prototype for integrating disparate campus components through imagination and structure.

We look then behind the glamour and success of the Sydney Olympics to gain an insight into how the city is tackling the reinvention of Olympic Park. This precinct includes world class sporting facilities and the largest metropolitan parkland in Australia, all of which need to be populated on a day-to-day basis to retain meaning and viability. The author of this paper is Helen Lochhead, architect and urban designer and currently Design Director responsible for the development of the new Master Plan for Sydney Olympic Park.

As Lochhead describes, 'the Olympic Legacy, while championing design excellence, best practices approaches to sustainability, world class infrastructure and unique parklands, also left behind a precinct characterised by monumental scaled buildings and spaces appropriate for major events but less suitable for ordinary day to day activities'. This paper may have particular resonance for Londoners, whose Olympic venue for 2012 is also based on a large brownfield development, away from the heartbeat and activity of the city centre.

To close the papers with food for thought, Alexander Cuthbert, Professor of Planning and Urban Development at the University of New South Wales, debates the status of urban design theory, arguing that it is currently immature, ambiguous, eclectic and lacking in substance. Cuthbert goes on to propose that 'urban design must realign itself with the substantial theoretical base being constructed within urban social theory, human geography and cultural studies, a grouping which roughly equates to what is termed *Spatial Political Economy*'.

The books reviewed in the journal are both those of the New South Wales Government Architect,

Chris Johnson, who has more recently taken the mantle of Executive Director for Urban Renewal in the Department of Infrastructure, Planning and Natural Resources.

Our Streetsweeper is Elizabeth Farrelly, outspoken architect turned journalistic provocateur, whose articles bring design critique and urban awareness to the broad daily readership of *The Sydney Morning Herald*. Farrelly currently writes, teaches and is working

on a number of books, lectures and documentaries.

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