

Speech by His Excellency Mr
Michael Bryce, AM, AE

Design Meets the NSW Parliament
Sydney

Tuesday 22nd November 2011

Salutations

Mr Paul Toole MP

and members of the NSW Parliament

Our Guest of Honour,

Sir George Cox

Colleagues

Ladies and gentlemen

I acknowledge the traditional keepers of this land and pay respects to their ancestors.

In September last year at the launch of the Australian Design Alliance, I spoke about “Design Thinking” and its place in Australian society. I said, at the time

“The AdA is the beginning of a voice that could lift this country from its dependence on other people’s ideas, from its apathy about the built environment, from the sense of us lagging behind in the innovation and creativity spectrum, that some countries have already established.”

I also said that

“nations that value design constantly rate above Australia in design performance and innovation, and actively promote design in their economies.”

I refer of course to Britain, as well as emerging design policies in Singapore, Korea, and Hong Kong, as well as the long admired approach of Denmark, Sweden and Finland.

Therefore –

I am pleased to welcome

Sir George Cox, formerly of the **British Design Council**, whose role in establishing a national design agenda for Britain is an example of one such country's value of creativity and design.

Let me remind you of the membership of this relatively new initiative – the Australian Design Alliance. They have managed to bring together as a compendium body the professions of architecture, urban design, landscape-architecture, industrial design, object and graphic design, fashion, stage and screen design with visual arts, craft and design media, education and research bodies.

Now – we know the threads that link these professions and these activities, but we constantly ask ourselves: How do we explain this to the government, or the public for that matter, let alone sell the notion of design as something that is taught and for what purpose, what value, what benefit, what motive?

There must be a way to switch on the light that shows the good sense and the better outcome of good design.

We hope that this meeting with the Parliament of New South Wales will go some way to strengthening this agenda.

What has AdA done since its formation in September 2010?

AdA strives to put a case to government, not that government is the only client – but government's overview of industry, education, the environment, health and commerce, make it critically important to deeply understand the benefits of design in all of its roles and responsibilities.

And so AdA is bringing its case before the elected representatives, the parliament, to seek its influence and support.

AdA is currently in discussion with the Federal Government and is included in the formation of a National Design Policy, separate from, but alongside innovation, cultural and urban design policies.

AdA has put forward a submission which you may have seen, and which I totally support, with recommendations that include design in the procurement and selection of public goods and services, ensuring that all urban development projects pass the test of sustainability, health and beauty, and that commercial products receive the maximum support to be competitive on a world market.

Meanwhile, State Governments are tackling the question of good design from different directions

In **Queensland**: the Queensland Government profiles design with the Premier's Design Award which recognises emerging designers.

The Government (Department of Employment, Economic Development and Innovation) has for some time shown an interest in how design assists industry, but a new program called Ulysses – based on a New Zealand model (Better by Design) – is working with business to measure how design has improved product outcomes.

Auditors come into the business and assess product and graphic design input – apparently CEOs are singing the praises of the designer to improved business.

Under the title of Queensland Design Strategy 2020, a Design Council is to be formed to guide the implementation of the strategy.

Even the glittering **Gold Coast** has an office of City Architect and Heritage taking great steps in urban design, as is the **City of Melbourne**, which now has a “City Industrial Designer”.

In **Victoria**, well known for its design consciousness, the Government has supported the “Design Victoria program” for the past 3 years, to educate industry and place designers in the factory and shops of Victoria.

This has included an “Export Ready” program (under the former DIIRD department). They also support a “Business Ready” program to assist underprepared graduates to get into a business environment.

In **South Australia** the Government has taken a big step in creating a Commission for Integrated Design with a Commissioner empowered to advise the Premier on the design issues facing the State.

The South Australian Government has just released news of a pioneering new partnership with the British Design Council, which as you know has recently merged with CABA (Commission for the Built Environment). The partnership will share knowledge on how to promote world class urban design and architecture.

In **Canberra** the Australian Institute of Architects holds an annual conference with Federal Parliament, called Built Environment Meets Parliament, BEMP, which attracts senior Ministers for panel discussion.

The appointment of Government Architects in all national capitals¹ has been a welcome breakthrough in placing architecture in the State Premiers’ field of vision.

¹ Northern Territory has a position, but not filled yet.

I do acknowledge NSW Government support for the establishment of the Australian Design Alliance, and in supporting this Conference – indeed, in facing up to this first welcome encounter: **Design Meets Parliament**.

Thank you Mr Toole.

Of course we acknowledge the adventurous leadership in design of the Sydney City Architect.

While encouraging, we must ask what the reasoning is that creates such a diverse range of effort across the nation.

Surely the Federal Government will recognise these State by State activities need help, and step into the business of design being a nation building activity, wherein GFCs can be conquered by competitive design excellence.

A bright note is the recently released strategic policy document for the 18 major cities of Australia – the National Urban Design Policy

“To ensure Australian cities are globally competitive, productive, sustainable, liveable, and socially inclusive”

The Institute of Architects is leaning hard on this initiative

With all of its history of architectural jewels, and as the birthplace of the nation it would be fabulous if the NSW Parliament were to be champions of design, creativity and innovation.

We know that Australia has wonderful architects, creative product and object designers, world class film and theatre designers, and that we have the best quality education courses.

We glory in our nation’s creative potential.

But -----

Let me revert to a theme that I have often put that might help governments to support design, and that is the struggle that the design community has to make its voice heard.

Too many critical design decisions are made by other than design professionals. Building developments being a leading contender, along with civic landscaping and urban planning.

If government, and for that matter politicians, were to get behind the creative design talent of this country, and really promote the value of expert design opinion – placing designers, architects and landscape architects on government business, industry and advisory bodies, it would be a show of faith in the tremendous steps that have been taken over the past 50 years to educate a world class body of professional design experts.

I am hoping that the political forces, on both sides in the New South Wales Parliament, will act in the nation's interest.

Thank you for your attention, and best wishes for the remainder of the Forum.