

Local Leadership for Density Done Well

Thursday 22 October
The Capitol, RMIT University
9.30am – 4pm

RMIT UNIVERSITY
MAV MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION OF VICTORIA
PIA Planning Institute Australia
Australian Institute of Architects

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Local Leadership for Density Done Well Symposium

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WiFi — RMIT-Guest
Event Code — 097984

Welcome to Local Leadership for Density Done Well

This symposium brings local government leaders, planners, researchers and designers together to discuss how we can shape Victoria's growing cities and communities.

As the demand for housing grows and urban areas face density concerns, local leaders and planning professionals face a critical challenge: how can we create the homes we need, while supporting social equity and protecting environmental amenity.

The symposium will begin with the launch of *Leading Communities Through Urban Change: Building Community Support for Density Done Well*, a new report co-authored by RMIT University's **Centre for Urban Research** and the **Municipal Association of Victoria**.

Across three panel discussions, we'll share diverse perspectives on policy and governance, planning and design, and the research shaping our urban future. During each session, audiences can submit questions to the panel through Slido.

Over lunch, explore the *Density Done Well* exhibition, presented by the Victorian Chapter of the **Australian Institute of Architects**' Housing Committee, showcasing exemplary densification and planning projects in Melbourne and regional Victoria.

Thank you for joining us.

Program Schedule

9:30AM	Registrations and morning tea
10AM	Welcome to Country by **Wurundjeri Man Thane Garvey** Introductions by **Libby Porter**, RMIT University
10:35AM	*Leading Communities Through Urban Change: Building Community Support for Density Done Well* Report launch by **Kat Panjari**, City of Melbourne & RMIT University
10:50AM	Session one: *Leading for Density Done Well* Moderated by **Kelly Grigsby**, Municipal Association of Victoria With **Cr Alex Makin**, City of Port Phillip **Cr Thomas Prince**, City of Greater Bendigo **Simon McMillan**, Whitehorse City Council **Shaun Middlebrook**, Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute
11:50AM	Break

12PM Session two: *Designing for Density Done Well*

Moderated by **Sarah Buckeridge**, Hayball & Australian Institute of Architects Victorian Chapter

With **Munir Vahanvati**, Darebin City Council
Jane Keddie, Hansen Partnership & Planning Institute of Australia Victoria
Leanne Hodyl, Hodyl & Cities People Love

1PM Lunch
Density Done Well exhibition viewing in the Salon

2:10PM Session three: *Knowledge for Density Done Well*

Moderated by **Libby Porter**, RMIT University

With **Sarah Foster**, RMIT University
Hugh Stanford, RMIT University
Emma McCrae, RMIT University
Melanie Davern, RMIT University

3:10PM Closing remarks
by **Libby Porter**, RMIT University

3:25PM Networking

4PM Event finish

Leading Communities Through Urban Change: Building Community Support for Density Done Well

Report Launch
by Kat Panjari

Leading Communities Through Urban Change explores how Australian local governments can build community support for well-designed, higher-density housing to address today's housing challenges. Drawing on international city leaders, the report identifies key conditions for success: forward-thinking leadership in community conversations; genuine engagement with First Peoples' knowledge systems; strategic vision and design-quality guardrails; and sustained advocacy to hold stakeholders accountable. The report concludes that leadership for density done well must shift the housing narrative from ownership and status towards stewardship and shared community benefit.



With a career spanning local, state and commonwealth levels of government, **Kat Panjari** is the General Manager of Community and City Services at the City of Melbourne. While Kat was the Municipal Association of Victoria's Director Strategic Foresight and Partnerships, she held the inaugural MAV x RMIT Centre for Urban Research Fellow in Residence position, resulting in the *Leading Communities Through Urban Change: Building Community Support for Density Done Well* report.

Session One:
Leading for Density Done Well

A panel of local government and First Nations leaders will discuss the challenges and opportunities of achieving improved housing outcomes that are equitable, appropriate and environmentally responsible.

About the Moderator



Kelly Grigsby joined the Municipal Association of Victoria in July 2023 following successful stints as CEO at the City of Hobart and Wyndham City Council. Kelly's background includes city shaping, organisational transformation, service reform and, as a respected sector-leading CEO, is experienced in intergovernmental influencing at state, national and international levels.

A Senior Honorary Fellow at the Melbourne School of Government, Kelly is also a member of the Committee for Economic Development of Australia (CEDA) State Advisory Council.

Ask a Question

Scan the QR Code or search #leadingwell at slido.com

Session One:
Leading for Density Done Well

About the Speakers



Shaun Middlebrook is a proud Wiradjuri and Yuin man and the Australian Housing and Urban Research Institute's Principal First Nations Advisor. Shaun has experience in strategic policy, advocacy and communications at Aboriginal Housing Victoria, overseeing implementation of the Mana-na woorn-tyeen maar-takoort, Victoria's Aboriginal Housing and Homelessness Policy. He holds degrees in law and management and has worked with NGOs, peak bodies, banks, and departments of Government.



Councillor Thomas Prince is the Mayor of the City of Greater Bendigo. He's an advocate for waste management, recycling, road infrastructure and economic growth, and is committed to supporting a thriving and sustainable Greater Bendigo and serving its diverse and inclusive communities. Thomas' achievements include establishing the Bendigo Dragons Gridiron Club and supporting school-based programs aimed at increasing participation in sport among young people. He is currently undertaking part-time studies at La Trobe University while balancing his duties as Mayor.

Session One:
Leading for Density Done Well

About the Speakers



Councillor Alex Makin is the Mayor of the City of Port Phillip, and former Mayor of Maroondah City Council. During his time at Maroondah, he helped oversee the transformation of Ringwood into a major metropolitan activity centre. Alex has worked across business, consulting and the not-for-profit sector and teaches strategy and analytics at postgraduate level. As a Port Phillip resident, he is passionate about ensuring higher-density development is supported by the infrastructure, transport, public spaces and local leadership needed to create liveable and connected communities.



Simon McMillan is the Chief Executive Officer of Whitehorse City Council. Simon has held a number of senior executive positions, including CEO of Banyule City Council for over 12 years and Director City Development Banyule City Council. Simon has worked in Local Government for over 30 years in both inner and middle Melbourne metropolitan areas. He is a Fellow of the Planning Institute of Australia, a member of the Victorian Planning and Environmental Law Association, is a qualified Urban Planner and holds a Master of Business Administration.

Session Two:
Designing for Density Done Well

Planners, architects and design experts from local government and the private sector will consider what is required to shift the conversation away from high-quality design as a ‘cost’ that only some deserve toward principles of design equity for flourishing communities.

About the Moderator



Sarah Buckeridge is Managing Principal of Hayball, an award-winning national architecture practice, and Co-chair of the Australian Institute of Architects Victorian Chapter Housing Committee. She is a practice leader in social and affordable housing with over 20 years of experience in the design and delivery of significant mixed tenure housing projects for the public, community housing, and private sector.

Sarah is a Life Fellow of the Australian Institute of Architects and a Victorian Chapter Councillor, advocating for sustainable, equitable and well-connected communities.

Ask a Question

Scan the QR Code or search #designingwell at slido.com

Session Two:
Designing for Density Done Well

About the Speakers



Jane Keddie is Director of Hansen's strategic planning team and works collaboratively across planning and design. Jane is committed to improving planning responses to climate change and the intersection of climate resilience and planning systems. Jane regularly supports reviews of policy and has provided expert evidence at Planning Panels Victoria. She sits on the program advisory board for Monash University's planning degree and is the current Vice President of the Planning Institute of Australia (Victorian division).



Leanne Hodyl is an urban strategist, designer, facilitator and educator, and a leading advocate for better cities. Leanne has led organisations and multidisciplinary teams across the public, private and not-for-profit sectors for over two decades. She led the award-winning practice Hodyl & Co (2016–2025), launched Cities People Love in 2020, and co-led the relaunch of Urban Design Forum Australia in 2021. Her 2015 Churchill Fellowship reshaped planning policy in Victoria. She is now Director of Hodyl, an urban strategy and design practice focused on delivering public interest outcomes.

Session Two:
Designing for Density Done Well

About the Speakers



Munir Vahanvati is an urban designer with more than 20 years of experience across local government and private practice. With a background in architecture and urban design, his work has focused on how planning, built form and design policy can support urban growth while delivering better places and better housing.

Munir initiated and led the development of the award-winning Moreland Apartment Design Code, one of the first comprehensive apartment design standards of its kind in Victoria. At Darebin City Council, he has led the Design Excellence Program, including design guidance and exemplar projects focused on improving the quality of apartment and medium-density development.

Session Three: Knowledge for Density Done Well

This panel brings together internationally leading researchers to share the findings of their research on the kinds of health, social and environmental outcomes that can be achieved from doing denser housing well.

About the Moderator



Professor **Libby Porter** is Director of the Centre for Urban Research at RMIT University where she leads research and education in planning and urban studies. Motivated by social and ecological injustice, her work brings a critical lens to questions of urban governance, land and housing injustice, displacement and dispossession and the politics of property.

Libby has worked in planning and urban policy practice and taught in planning and geography schools in the UK and Australia. She is a Fellow of the Higher Education Academy UK and has been active in many grassroots initiatives to catalyse action in the face of urban injustice.

Ask a Question

Scan the QR Code or search #knowledgewell at slido.com

Session Three:
Knowledge for Density Done Well

About the Speakers



Emma McRae is an urban geographer at RMIT University, researching questions of liveability and health in the context of increasing urban densification. Drawing on insights from the Australian Urban Observatory, this research addresses the disconnect between health and planning legislation. Across diverse sites in Victoria, the research aims to understand the health impacts of different planning and residential density scenarios on daily lives, health and wellbeing.



Melanie Davern is a Professor of Public Health and Urban Planning in RMIT's Centre for Urban Research. She is the Director of the Australian Urban Observatory, a digital liveability planning platform that mobilises research evidence into policy and practice nationally and internationally. Melanie's research focuses on the intersection between public health and urban planning, bringing transdisciplinary knowledge to co-create better city planning and policymaking. Melanie was awarded an RMIT University Vice Chancellor's Senior Research Fellowship in 2022.

Session Three:
Knowledge for Density Done Well

About the Speakers



Sarah Foster is the Associate Director of the ‘Planning and Transport for Healthy Cities’ theme at the Centre for Urban Research at RMIT University. She leads a program of applied research designed to influence policy and practice to create healthier built environments. This includes ‘The High Life Study’ which examines the interplay between apartment design policy standards, the design of contemporary apartment buildings, and resident health and wellbeing.



Hugh Stanford is a Post-Doctoral Research Fellow in RMIT University's Centre for Urban Research and Curtin University’s School of Design and Built Environment. His work centres on urban planning and sustainability: how cities can grow while ensuring positive social and environmental outcomes. His work interrogates the built form and liveability impacts of housing development and densification, the strategic use and greening of underutilised urban land, and how planning can support biodiversity sensitive design outcomes in cities.

Density Done Well Exhibition

Curated by the **Victorian Chapter of the Australian Institute of Architects**, the *Density Done Well* exhibition showcases a selection of architecturally designed housing projects across Victoria. The exhibition is aimed towards policy makers with key data demonstrating diverse approaches – case studies range in size, height, and type – in which density can be achieved.

Density Done Well responds to the challenge outlined in Victoria's Housing Statement: we need to construct more than two million new homes across Melbourne and Victoria's regional centres, within the next 25 years, by unpacking the real-world aspects of liveability, and puts the resident experience front and centre to sponsor the question we should all be asking:

Would you choose to live here?





Guests are invited to visit the Density Done Well exhibition in The Capitol Theatre Salon over lunch, and speak with AIA Committee Members about the housing projects.

Thank you for joining us.

Learn more about the research, advocacy and thought leadership of RMIT's Centre for Urban Research

cur@rmit.edu.au

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engage.dsc@rmit.edu.au

This event is proudly presented by RMIT University's Centre for Urban Research and College of Design and Social Context, in partnership with the Municipal Association of Victoria, Planning Institute of Australia and Australian Institute of Architects Victorian Chapter.

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