

Strategy for Action 2017-18

Delivering Better Placed – an integrated design policy for New South Wales



“If we care for country
it will care for us”

Design objectives for NSW

Seven objectives define the key considerations in the design of the built environment.



Better fit
contextual, local
and of its place



Better performance
sustainable, adaptable
and durable



Better for community
inclusive, connected
and diverse



Better for people
safe, comfortable
and liveable



Better working
functional, efficient
and fit for purpose



Better value
creating and
adding value



Better look and feel
engaging, inviting
and attractive

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Good Design and the role of the Government Architect NSW

The NSW Government recognises the importance of good design in making great places and ensuring our cities and towns are Better Placed.

Great places and cities don't happen by chance: they are designed, and continue to be designed as we manage the transformation of our cities.

Well-designed places have the potential to link new and old, are more efficient, healthier, and support social cohesion. Well-designed places add value, attracting and retaining residents, jobs, global talent, tourists and further investment.

To create great places for NSW, we need to elevate the role, importance and value of design, focus on funding solutions to today's pressing challenges that will benefit all our communities. In short, good design makes better places.

The Government Architect NSW (GANSW) has been charged with championing good design in NSW and developing strategies to:

- **Advocate** the importance of design for better places, spaces and outcomes
- **Support** industry and government to deliver good design for people
- **Enable** effective design processes to be established and supported in the planning system

Better Placed provides an overarching policy framework and focus for championing good design and great places.



Introducing Better Placed

GANSW released **Better Placed: an integrated design policy for NSW** in August 2017. The policy provides clarity on what the NSW Government means by good design. Not just how a place looks, but how it works and feels for people, as well as outlines processes for achieving this. The policy has been created to assist everyone involved in built environment projects or the development assessment process and advocates that we all have a role in ensuring our cities and towns are better places.

The policy has also been developed to support the inclusion of a new Design Object in the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act as part of the review of the Act.

Better Placed is about enhancing the quality of our built environment, raising expectations, working better and creating better environments.

A well-designed built environment is:

Healthy for all members of our communities, promoting physical activity, social cohesion, and community safety and security to support people's wellbeing

Responsive to the needs and aspirations of local people, now and into the future, inviting use and habitation, interaction, productivity and enjoyment

Integrated by drawing together the relationships between parts and elements, considering interfaces at multiple scales, and working to common goals and aspirations

Equitable by presenting opportunities for all segments of our community so residents and visitors have access to and can move about freely between public domain, infrastructure, open space and buildings

Resilient to the dynamic, challenging conditions of our time, able to adapt and evolve while retaining essential qualities and values

To implement the policy, this document outlines a range of actions which will be undertaken to achieve the changes we seek.

This document

The **Better Placed Strategy for Action** is a summary of key actions to implement **Better Placed**.

We acknowledge that change will not happen overnight. It will require a commitment to examine the way we think and do things. Change in culture and new processes will need to evolve over time to ensure design is considered early in the process when it can add the most value. Notwithstanding the long-term nature of the challenge and the required culture change, this **Strategy for Action** identifies a combination of 'quick wins' in addition to longer-term actions.

Implementation identified as a key issue

Better Placed was first issued as a 'draft for discussion' in September 2016. The final policy has benefitted from extensive workshoping and review over an extended period.

How we implement the policy was a key focus of the program of engagement.

Feedback highlighted:

- the need to embed good design and **Better Placed** early in the conception, scoping and briefing stages of project development when design can add most value and more efficiently reduce risk
- the need to empower all involved in the development of projects and the planning process to champion good design
- the need for good design and **Better Placed** to be referenced in existing and future statutory planning instruments and process
- that the proposed inclusion of the Design Object in amendments to the EP&A Act is important as it sends a strong message to all involved in the planning process that good design is a priority for government
- that the proposed inclusion of the Design Object needs to be supported by specific references in statutory planning instruments, guidelines and circulars etc.
- that the implementation of **Better Placed** needs to be focussed on more than the development process
- there is value in piloting approaches to demonstrate benefits
- the focus should be on continual improvement – achieving better outcomes and urban quality
- NSW needs champions to raise awareness and promote good design processes and outcomes
- NSW needs to build capacity, develop skills and awareness across all stakeholder groups in relation to good design and the importance of great places
- the need to develop a program to monitor and measure success and evaluate the policy.

How the draft policy is already being used

GANSW continues to engage with Government agencies responsible for development of major projects. A key focus is recognising that when design is considered early in the conception and development of projects, opportunities can be optimised and risks more effectively managed. We are working with agencies to develop approaches to place-based planning and design-led processes.

Engagement across the Department of Planning and Environment (DPE) is exploring the utilisation of design review processes early to reduce risks and potentially speed up the approval process as potential issues will have been addressed early in the development process rather than at the submission and assessment stage.

The draft policy is already being used by NSW Government and industry. Some examples include:

- inclusion in SEARS (Secretaries Environmental Assessment Requirements) for major projects, State Significant Development (SSD) and Infrastructure (SSI)
- inclusion of references to **Better Placed** and requirements for good design processes in project briefs
- referencing of **Better Placed** objectives in design review processes and submission by applicants
- consideration by the NSW Planning Assessment Commission in the assessment of applications
- used by industry when working with clients to stress the importance of good design
- used by industry as an internal checklist before presenting concepts to clients and councils
- referenced in Sydney's draft District Plans and regional plans.

Strategies for action



The following strategies have been identified to work towards implementing Better Placed:

1. **Creating a culture of design**
2. **Capacity building – education and awareness raising**
3. **Influencing the front end of major projects when a focus on design can add the most value to the project**
4. **Improving the procurement of great places and good design**
5. **Influencing the planning process**
6. **Monitoring and evaluating to establish the benefits of Better Placed and good design**

Strategies for Action

1 Creating a culture of design by:

- establishing design champions within DPE, across all 3 tiers of government, industry, academia and the community to advocate for the creation of better places and for use and application of the policy
- continuing to leverage 200 years of the Government Architect's role in architecture and city making
- providing thought leadership in regards to design and quality
- delivering forums to debate and promote design, place-based planning and quality of the built environment
- promoting national and global best practice
- collecting, collating and publishing best practice case studies
- developing initiatives and partnering with others to reward good design
- supporting awards programs – including establishing Better Placed, Greener Places and Future Heritage awards
- supporting the development of a program of pilot projects to demonstrate the value of good design
- supporting DPE Year of Design Programs.

2 Capacity building – Education and awareness raising by:

- creating enhanced awareness of the role and value of design and equipping all with the tools, guidance and references to encourage and champion good design
- promoting a common language for understanding design, reviewing design and discussing design
- developing a GANSW website to promote **Better Placed**, design guidelines, share best practice case studies and resources and provide a focus for thinking and discussion on good design
- working with others including Australian Institute Architects, Planning Institute Australia, Australian Institute Landscape Architects to deliver a range of promotional programs for **Better Placed** linked to skills and training opportunities
- promoting the Policy to secondary, tertiary and professional/industry education and training providers
- promoting case studies on the GANSW website so people can engage in debate about good design and the NSW community can be proud of their great places
- surveying communities, developers, councillors to understand their thoughts on design, and share the results to raise awareness about design and identify priorities
- developing tools and resources to help communities, planners, designers and politicians promote and champion good design process and outcomes and the creation of great places
- providing support for and assisting the development of an expanded network of city architects, design advisors and champions in local authorities including the development of shared resources
- providing support for the establishment of independent local design review panels and processes.

Strategies for Action

3 Influencing the front end of major projects when a focus on design can add the most value to the project by:

- developing programs that encourage and reward a focus on design upfront in the development of projects including early and ongoing design review processes
- continuing to build relationships with agencies responsible for planning and building major infrastructure and urban renewal to identify opportunities for collaboration with a focus on
- ensuring the principles of good design and great places are imbedded in NSW Government major projects' objectives and KPIs
- continuing to work with Infrastructure NSW to incorporate the objectives and processes outlined in **Better Placed** into the assurance review process appraisal of major projects, especially in the initial stages of project creation
- ensuring consistency across all major projects in NSW with the establishment of a State Design Review Panel involved at regular intervals throughout the processes of project development, appraisal and assessment, monitoring during construction and evaluation post completion
- working with government agencies to establish specific agency design groups to create a culture and process that ensures integration of design into decision making process
- supporting the Greater Sydney Commission and others to deliver design-led planning process as part of place-based planning
- promoting the role of Green Infrastructure and the Green Grid as part of the development process.

4 Improving the procurement of great places and good design:

- continuing to manage, renew and promote the Government Architect's Prequalification Scheme, thus making available to government a prequalified, multidisciplinary talent pool
- promoting the value of Strategic Frameworks to government and key stakeholders and managing the procurement and delivery to ensure benefits of investment and growth are optimised and risks reduced
- preparing practice advice sheets to support good design processes such as brief writing, master-planning and the preparation of strategic frameworks
- reviewing and updating Design Excellence Guidelines, such as the Director General's Design Excellence Guidelines.

Strategies for Action

5 Influencing the planning process by:

- developing a suite of urban design guidelines and tools to help shape and assess proposals
- promoting the benefits and value of good design processes through documenting best practice in case studies
- encouraging pre-application processes that support good design such as pre-application design review referencing **Better Placed** in the revisions to the regulations (currently being prepared)
- ensuring the inclusion of **Better Placed** in Regional and District Plans (the Draft **Better Placed** is already referenced in Draft District Plans)
- developing standard design clauses for LEPs and DCPs as part of the Department's standardised approach to instruments
- developing standard design clauses to be included in SEARs to ensure design is considered early in the process when projects can be influenced (starting to happen)
- including reference to **Better Placed** and design review processes in the review of Environmental Impact Assessment Guidelines (currently being prepared)
- exploring options to develop specific s117 directions to ensure the objectives of **Better Placed** and good design processes are considered as part of the development of planning proposals
- including **Better Placed** in the update to the Planning Proposal Guidelines (currently being prepared).

6 Monitoring and evaluating to establish the influence and benefits of **Better Placed** and good design by:

- working with partners to identify both existing and future data sources that can be interrogated to measure the impact of good design and **Better Placed**
- working with academia, industry, local authorities and communities to establish best practice and encourage the practice of producing post occupancy evaluation of projects
- supporting the further collection of case studies and best practice examples where successful design processes and outcomes have been achieved, to demonstrate the value of design and learn from previous projects
- monitoring and communicating the benefits of good design process including design review, competitive design excellence processes, etc.



Monitoring and reviewing the action plan

Better Placed – Strategy for action will be updated and monitored annually.

How can you help?

GA NSW welcomes your feedback on how we are doing, what initiatives you, your organisation or others are pursuing to deliver Better Places, case studies and ideas for future programs.

Please also sign up to our contact list on the website so we can share updates with you.

Contact details

Please see the GA NSW website for:

- Policy
- Guidelines
- Thought leadership
- Case studies
- News
- Updates

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