

It seems that the Lloyd Rees Bandstand article last month stirred up some response and defence of the structure because of its implied cultural and social heritage. While some in the community may support this position (and noting it is not listed on a Lane Cove Council or any other heritage register) that does not necessarily justify the case for iconic status. There are many who also question the LRB design and performance merits, and its continued existence in a compromised location that is now very different to the original space for which it was conceived at the junction of Lane Cove Plaza and Birdwood Lane.

Some criticism of the article was based on the suggestion that I was advocating elimination of the LRB altogether, but if there is enough passion to warrant its retention why not move it to another more appropriate open space. The imminent Rosenthal development could provide a park setting, like bandstands in many other places.

Another comment was on the merit of the building technology from four decades ago, but today it must rate low in any assessment of design quality or construction merit. The combination of this with the unfortunate attempt for a complementary shade structure adjacent has resulted in a mishmash of forms that now clash with the latest commercial intrusions - and it seems that with the rising popularity of the plaza, like it or not, these will be around for some time. What is needed is a simpler, more elegant and complementary design for the popular event and entertainment part of Lane Cove Plaza that can offer a much-improved venue with some design excellence.

The issue of design quality in and around Lane Cove is also one that deserves further attention. Many recent Lane Cove village unit developments display an unfortunate lack of architectural merit, and the public domain spaces between that we all share will be around for many years and should also receive design excellence. These spaces and the walls that define them concern not only how buildings look and the amenity for their occupants, but also how they affect the quality of our public urban places: the streets, lanes, plazas and parks that form the physical, social and cultural context for more desirable and sustainable living and working environments.

Prior to the move of Rob Stokes from the planning ministry to education after the last election, he hinted at long awaited and imminent changes to the 1979 Environmental Planning and Assessment Act and inclusion of policy promoting good design in the built environment.

"Good design is critical to creating liveable, productive, sustainable and resilient communities, and we want to champion good design through a new policy and give it weight through legislative changes," said Stokes.

The policy in its draft form showed the potential to ensure consideration of design excellence across all new development in the state, on a similar basis to what SEPP 65 and the Apartment Design Guide does for much multi-residential development. For SEPP 65 and the ADG to work effectively however, there needs to be Design Excellence review in place to ensure proper peer review of development proposals. It is hoped the new planning minister, our own local member Anthony Roberts, will continue this initiative, and then perhaps we

might see such a panel in action for Lane Cove Council - or its amalgamated future body. Unfortunate outcomes for some recent local developments could certainly have been avoided if such a process had been established before the current boom, as demonstrated by the couple of examples here.



Little St car park project – a compromised design outcome on several fronts.



152-154 Longueville Road – an overscaled intrusion on the original intact line of shopfronts that could have been kept through more sensitive design.

Former president of the Australian Institute of Architects, Shaun Carter, said the draft policy would provide the opportunity to apply that kind of holistic problem-solving to the planning and design of precincts, towns and cities and -

“inform a new era of design-led planning that has the potential to make the state’s towns and cities more individual and interesting. We look at the context of the individual building or place and aim to deliver a result that benefits the whole community, not just the organization that commissions it.”

The Government Architect Peter Poulet is also pursuing a design-led planning strategy through the 'Better Places and Spaces' policy. Consultation with local communities, industry and council stakeholders is currently under way to help achieve more well-designed places through design-led planning methodology to assist planning system users.

Unfortunately we have missed the chance on this development boom, but perhaps in time for the next one – by which time there might also be a better home for the LRB?

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