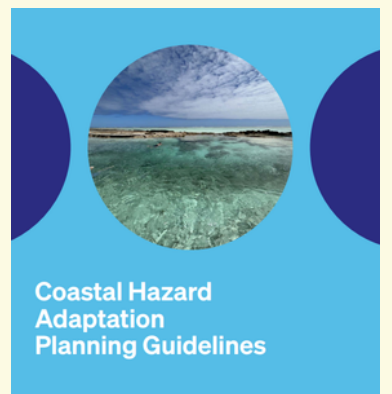
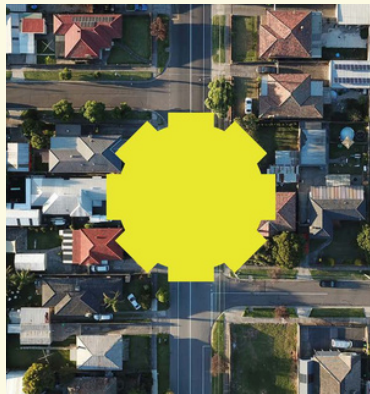
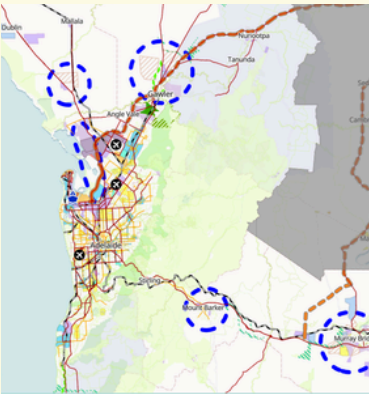


Planning  
Institute  
Australia

**2026  
NATIONAL**

**AWARDS FOR  
PLANNING  
EXCELLENCE**

Planning Institute Australia



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# Message from the Chief Executive Officer

The National Awards for Planning Excellence remain one of the most important moments on our calendar. They give us the opportunity to recognise the ideas, leadership, and commitment that continue to strengthen planning across Australia.

Planning has never been more important. Our communities are navigating housing pressures, climate resilience, population growth, infrastructure demands, and the need to create places that are more connected, inclusive, and liveable. At the centre of these challenges are planners helping turn complexity into progress.

These Awards celebrate those leading that work. They recognise projects, policies, people, and partnerships that demonstrate what great planning can achieve and the positive difference it makes in everyday lives.

They also serve another important purpose: sharing excellence across the profession. The finalists and winners showcased in these pages set a standard others can learn from, adapt, and build upon in communities right around the country.

Each national finalist has already been recognised through their State and Territory awards program, reflecting the outstanding quality of work happening in every corner of Australia. Reaching this stage is an achievement in itself.

Congratulations to all finalists and recipients in the 2026 PIA National Awards for Planning Excellence. Your work is helping shape a stronger future for our cities, regions, towns, and communities.

*Matt*



**Matt Collins MPIA**  
**Chief Executive Officer**

# Message from the Vice-President and National Awards Convenor

As the 2026 National Awards Convenor, it is a privilege to help celebrate the remarkable work being delivered by planners across Australia. These Awards showcase a profession that is thoughtful, future-focused, and deeply committed to creating better places for people.

This year's finalists reflect the breadth of planning practice from city-shaping strategies and housing solutions to environmental stewardship, transport connections, regional growth, and community-led outcomes. Together, they highlight the many ways planners make a lasting contribution to our nation.

In 2026, we received 55 entries across 11 categories, representing the winners and leading projects recognised through our State and Territory awards programs. The standard was exceptionally high, and selecting recipients was no simple task.

On behalf of the judging panel, I congratulate every finalist. To be recognised on the national stage is a significant achievement and a testament to the quality, dedication, and impact of your work.

I also extend sincere thanks to our judges for their expertise, care, and generosity throughout the process, and to our State and Territory teams whose efforts are essential in bringing these Awards to life each year.

Congratulations to all recipients of the 2026 PIA National Awards for Planning Excellence. Your leadership and innovation continue to raise the bar for our profession and inspire what comes next.

*Rukshan*



**Rukshan de Silva RPIA**  
**Vice-President**  
**National Awards Convenor**

# 2026 PIA National Awards Sponsors

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Climate Change & Resilience



Community Wellbeing & Diversity



Great Place



Improving Planning Processes



Planning with County



Planning Research



Stakeholder Engagement



Strategic Planning Project



Technology & Digital Innovation



Tertiary Student Project



Emerging Planner of the Year



# 2026 PIA National Awards Judges



**Rukshan de Silva RPIA**

Rukshan is a Registered Planner and Graduate of the Australian Institute of Company Directors, currently serving as National Planning Manager at Lendlease.

His experience spans policy, strategic planning, statutory planning, and community and stakeholder engagement across consulting, local government, state government and the development industry. He has championed cross-sector collaboration to tackle workforce shortages, bringing together industry, government and academia to grow the pipeline of future planners.

Rukshan is currently the PIA National Vice President. He has also served as Vice President of PIA's NSW Division, lectured in city planning at the University of New South Wales, and was named PIA National Young Planner of the Year in 2019.

He holds degrees in planning and economic development from the University of Waterloo in Canada.



**Rachel Jones MPIA**

Rachel is a specialist planning and development lawyer focusing on planning and environment litigation, advisory work and compliance.

Known for her outcome focused and lateral thinking approach, she provides frank and practical legal advice tailored to her clients' needs. Her litigation experience includes involvement in a number of seminal cases in the Planning and Environment Court. She regularly advises on local planning schemes, infrastructure charges and infrastructure agreements.

She has a deep understanding of the Planning Act 2016 (QLD) and its related legislation and predecessors. Rachel acts for a diverse range of clients including private and commercial clients, property developers, submitters and local and state government departments across all facets of planning and environment law.



**Anne Moroney RPIA (Fellow)**

Anne is a long-time Canberran working for decades as a strategic planner with strong social and community planning experience in public, private and not-for profit sectors. She maintains a keen interest in social planning policy and building community resilience.

Anne brings to the judging panel the perspective of a retired Fellow on contemporary best practice and an enthusiasm for planning. Since retiring in 2021, she has maintained a passion for lifelong learning, currently volunteering for the National Capital Authority at the National Capital Exhibition, particularly as a volunteer guide delivering education programs on the story of Canberra to visiting school groups.

Anne is passionate about how planning can build resilience for our cities and communities to respond to contemporary and future disruptors and challenges.



**Kym Pryde RPIA (Fellow)**

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Kym has over 25 years of experience with State Government, primarily within the environment space within various departments including the EPA and the Department for Environment and Water.

Kym is familiar and has worked on a large variety of projects across a range of industry sectors from renewable energy, waste, manufacturing, intensive animal keeping, site contamination and produce and mineral processing.

Kym is currently Director for Planning, Heritage and Dog and Cat Management at the Department for Environment and Water and prior she undertook a short stint in the private sector at JBS&G as an Associate specialising in environmental impact assessment, approval pathway and strategic advice. During her career Kym has worked across all areas of planning including the assessment of major developments with Planning and Land Use Services (DTI).



**Sharon Smith RPIA (Fellow)**

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Sharon (Gumbayngirr) is a strategic and urban planner with 40 years of planning and urban design experience, in both local government and consultancy.

She has a particular interest in creating environmentally sustainable, equitable and engaging places for all and is proud of her Gumbayngirr heritage. She has always lived and worked on the North Coast of NSW.

Sharon is the immediate Past President of the NSW PIA Divisional Committee, and has served on the Committee for 8 years. She is currently the NSW NSW Divisional Committee All Regions Convenor and member of PIA's Knowledge Circle. She has always championed the regions and been mentor to many young planners over the years.



**Lisette Traves MPIA**

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Lisette is an experienced planning professional with more than two decades in the public sector, working across major infrastructure projects, master planned communities, urban renewal and high-density development.

She is passionate about creating vibrant, authentic places and has a strong vision for transforming Perth into not only one of the world's most liveable cities, but its most loveable.

Lisette is known for working collaboratively with stakeholders, building trust with communities, and navigating complex planning systems to achieve practical outcomes.

She currently serves at the Department of Housing and Works, where she is focused on delivering safe, stable and sustainable homes for Western Australians.



### Michelle Wang MPIA

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Michelle is an urban planner who gets excited about innovation and bringing people together. With nearly 10 years' experience in local government and private consultancy as a statutory and strategic planner, Michelle has a well-rounded understanding of the Victorian Planning System across urban, regional, and growth area planning issues.

Michelle advocates for and champions PlanTech and the possibilities of digital planning.



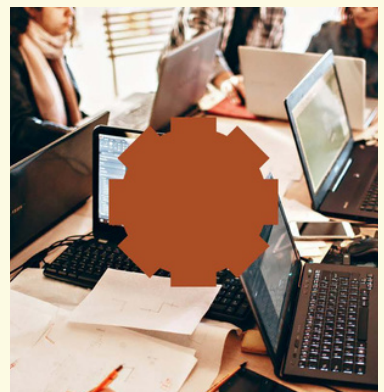
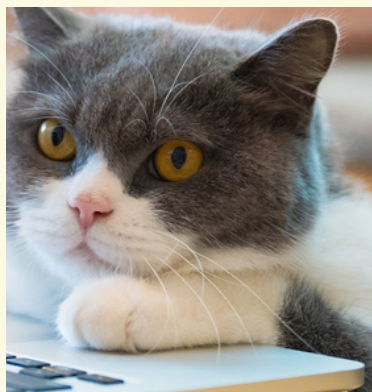
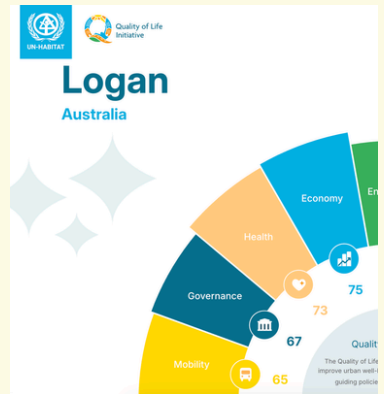
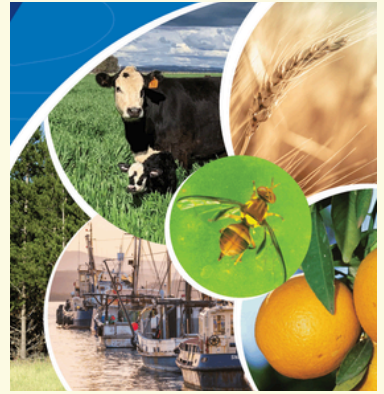
### Banfu Yu MPIA

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Bunfu is a Senior Environmental Planner at Entura with diverse experience in strategic and statutory planning, environmental approvals and management, and engagement and consultation streams for small to large scale projects across Australia and the Asia-Pacific.

Working with public and private clients across the water, energy, and infrastructure industries, she designs and leads fit-for purpose approval strategies that consider the community, landscape, and regulatory regime, and advises on acquisition, joint venture and/or purchase of portfolios in due diligence roles nationally and internationally. She has also worked on a number of key strategic planning projects in Tasmania in her career to date, including land use strategies, structure plans, local area plans, and large-scale rezoning and subdivisions.

She was awarded the PIA National Young Planner of the Year in 2023.





Home  
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## Vision

> Vision Show map

Kangaroo Island 2053 – is a resilient community who embrace new technologies and practices, and reside in high-quality townships, which deliver reliable infrastructure and accessible services. First Nations relationships are recognised and their cultural significance is respected and made visible.

Population growth is concentrated in key established settlements, with increased diversity of housing types in well serviced locations, particularly Kingscote.

The Island's economy is underpinned by primary industry and tourism, these industries continue to expand, as domestic and global economies seek high-quality products and visitor experiences.

The natural wilderness, native flora and fauna, remain at the heart of the Island's identity and is celebrated, recognised, and preserved for future generations. The Island will make a significant contribution to climate mitigation with its vegetation, soils and sea grasses acting as a carbon sink to accumulate and store greenhouse gasses.

As the risk of natural hazards increases, population growth will be directed towards low settlements on the eastern end of the Island away from extensive



# About PIA

## Australia's trusted voice on planning

The Planning Institute of Australia - and before it, the Royal Australian Planning Institute - has proudly championed planning professionals in Australia and internationally since 1951.

In 2026, PIA proudly celebrates 75 years of supporting the profession and shaping better communities across the nation. PIA is the only national organisation representing urban and regional planners in Australia, and our goal is to support planners to create a more liveable and sustainable built environment.

Good planning creates and connects us with places that enhance our health, wellbeing and happiness. It ensures our natural and built environments are resilient and able to respond effectively to emerging megatrends like increased urbanisation and climate change.

Planners, highly qualified and ethical professionals with a broad range of skills and knowledge, are central to delivering great planning outcomes for all our communities.

PIA supports, educates and encourages planners at all stages of their careers through university accreditation, mentoring and professional development programs. Through advocacy, collaboration and influence-building, PIA champions planning's key role in creating communities where fairness, equity and access are fundamental and paramount.

The Institute is built on a foundation of good governance, efficient and effective systems, member support services and financial sustainability.

**For more information on PIA or to become a member, visit [planning.org.au](http://planning.org.au)**



## National Board

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### **Vice-President / Queensland**

Wendy Evans MPIA (Fellow)

### **Vice-President / New South Wales**

Rukshan de Silva RPIA

### **Vice-President / South Australia**

Stephen Smith RPIA (Fellow)

### **Australian Capital Territory**

Peter Johns MPIA

### **Northern Territory**

Catriona Tatam MPIA

### **Tasmania**

Sandra Hogue RPIA (Fellow)

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Laura Murray RPIA

### **Western Australia**

Phyllida Rodic RPIA (Fellow)

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### **Western Australia**

Cameron Leckey MPIA



Winners of the 2025 PIA State Awards for Planning Excellence who are then eligible for the 2026 National Awards



2026  
NATIONAL

AWARDS FOR  
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Planning Institute Australia

# Award Winners & Commendations

# Climate Change & Resilience



## AWARD

**Climate Vulnerability Assessment and the Agricultural Landuse Planning Teams, Climate and Natural Resources Division, the NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development**

## PROJECT

**A Climate Vulnerability Assessment for NSW Primary Industries - Building climate resilience through evidence-based planning**

This project stands as a nationally significant benchmark in climate adaptation planning. At a time when Australia's primary industries face intensifying pressures from climate variability and extreme events, this assessment provides a comprehensive, practical and scientifically robust framework for understanding and managing risk across crops, livestock, fisheries and biosecurity.

The judges commended the project for its depth, clarity and direct applicability to real-world decision-making.

Through detailed climate modelling, expert engagement and systematic vulnerability scoring, the assessment translates complex scientific data into accessible, decision-ready tools. It enables both policymakers and producers to identify exposure, sensitivity and adaptive capacity with precision, supporting

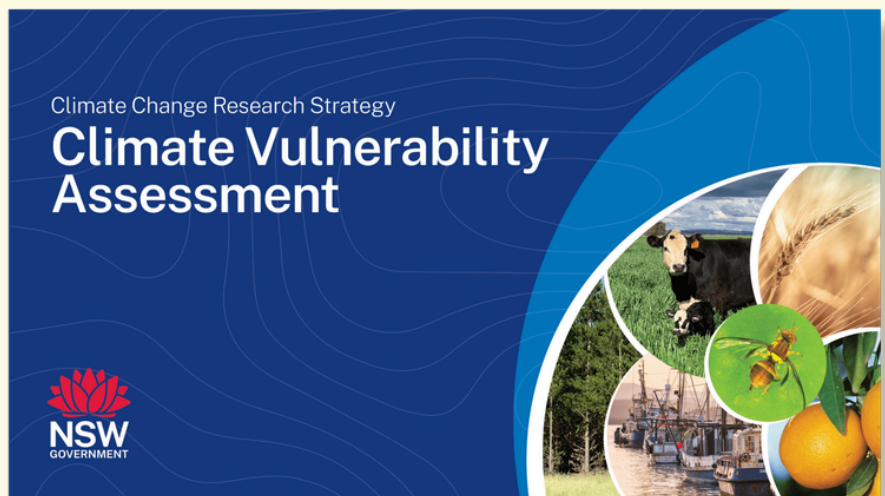
targeted interventions at statewide and farm scales.

Importantly, the framework establishes a consistent methodology for evaluating climate risk across diverse sectors, setting a new national standard for evidence-based resilience planning.

Its transparency in approach and sector-specific insights ensure that adaptation strategies are grounded in credible science while

remaining responsive to operational realities on the ground.

The judges recognise this work as a critical contribution to safeguarding Australia's food security, regional economies and environmental assets. It exemplifies how rigorous analysis, cross-sector collaboration and clear communication can strengthen resilience across complex systems.



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# Climate Change & Resilience



## COMMENDATION

**LGA South Australia,  
Department for  
Environment and Water,  
SA Coast Protection  
Board, SA Coastal  
Councils Alliance,  
Adelaide Coastal  
Councils Network, BRM  
Advisory, HATCH**

## PROJECT

**SA Climate Ready  
Coasts: Accelerating  
Coastal Hazard  
Adaption Planning**

This program represents a landmark national contribution to coastal climate adaptation. At a time when Australia's coastlines are facing intensifying risks from sea level rise, storm surge and coastal erosion, SA Climate Ready Coasts demonstrates how coordinated governance, scientific rigour and practical guidance can shift planning from reactive response to proactive, long-term resilience.



Through close collaboration across state and local government, and alignment with national initiatives, the program has delivered consistent Coastal Hazard Adaptation Planning Guidelines, an expert technical review process, a prioritisation framework for strategic investment, and South Australia's first comprehensive statewide coastal erosion assessment.

Together, these achievements establish a robust, transparent and risk-informed foundation for decision-making

across the state's 34 coastal councils.

The judges were particularly impressed by the initiative's depth of collaboration, methodological integrity and scalability. By building technical capability within councils, embedding quality assurance mechanisms and creating a shared language for adaptation planning, the program ensures that resilience is not only well-designed but also consistently applied. This integrated framework enables equitable allocation of resources while strengthening

confidence in long-term coastal management decisions.

At a national level, SA Climate Ready Coasts offers a transferable model for other jurisdictions grappling with the complex and cumulative impacts of climate change along Australia's extensive coastline. It exemplifies how sound evidence, strategic governance and a shared vision across tiers of government can safeguard communities, infrastructure and environmental assets for generations to come.

Category Sponsor



# Community Wellbeing & Diversity



## AWARD

**Frasers Property  
Australia and Fourfold  
Studio**

## PROJECT

**Ed.Square Residents  
Group**

This initiative stands as a nationally significant model for how community development can be authentically embedded within large-scale urban renewal. Delivered at Ed.Square in Sydney's South-West, the project demonstrates how masterplanned communities across Australia can move beyond transactional engagement toward meaningful, resident-led participation.

At the heart of the initiative is a dedicated Community Development Team, supported by specialist consultants, who established and continue to nurture a Residents Group designed to place leadership directly in the hands of the community.

Category Sponsor



Through funded and facilitated resident-led events, activations and social initiatives, the program fosters inclusion, celebrates cultural diversity, and strengthens wellbeing within a high-density environment.

Led by Claire Palmer, Karley Grill and Harriet McKindlay, the project goes far beyond traditional developer engagement. It establishes a replicable framework in which residents actively shape the identity, culture and rhythms of their neighbourhood. In doing so, it demonstrates that social sustainability is not an abstract aspiration,



but a measurable, human and enduring outcome of thoughtful planning practice.

The judges recognise this project as a benchmark for community-centred development in Australia. It exemplifies how the planning profession can champion diversity, cultivate belonging and build social capital from

the earliest stages of place-making. The Ed.Square Residents Group project offers a compelling and transferable model for communities across the country, illustrating the vital role of planning in delivering not only homes, but thriving, connected neighbourhoods for the long term.



# Community Wellbeing & Diversity



## COMMENDATION

City of Logan

## PROJECT

### UN-Habitat Quality of Life Pioneer City Initiative - City of Logan

This project represents an internationally benchmarked and locally grounded model of socially sustainable planning. As one of only ten global pioneer cities selected for the program, Logan has demonstrated how Australian local government can lead on the world stage while remaining deeply responsive to community needs.

Central to the project is the co-design of a dual-layer Quality of Life Index that integrates global benchmarks with locally defined priorities. This approach ensures that planning decisions reflect international best practice while directly responding to the health, safety, cultural diversity

and lived experiences of the Logan community. By embedding equity and inclusion into the measurement framework itself, the city has elevated wellbeing from an aspirational objective to a measurable and actionable planning outcome.

Collaboration sits at the heart of this achievement. Working with UN-Habitat, Geografia Pty Ltd, global experts and local stakeholders, the City of Logan fostered inclusive engagement processes that ensured policies genuinely reflect community aspirations.

Strategically embedded within the Transform Logan Strategy and aligned with the United Nations Sustainable



Development Goals, the initiative positions Logan as a national leader in social sustainability.

The judges commend this project as a benchmark for how Australian cities can harness data, global collaboration and community partnership to advance diversity, equity and wellbeing. The UN-Habitat Quality of

Life Pioneer City Initiative demonstrates the transformative power of planning when it places people at its centre, offering a model that is both globally informed and distinctly local in impact.

Category Sponsor



**ACT**  
Government

City and Environment

# Great Place



## AWARD

**Brisbane Sustainability Agency**

## PROJECT

**Archerfield Wetlands Parkland**

The Archerfield Wetlands Parkland project stands out as an exemplar regional shaping and multifaceted Great Place for Brisbane and the broader region. It represents a transition and renewal from industrial, contaminated and underutilised land to a resilient, biodiverse and community-focused landscape that delivers enduring public value.

A defining strength of the project is its strong collaboration and broad stakeholder support including the Traditional Owners, local environmental groups, active transport users, Brisbane City Council as asset owner and

manager, and local residents. The initiative reflects a shared commitment to place and community.

The project successfully advances multiple strategic objectives, including climate change adaptation and resilience, active and healthy communities, genuine reflection of Traditional Owner interests, stronger community bonds and the protection of environmental assets.

The judges commend the Brisbane Sustainability Agency and its partners for delivering an outstanding Great Place that demonstrates viability,



secures meaningful stakeholder buy-in and provides a clear, transferable model for other local governments

seeking to transform degraded land into resilient, community-centred environments.



Category Sponsor



# Great Place



## COMMENDATION

### North Western Program Alliance

## PROJECT

### Pakenham Level Crossing Removal

The Pakenham Level Crossing Removal Project demonstrates the transformational change and positive community outcomes that can be achieved through major infrastructure in a growth area context.

The project removed three congested level crossings through the construction of a 2-kilometre elevated u-trough rail viaduct, delivering a new premium station, track duplication and an end-of-line turnback with V/Line connectivity.

These upgrades have alleviated congestion and strengthened the reliability and capacity of both Metro and V/Line services.

Beyond its transport function, the project creates a significant new public realm. The delivery of an abundant 2-kilometre linear open space introduces a sequence of activity zones tailored to a wide range of community needs. These spaces support recreation, movement and social connection, and are inclusive and welcoming for people of all ages and abilities.

The judges commend this project as a strong example of how major infrastructure can deliver integrated transport and place outcomes. It demonstrates how thoughtful design and

delivery can transform infrastructure corridors into valued community assets, supporting liveability, accessibility and community wellbeing in a rapidly growing area.



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# Improving Planning Processes



## AWARD

**Department for Housing and Urban Development**

## PROJECT

**Code Amendment Tracking System (CATS)**

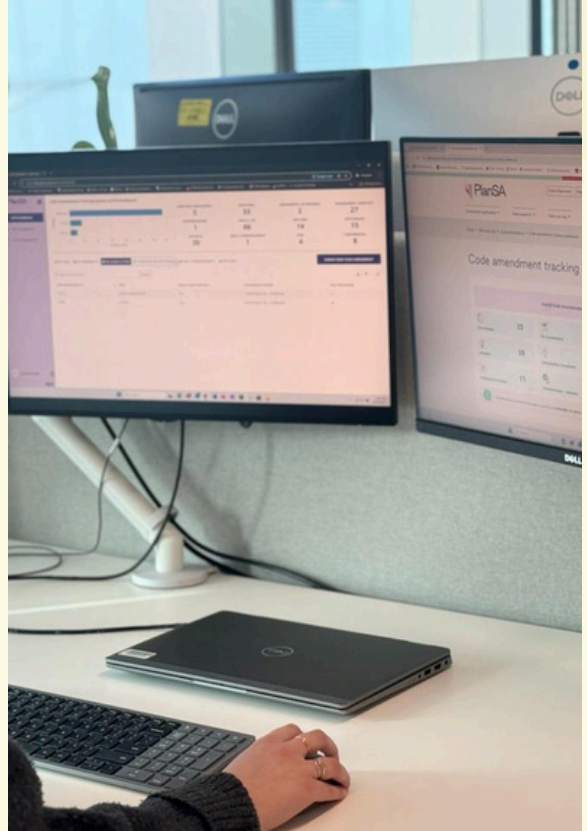
The judges were impressed by the originality of the South Australian Code Amendment Tracking System (CATS) as a first-of-its-kind digital platform that brings innovation and transparency to planning processes.

By enabling real-time submission and tracking of Code Amendments, the CATS System provides a clear, accessible interface for both proponents and the community, ensuring up-to-date information, promoting informed engagement and improved planning outcomes.

Strategically aligned with delivering the State Government's Housing Roadmap, the CATS System supports policy implementation through improved streamlined processes and enhanced oversight.

The judges recognise that the System's thoughtful design and quality implementation demonstrates its potential for replication in other jurisdictions.

The project was underpinned by extensive collaboration with consultants, industry bodies, and Councils, making it a model of effective stakeholder engagement and sector-wide impact.



Category Sponsor

**Objective**

# Improving Planning Processes



## COMMENDATION

**Gold Coast Waterways Authority and Meridian Urban**

## PROJECT

**A new statutory planning framework for sustainable access and management of Gold Coast waterways**

The Gold Coast Waterways project is recognised by the judges as a pioneering approach to managing one of Australia's most complex and dynamic coastal environments: Queensland's Gold Coast waterways.

The judges commend this project's improved planning outcomes being delivered by a new statutory planning framework that integrates mapping, policy and development assessment into a cohesive and accessible system for tidal works and waterway management.

Category Sponsor

**Objective**



Demonstrating originality and innovation, the project reframes the waterways as a managed infrastructure network, introducing a visionary code and mapping tool that supports sustainable access and development.

The project aligns with multiple overlapping jurisdictions and regulatory instruments, showcasing strategic depth and a commitment to public interest outcomes. The project's success is underpinned by extensive collaboration across



state agencies, local government and the community, culminating in a robust and practical planning solution.

The judges acknowledge the methodology offers strong transferability to other coastal and waterway contexts.

# Improving Planning Processes



## COMMENDATION

City of Subiaco

## PROJECT

**Park Street Heritage Area: Achieving Heritage Outcomes Through Community Engagement and Empowerment**

The City of Subiaco's Park Street Heritage Area project exemplifies how inclusive planning can transform heritage protection leading to improved planning outcomes.

The judges commend the City of Subiaco's staged, precinct-based approach for building trust and understanding with stakeholders and landowners. Working with a resident-led Heritage Reference Group, the project delivered a co-designed model that earned overwhelming community support and acceptance, protecting 109 properties with only three objections.

Category Sponsor

## Objective



Creative engagement, including storytelling, walking tours and resident-led videos, reframed heritage as a shared asset. Incentives and advisory services supported conservation, while strategic alignment with state and local frameworks ensured lasting impact.

The judges commend the City of Subiaco for its leadership in heritage planning, delivering a replicable, community-centred process that sets a benchmark for good planning practice and improved planning outcomes.



# Planning with Country



## AWARD

**Government Architect NSW at Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure**

## PROJECT

**Connecting with Country Framework**

The Connecting with Country Framework is a NSW based initiative that integrates Aboriginal culture, knowledge, and values into the planning and design of the built environment.

Developed by the Government Architect NSW and the Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure, this framework has local and international ramifications including the potential to influence global design practices, promote sustainable development, and encourage the recognition of Indigenous rights and heritage on a wider scale.

Category Sponsor



This is the first holistic framework of its kind in Australia. It fosters collaboration and seeks to embed a deeper understanding of the importance of Country at the centre. It responds to the urgent need for built environment decisions to address climate change effects such as drought, fire and floods, and protect Country, communities, and sacred sites from the impacts of rapidly increasing development.

Grounded in Aboriginal worldviews, led by Aboriginal people and shaped through close collaboration with Aboriginal communities and knowledge holders, the Framework shifts the paradigm from a human-centred approach to one that is Country-centred.



# Planning with Country



## COMMENDATION

**Ngunawal Custodians Wally Bell and Karen Denny, Ngunnawal Watermarks Working Group in partnership with ACT Government - Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, PLACE Laboratory, Climate Factory, Catchment Studio, Create and Sow Consulting**

## PROJECT

**Connecting Nature | Connecting People, the Sullivans Creek Re-naturalisation project**



This project represents a climate resilient vision that moves well beyond traditional urban creek regeneration. It redefines how planning and design responds to climate change, biodiversity loss and cultural disconnection at a small local scale.

Tailored for an urbanised catchment, the project's vegetated swales, swampy shallows, leaky

weirs and meandering alignments are designed to slow water, cool the city and restore habitat in a truly climate beneficial solution that turns back the clock on traditional engineering principles.

The judges applaud the direct involvement of community at all stages to achieve such an innovative and regenerative outcome that can be adaptively applied as a model in many other water systems in the ACT context and beyond.

The judges were impressed with the exemplar process that was applied to this

project and the sensitive application of that process in collaboration with Ngunnawal elders.

Category Sponsor



# Planning with Country



## COMMENDATION

Planning Portfolio,  
Department of  
Transport  
and Planning

## PROJECT

Progressive Planning  
for Waterways - a  
decade of Planning with  
Country

This long-term project and process is leading the way to reframe planning with Country across Victoria. This includes groundbreaking legislation, the first in Australia, to grant legal recognition to a river (the



Birrarung) as a living entity with rights. It is also Australia's first legislation to have a co-title and preamble in Traditional Owner language. The commitment to building meaningful relationships and supporting self-determination is reflected in the project's innovative approach to governance and collaboration with Traditional Knowledge holders.

'assets management' paradigm, by adopting a Country-centred approach to water and the cultural importance of healthy water systems across the state.

The judges applaud the state-wide leadership and relationship building embedded in the project, which provide a replicable model for waterway management at a national level. They were impressed with the comprehensive and practical approach of embedding of Country in the planning system.

Category Sponsor



This work demonstrates to all stakeholders how to shift from a western

# Planning Research



## AWARD

Purdon

## PROJECT

### Planning and Economic Feasibility Analysis - Integrating the "Missing Middle"

The Planning and Economic Feasibility Analysis – Integrating the ‘Missing Middle’ is recognised for its exemplary, impartial and evidence-based contribution to a significant national planning challenge.

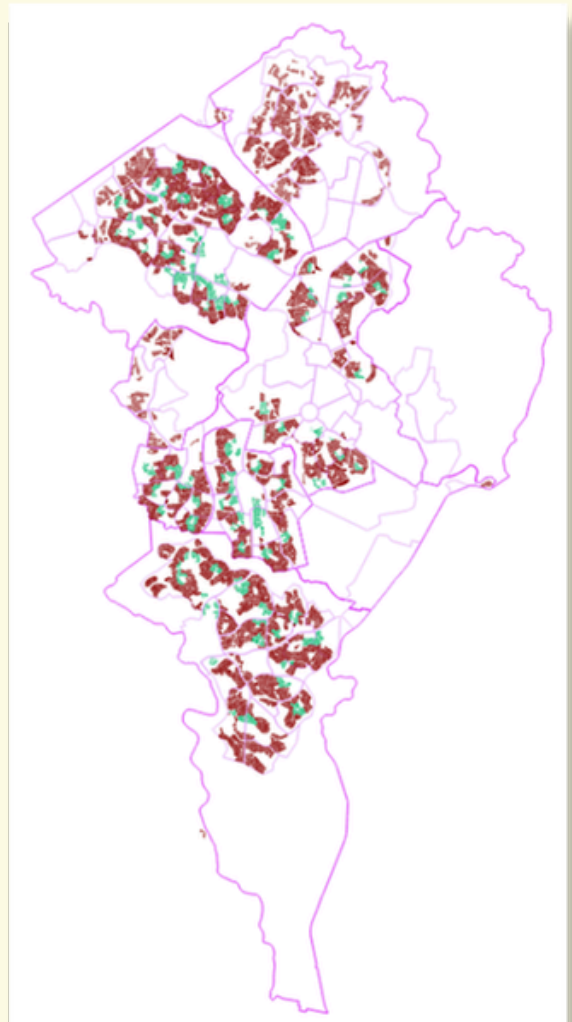
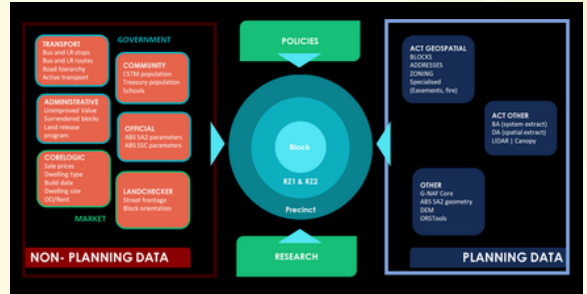
Purdon’s work, delivered in partnership with the ACT Government, establishes a rigorous analytical framework that examines planning, regulatory and economic levers across the development process.

The framework is strengthened by a targeted spatial developability index, enabling transparent, objective assessment of development likelihood.

Supported by detailed case studies and expert engagement, the project provides robust and defensible recommendations to improve the feasibility of missing-middle housing.

The jury commends the project’s methodological rigour, neutrality and strong transferability, noting its capacity to inform broader systemic reform.

Importantly, this work extends the planning debate, offering new analytical tools and insights that elevate national discussion on medium-density housing and reinforce the essential role of research-driven evidence in shaping policy and practice.



Category Sponsor



# Planning Research



## COMMENDATION

Transport for NSW, La Trobe University, supported by Inclusive Design, University of Sydney

## PROJECT

Care in Transit: Designing for Passengers, Transport Operations, and Homelessness Support

'Care in Transit' is recognised as an outstanding piece of planning research that re-imagines public transport infrastructure as inclusive and compassionate environments for socio-economically disadvantaged community members.

The project addresses the pressing issue of homelessness with sensitivity and insight, reframing transport hubs as places that can offer support to people living precariously while



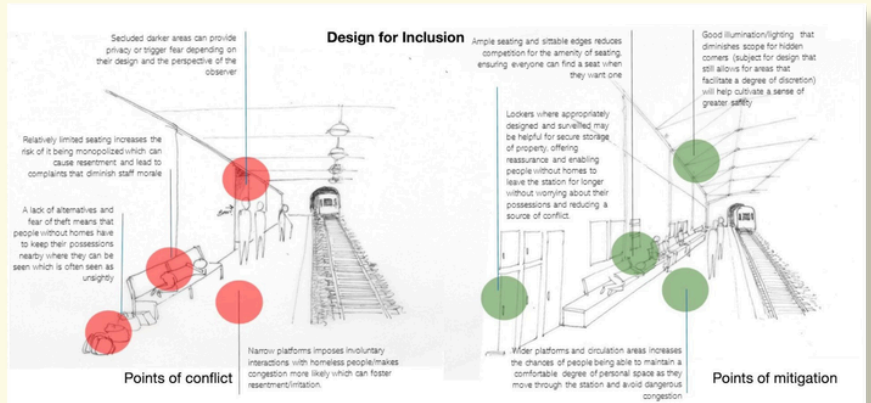
maintaining high-quality customer experience and operational performance.

Grounded in a robust, evidence-based methodology, the research draws on international case studies, passenger analysis, service mapping and extensive stakeholder engagement.

It reflects exemplary collaboration across transport planning, design, social services and academia.

The findings are practical and implementation-ready, articulated through clear design principles, best practice guidelines and a comprehensive stakeholder framework.

The judges commend this visionary work for extending the planning debate beyond traditional mobility functions to embrace inclusiveness, social justice and empathy, demonstrating the transformative potential of thoughtful, research-driven planning.



Category Sponsor



# Planning Research



## COMMENDATION

City of Adelaide

## PROJECT

### Adaptive Reuse City Housing initiative (ARCHI)

The judges congratulate the City of Adelaide for its outstanding contribution to planning research through the 'Adaptive Reuse City Housing Initiative' (ARCHI).

This pioneering program demonstrates how rigorous, evidence-based research can unlock new housing pathways, address complex urban challenges and shape policy with lasting impact.

ARCHI integrates applied research, academic collaboration and community engagement, generating original data through a comprehensive building audit and a large-scale housing preference survey.

Its use of Discrete Choice Modelling reflects strong methodological innovation and a clear commitment to aligning planning outcomes with community needs.

The judges commend ARCHI's strong alignment with local, state and national planning priorities, its high transferability and its capacity to influence housing, heritage and climate policy.

By embedding research into practice, the initiative strengthens cross-sector collaboration and builds technical capability across government and academia.

ARCHI sets a benchmark for excellence in planning research, demonstrating how thoughtful inquiry and robust evidence can drive meaningful change in response to Australia's housing crisis.



Category Sponsor



# Stakeholder Engagement



## AWARD

**Merri-bek City Council & Engeny (part of Egis Group)**

## PROJECT

### Calming the Storm

Calming the Storm sets a new national benchmark for stakeholder engagement on complex and sensitive planning issues.

Merri-bek City Council and Engeny delivered an innovative, emotionally intelligent approach to urban stormwater flood mapping transforming a historically adversarial process into one characterised by trust, curiosity, and genuine collaboration.

Drawing on the Kübler Ross change curve, the team built internal engagement capability, empowering planners to lead high quality conversations grounded in empathy and respect.

Their tailored tools, multilingual resources, and staged feedback loops ensured inclusive participation across more than 10,000 affected landowners, resulting in overwhelmingly positive responses and virtually no objections.

This approach not only strengthened local resilience and advanced state and national policy imperatives but has already influenced Melbourne Water and other councils seeking to replicate its success.

Calming the Storm exemplifies how thoughtful, values driven engagement can reshape planning practice nationwide.



Category Sponsor

**GYDE**  
Consulting

# Stakeholder Engagement



## COMMENDATION

**Western Australian Planning Commission and Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage**

## PROJECT

**Future of Fremantle Place and Economic Vision**



The Future of Fremantle Place and Economic Vision exemplifies best practice stakeholder engagement for a complex, city shaping transformation.

Led by the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage, the project delivered an inclusive, culturally grounded, and values led process that elevated voices often absent from major planning conversations particularly Aboriginal Elders, young people, and diverse local communities.

Culturally safe First Nations engagement was embedded from the

outset through partnerships with the Whadjuk Aboriginal Corporation, an Aboriginal Reference Group, and large Elders' gatherings, ensuring Aboriginal knowledge and priorities meaningfully shaped the Vision.

More than 300 participants contributed through a six-day Place Design Forum, complemented by open days, youth workshops, school partnerships, and accessible online tools; creating shared understanding and genuine co design across more than 1,200 contributors.

This ambitious, multi-phase engagement process strengthened trust, expanded participation, and



demonstrated how collaborative planning can unlock visionary, future focused outcomes

for a site of profound cultural and strategic significance.

Category Sponsor



# Strategic Planning Project



## AWARD

Department for Housing and Urban Development

## PROJECT

The Greater Adelaide Regional Plan

This Australian-first, web-based regional plan delivers a fully digital, interactive platform that transforms how planning is accessed and applied.

It identifies land for 316,000 new homes and 254,000 new jobs, aligning with the National Housing Accord and guiding infrastructure planning across South Australia. With 56 implementation actions - many already underway - the Plan is transparent, dynamic, and responsive, providing for real-time updates.

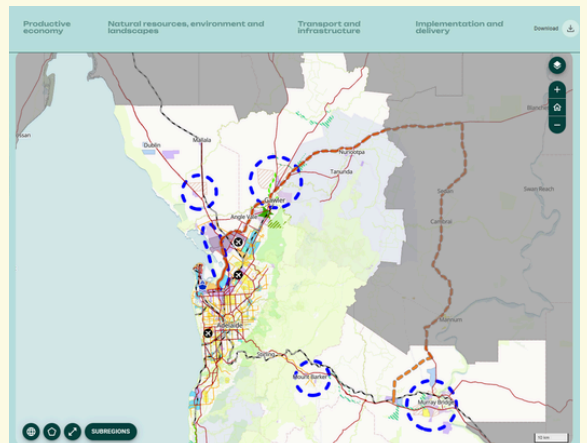
Developed through an 18-month robust and diverse consultation process with over 70 engagement events, it reflects strong



collaboration across government, industry, and community.

Innovative, high-quality, and strategically aligned, it sets a new benchmark in digital planning with clear potential for national transferability. This is an important tool that provides guidance beyond minimum design and consultation standards.

The judges were particularly impressed with the strong leadership and courage displayed by the Department for Housing and Urban Development for this evidence based, real-time approach that can be measured and tracked.



Category Sponsor





# Strategic Planning Project



## COMMENDATION

**Western Australian Planning Commission and Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage**

## PROJECT

**Future of Fremantle Place and Economic Vision**

The Future of Fremantle Place and Economic Vision developed by the Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage sets a new benchmark for strategic planning, reimagining Walyalup | Fremantle's Inner Harbour as a sustainable, inclusive, and resilient urban precinct.

Through extensive collaboration with over 1,200 participants, including strong First Nations leadership, the project demonstrates how long-term transformation can be grounded in shared values and community aspirations. Integrating land use, transport, and

economic planning, it establishes a 50-year framework for 20,000 new homes, 45,000 jobs and a 70:30 sustainable mode share target.

This is a large vision and perfect example of how

co-design and cross-agency collaboration in strategic planning projects can achieve a quality outcome for all. This project can be replicated and used as an exemplar for other locations.

The judges were particularly impressed with the enduring nature of the vision that was developed, in terms of intergenerational renewal.



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# Technology & Digital Innovation



## AWARD

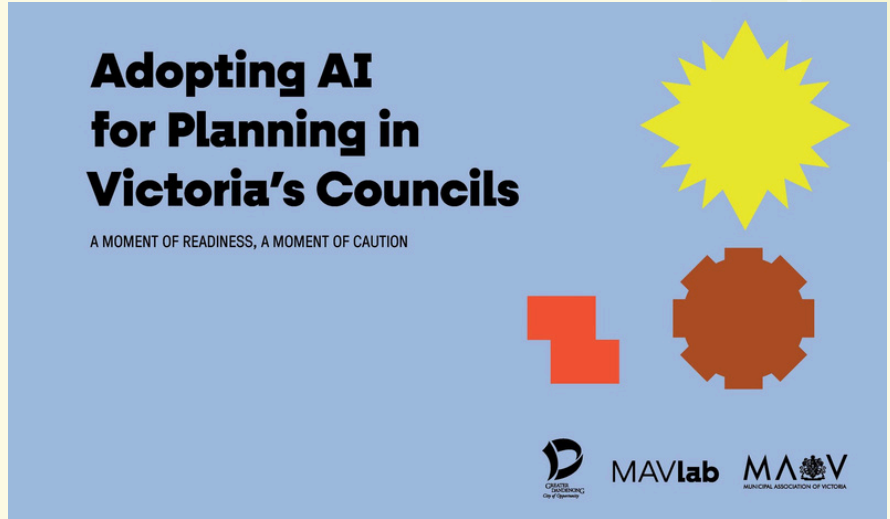
Municipal Association of Victoria (MAVlab), City of Greater Dandenong and Portable

## PROJECT

Advancing AI Innovation in Local Government

This project represents a nationally significant step forward in how local governments can responsibly harness artificial intelligence (AI) in statutory planning. Led by MAVlab and the City of Greater Dandenong, the initiative is grounded in a clear intent to relieve administrative burden and enhance efficiency in a safe and ethical manner.

It delivers highly practical recommendations, including a library of appropriate and inappropriate AI use cases, a dynamic AI procurement register and targeted implementation guidance.



A defining strength of the project is its extensive and collaborative engagement, involving approximately 70 percent of Victorian councils alongside planning and technology professionals, industry experts and AI vendors.

While the judges recognise this work marks the beginning of a longer implementation journey, it establishes a robust foundation for a future-ready system. It equips councils with the confidence, shared knowledge and collaborative platform to

act now in advancing efficiency, capacity and innovation.

The judges commend this project as a leading, transferable project guiding the ethical and effective adoption of AI in the public interest.

Category Sponsor

**PLANTECH**  
SERIES

# Technology & Digital Innovation



## COMMENDATION

Department for Housing and Urban Development

## PROJECT

### Regional Planning Portal

The Regional Planning Portal project represents a national-first, innovative online system that transforms how regional planning information is comprehensively brought together, updated, accessed and applied across jurisdictions.

The Portal delivers a digital planning solution that is transparent, updatable and accessible to all, encouraging not only planners but also meaningful public engagement and interaction. Its user-friendly design and comprehensive data integration enable clear navigation of complex planning information, while its strategic alignment with government priorities

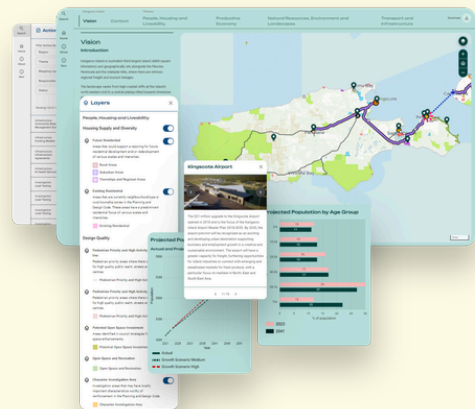
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ensures that implementation plans and regional objectives are clearly articulated across all levels of government.

Successfully rolled out across all planning regions in South Australia, the project demonstrates proven implementation and strong potential for transferability to other jurisdictions, with cost considerations appropriately recognised.

A defining strength of the initiative is its collaborative approach, with extensive stakeholder engagement



informing both the regional planning program and the Portal's development.

The judges commend the Regional Planning Portal as a leading example of digital innovation in planning

practice. It demonstrates how technology can open up the planning system, strengthen coordination across regions and empower both professionals and communities with clear, reliable and accessible planning information.

# Tertiary Student Project



## AWARD

**Anh Thi Hoang Nguyen,  
Ka Sin Adelaide Lee,  
Shiyi Zhang**  
The University of  
Melbourne - Master of  
Architecture,  
Urban Planning, and  
Landscape Architecture



## PROJECT

**The Ovava Playground  
for Resilience -  
Placemaking in Ohonua,  
Eua, Tonga**

This extraordinary project powerfully demonstrates how placemaking can deliver significant contributions to planning and development outcomes. It transforms a 'scarred land' once avoided due to fear, memory and loss into a vibrant sanctuary of respite, renewal and rebuilding. At its heart is a tactical, co-created playground centred on the revered Ovava tree - the community's most sacred cultural and ecological anchor - honouring its timeless role in Tongan heritage.

Through profound sensitivity to local voices, traditions and connections to land and culture, the student team delivered an exemplary, high-impact intervention. Their collaborative approach not only strengthened community ties to heritage and environment but ignited hope, resilience and a renewed sense of belonging.

The national jury celebrates this inspiring work as a beacon of compassionate, innovative student planning. Anh Thi Hoang Nguyen, Ka Sin Adelaide Lee and Shiyi Zhang have set a remarkable standard for tertiary excellence, showing how thoughtful design can mend wounds, empower communities and build a more resilient future.



Their creativity and empathy are a profound inspiration to the profession.



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# Tertiary Student Project



## COMMENDATION

Joanna Kontogiorgis

## PROJECT

**More than dead space: Exploring the recreational use of cemeteries in Sydney**

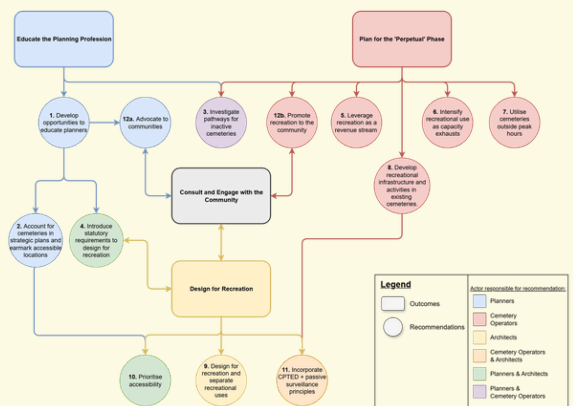
This research makes a significant contribution to planning by proposing that cemeteries integrate interment and recreational functions to address Sydney's burial space shortage and public open space pressures.

Employing a mixed-methods approach - including literature review, policy analysis, site observations and original stakeholder interviews - the thesis establishes the Australian context and identifies strong professional support for the concept.

Recommendations for planners, cemetery operators and designers outline pathways to



incorporate cemeteries into the open space network, enhancing community connection, reflection and recreation. The national jury commends the work's originality, research quality, alignment with urban planning challenges, transferability potential, and collaborative insights.



This thesis exemplifies rigorous student achievement and provides a measured

foundation for advancing inclusive, sustainable urban space planning.

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# Emerging Planner of the Year



## AWARD

### Russell Coldicutt PIA (Assoc.)

Russell Coldicutt is an outstanding emerging planner who represents the balanced qualities of advocating for emerging planning professionals while delivering high-quality planning outcomes in the workplace.

In his role as Development Manager at the Suburban Land Agency, Russell applies cross-disciplinary expertise to the integration of climate change, sustainability and urban planning in the design and delivery of new suburbs in the ACT.

His academic background, combined with his current studies, reflects a strong commitment to continuing professional development.

As the representative of the ACT Emerging Planner members and participant

in PIA's mentor program (as both mentor and mentee), Russell serves as an advocate and role model, contributing to professional growth and teamwork.

The national jury acknowledges Russell's demonstrated planning skills, emerging leadership, passion and integrity.

His contributions advance planning practice and promise continued benefit to the profession.



Category Sponsor



# 2026 Award Nominees

## Climate Change & Resilience

**ACT | Ngunnawal Custodians Wally Bell and Karen Denny, Ngunnawal Watermarks Working Group** In partnership with ACT Government - Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, PLACE Laboratory, Climate Factory, Catchment Studio, Create and Sow Consulting  
Connecting Nature | Connecting People, the Sullivans Creek Re-naturalisation project

**NSW | Climate Vulnerability Assessment and the Agricultural Landuse Planning Teams, Climate and Natural Resources Division, the NSW Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development**  
A Climate Vulnerability Assessment for NSW Primary Industries - Building climate resilience through evidence-based planning

**QLD | Wujal Wujal Aboriginal Shire Council, Meridian Urban and Water Technology**  
Wujal Wujal Master Plan Review Project

**SA | LGA South Australia, Department for Environment and Water, SA Coast Protection Board, SA Coastal Councils Alliance, Adelaide Coastal Councils Network, BRM Advisory, HATCH**  
SA Climate Ready Coasts: Accelerating Coastal Hazard Adaption Planning

**VIC | Department of Transport and Planning (Vic), RMIT University, RACE for 2030 CRC, C4NET**  
Sunshine sustainability modelling

**WA | Professor Peter Newman AO**  
Net Zero Cities with Sustainability: A Practitioner's Approach

## Community Wellbeing & Diversity

**NSW | Frasers Property Australia and Fourfold Studio**  
Ed.Square Residents Group

**QLD | City of Logan**  
UN-Habitat Quality of Life Pioneer City Initiative - City of Logan

**SA | Department for Housing and Urban Development**  
Future Living Code Amendment: new planning rules to create greater housing diversity

**TAS | West Coast Council and Era Advisory**  
West Coast 2035 Community Plan

## Great Place

**NSW | Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure**  
Penrith Beach Summer Activation

**QLD | Brisbane Sustainability Agency**  
Archerfield Wetlands Parkland

**VIC | North Western Program Alliance**  
Pakenham Level Crossing Removal Project

**WA | Shire of Waroona, SLR and EPCAD**  
Waroona Town Centre Revitalisation and Railside Park

## Improving Planning Processes

**NSW | Singleton Council**  
The Impact of Process Improvement on Performance

**QLD | Gold Coast Waterways Authority and Meridian Urban**  
A new statutory planning framework for sustainable access and management of Gold Coast waterways

**SA | Department for Housing and Urban Development**  
Code Amendment Tracking System (CATS)

**TAS | Central Coast Council**  
Customer First: A Refocused Approach to Land Use Planning

**VIC | City of Boroondara**  
Housing Trend Tracker

**WA | City of Subiaco**  
Park Street Heritage Area: Achieving Heritage Outcomes Through Community Engagement and Empowerment

## Planning with Country

**ACT | Ngunnawal Custodians Wally Bell and Karen Denny, Ngunnawal Watermarks Working Group** In partnership with ACT Government - Environment, Planning and Sustainable Development Directorate, PLACE Laboratory, Climate Factory, Catchment Studio, Create and Sow Consulting  
Connecting Nature | Connecting People, the Sullivans Creek Re-naturalisation project

**NSW | Government Architect NSW at Department of Planning, Housing and Infrastructure**  
Connecting with Country Framework

**VIC | Planning Portfolio, Department of Transport and Planning**  
Progressive Planning for Waterways - a decade of Planning with Country

## Planning Research

**ACT | Purdon**  
Planning and Economic Feasibility Analysis - Integrating the "Missing Middle"

**NSW | Transport for NSW, La Trobe University, supported by Inclusive Design, University of Sydney**  
Care in Transit: Designing for Passengers, Transport Operations, and Homelessness Support

**QLD | Joanne Dolley, Keiran Hardy, Tony Matthews - Griffith University**  
Public Space and the Sustainable Development Goals - Inclusion, Safety, Culture and Nature

**SA | City of Adelaide**  
Adaptive Reuse City Housing initiative (ARCHI)

**VIC | Assoc Prof Liton Kamruzzaman, Monash University**  
Towards a Theory of Sustainable City Sizes

**WA | Dr Francesca Perugia PIA (Assoc.), Dr Courtney Babb MPIA, Dr Rebecca Scherini, Prof Steven Rowley - Curtin University, Dr Callum Logan – RMIT University, Dr Sara Shirowzhan MPIA, Dr Yi Lu, Prof Christopher Pettit MPIA – UNSW, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute (AHURI)**  
Improving coordination of data and actors for disaster-responsive housing and safer communities

## Stakeholder Engagement

**ACT | City Renewal Authority**  
Better City Streets

**NSW | Willoughby City Council**  
No need to drive' ..... Resilient Willoughby Primary School Active Travel Program

**QLD | Noosa Council with CRED Consulting and Archipelego**  
Pomona Place Plan Pilot

**SA | Tract, University of South Australia, City of Unley**  
Transforming to an Age-Friendly World: Models of Co-design for Creating Age-Friendly Public Green Spaces in Urban Neighbourhoods

**TAS | West Coast Council and Era Advisory**  
West Coast 2035 Community Plan

**VIC | Merri-bek City Council & Engeny (part of Egis Group)**  
Calming the Storm

**WA | Western Australian Planning Commission and Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage**  
Future of Fremantle Place and Economic Vision

## Strategic Planning Project

**NSW | Ku-ring-gai Council**  
Ku-ring-gai Council TOD Alternative Preferred Scenario

**QLD | Tract Consultants and Bundaberg Regional Council**  
Washpool Creek Master Plan

**SA | Department for Housing and Urban Development**  
The Greater Adelaide Regional Plan

**TAS | Central Coast Council and Colliers Urban Planning**  
Our Homes Our Future: Central Coast Housing Strategy

**VIC | City of Stonnington, Breathe Architecture, Hodyl & Co (now Hodyl), GJM Heritage, HillPDA, SGS Economics and Planning, Movement & Place and Capire**  
Stonnington Neighbourhood Activity Centres Framework

**WA | Western Australian Planning Commission and Department of Planning, Lands and Heritage**  
Future of Fremantle Place and Economic Vision

## Technology & Digital Innovation

**NSW | The Department of Primary Industries and Regional Development**  
myFarmPlanner - Digital Pre-Assessment Tool for Intensive Agricultural Development in NSW

**SA | Department for Housing and Urban Development**  
Regional Planning Portal

**VIC | Municipal Association of Victoria (MAVlab), City of Greater Dandenong and Portable**  
Advancing AI Innovation in Local Government

## Tertiary Student Project

**NSW | Joanna Kontogiorgis**  
More than dead space: Exploring the recreational use of cemeteries in Sydney

**QLD | Teah Hammet PIA (Assoc.) - Queensland University of Technology**  
Accounting for Compound Risk in Resilient Regional Planning for South East Queensland

**VIC | Anh Thi Hoang Nguyen, Ka Sin Adelaide Lee, Shiyi Zhang The University of Melbourne - Master of Architecture, Urban Planning, and Landscape Architecture**  
The Ovava Playground for Resilience - Placemaking in Ohonua, Eua, Tonga

## Emerging Planner of the Year

**ACT | Russell Coldicutt PIA (Assoc.)**

**NSW | Amber Nehal PIA (Assoc.)**

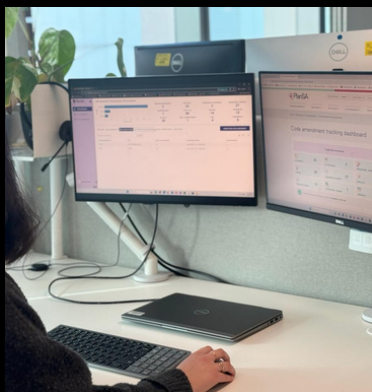
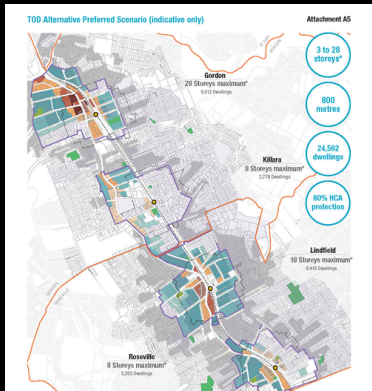
**QLD | Katrina Christensen MPIA**

**SA | Saba Adil Malik MPIA**

**TAS | Grace Elliott PIA (Assoc.)**

**VIC | Hugh McIntyre MPIA**

**WA | Emily Robertson PIA (Assoc.)**





PIA

Planning  
Institute  
Australia

Planning Institute of Australia (PIA) is the national body representing planning and the planning profession. Through education, communication and professional development, PIA is the pivotal organisation serving and guiding thousands of planning professionals in their role of creating better communities.

PIA currently represents approximately 6,000 members nationally and internationally, and connects with more than 10,500 planners annually. We are governed by a National Board of Directors and managed by a professional administration. We are a member-based organisation with its management complemented by volunteers, who support and contribute to our activities on various levels.

Our mission is to champion the role of planning in shaping Australia's future. PIA does this through strong leadership, advocacy and contemporary planning education.

**Our vision is for PIA to be Australia's trusted voice on Planning.**

**Planning Institute of Australia**

Unit 16, Level 3, 11 National Circuit  
BARTON ACT 2600  
membership@planning.org.au  
02 6262 5933  
planning.org.au