**AdA Chairman's Address**

*Government House, Yarralumla, 06-FEB-14*

Your Excellency Mr Michael Bryce, fellow ADA board members, ladies and gentlemen.

The AdA’s purpose - its raison d'être - is the creation of a National Design Policy. This primary cause was identified by 85 leading representatives of the creative sector at our launch event three years ago and has been at the core of our efforts since.

The need for a national design policy has been expressed by many organisations for similar reasons going back decades. It is a policy that will lift Australia’s international competitiveness, our government’s effectiveness, and how we develop as a nation.

I would like to say we’ve had great success, but that is not the case. The AdA has achieved much in those three years, but the National Design Policy has so far eluded us.

The good news is that this was no accident, but happened by design. When it became clear that the federal election was going to result in a massive change in Federal Parliament, we backed off. We did not want the policy to become a victim of the new government’s house cleaning: last in, first out.

A National Design Policy must not be a political football; it is a necessary step in the evolution of Australia’s manufacturing and service capabilities. Its goals are particularly poignant in a post automobile-manufacturing environment. It is a policy that deserves bi-partisan support.

With fresh wind in our political sails, a renewed sense of purpose and energy is driving us forward: we are re-framing the policy, and taking it up the hill.

I can confirm the AdA’s commitment to the creation of a National Design Policy. The original document contained nine points, a few drafts later we were down to seven, then five… the current working version has four. We will be ready to march on Parliament when it has been distilled to two.

Right now the main points coalesce around:

**Design for Business** - Help Australian businesses integrate design to maximise their competitiveness

**Design for Government** – Integrate design into the delivery of government services and drive effective policy development

**Design in Education** - Integrate design thinking into all levels of education to prepare tomorrow’s generation to solve tomorrow’s problems

How do we know if the National Design Policy has been a success? When we have a Prime Minister’s design award. When departmental secretaries use the word “prototype”. When high school children use Design Thinking to complete assignments. When a company board without a designer is considered an anomaly.

If federal government fails to adopt a national design policy, then we will doom ourselves to becoming a third world nation, relying not on our fellow citizens’ intellect and creativity, but depending on cheap commodity exports and nice weather…

We have to ask ourselves: are we a lucky country full of mediocre people, or do we choose to be people that make their own luck?

Big business “gets” design. From Qantas and Westpac, to Telstra and the Commonwealth Bank. Unfortunately, most smaller businesses do not get design. SMEs rarely get it. Fortunately this is one area where government intervention has a proven success record.

Government bureaucracies sense the need of having to do things differently, but fight their own massive inertia. Public sector innovation initiatives in Scandinavia, the EU and the UK have shown that alternative approaches are possible if given the chance. And full credit to our very own ATO, which has enthusiastically embraced service design.

Design does not have all the answers. Designer will not replace accountants, strategists, enlightened CEOs, and visionary leaders. But having a seat at the big table will allow designers to act as agents of change. And important as they are, there is more to running a company than remuneration, compliance and succession committees. There is more to running a country than budgets and bureaucracy. Somewhere there has to be real leadership, and it’s about time that enlightened leaders got a bit of a nudge.

The existence of the AdA is living proof that design thinking can translate into design doing. That people from backgrounds, stretching from the visual arts at one end of the spectrum, to engineering at the other, can come together around one table, around a common cause for the common good, the greater good.

I would like to publicly acknowledge three people for their contribution to the AdA: our untiring executive director Lisa Cahill, our now retired founding director and inaugural chair Mr Geoff Fitzpatrick, and Mr Paul van Barneveld, AdA director and National President of the Australian Graphic Design Association who is fighting his own battle right now.

Your Excellency, in your role as patron of the AdA you have championed our cause, lent your counsel, and your gravitas. On behalf of the AdA, please allow me to thank you for your efforts over the last three years, and for so kindly hosting us here today.

O. Kratzer