

## **Summary of Industry Feedback March 2013 Landscape Infrastructure Manual (LIM)**

### **1. Industry briefing sessions**

Industry briefing sessions were held on 13 March 2013 at 1.00pm and 4.00pm.

Invitations were issued to all the recipients of the Development Services Newsflash newsletter - 191 companies ranging from developers, planners, environmental design consultants, landscape design consultants etc. In addition eleven peak industry organisations were invited. The invitation included a link to Council's website, where the draft Landscape Infrastructure Manual has been placed to provide access to the document. ([Planning and Building](#) > [Development](#) > [Operational Works](#) > Draft Landscape Infrastructure Manual).

All key organisations as identified by Council's Development Assessment area and the peak industry organisations were followed up with phone calls.

The following organisations were represented on the day:

- Sunshine Coast Access and Advisory Network (SCAAN) – 5 members attended including a representative from Spiral Inc
- Sunshine Coast Business Council
- Property Council of Australia
- Urban Development Institute of Australia (UDIA)
- Australian Institute of Architects
- Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA)

Many private companies also attended the briefing sessions. They are as follows;

Environmental Design:

- Downes Group
- Callaghan and Toth
- Duke Environmental

Landscape/Urban Design:

- Terra-Firma
- Dillon Folker Stephens
- Place Design

Developers:

- Stockland

Architects

- Deicke Richards

Planners:

- RPS Group
- Murray and Associates

## **2. Discussion at the briefing sessions**

The types of questions received at the briefing sessions and answers are listed at item number 4.

In addition to attendance at the meeting, verbal comments have been recorded in discussions with those who could not attend.

## **3. Consultation Outcomes**

The Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) and the Sunshine Coast Access and Advisory Network (SCAAN) have indicated strong support for the document and have provided detailed comments. The Property Council and Urban Development Institute of Australia have also provided written comments.

Individual companies expressed support for the format, content, involvement of maintenance teams in the design and installation guidance material. They have also supported the fact that the Manual is outside the Planning Scheme so that it can be updated in line with innovation and best practice in a flexible, ongoing way.

The Australian Institute of Landscape Architects have indicated that it will provide a valuable reference source for the next generations of Landscape Architects.

#### **4. Landscape Infrastructure Manual Briefings to Industry – Q & A**

**Q – Will the Manual be available in word format?**

A – The Manual is on Council’s website in PDF format, but can be made available in word format on request. (This has now been provided to Peter Ryan who is vision impaired and asked the question).

**Q – Will picnic tables be wheelchair-accessible?**

A – There are standard and equal access models which enable a range of heights suitable for various users. The Manual recommends that the first table in any picnic area should be an equal access model, after that a range of heights should be used.

**Q – Will TGSi (tactile ground surface indicators) be covered by the Landscape Infrastructure Manual? There are local examples where tactiles have been installed in dark or shady areas and the colour contrast isn’t sufficient.**

A – Tactiles will be covered in Volume 2 in conjunction with a council compliance officer and an external access consultant. Issues of colour contrast will be dealt with there.

**Q – How many new parks are being installed? Will there be more parks in Caloundra city?**

A – The number of new parks depends on the number of new residential developments via which developers contribute parkland assets to Council. The Manual is more about construction embellishments than open space provision which is a consideration of Council’s Open Space Strategy.

**Q – Will new seats be timber or aluminium? Many of Council’s existing timber seats have peeling paint or are otherwise hard to maintain.**

A – There will be both so that designers have a choice. However, there will probably be more aluminium seats as they are more durable and cost effective.

**Q – Does the planting palette show suitable geographic zones for plant species?**

A – Yes

**Q - Does the Manual reference Australian Standards for tree protection?**

A - Yes

**Q – Why aren’t public toilets in the Manual?**

A – Buildings in open space such as shelters and toilet blocks will be covered in Volume 2 in relation to basic design elements.

**Q - Why don’t all parks have toilets? Do developers pay for them?**

A – There is a hierarchy of parks. Local parks don’t generally provide toilets because they are “closer to home” and people can more easily go to the toilet before they go to the park. Larger, and specifically “destination”, parks with special features are more likely to provide toilets because people travel further to them and usually stay there for a longer time. Some

local parks unintentionally become destination parks, and this can present a challenge when toilets were not originally planned for.

**Q – Why aren't parks non-smoking areas?**

A – That's beyond the scope of the Landscape Infrastructure Manual.

**Q – Who or what has determined “reach” for equal-access facilities? Some people with a disability would be unable to reach the buttons and taps (according to drawing dimensions) as they don't have full arm extension. Also, BBQ hot plates need to balance child safety with cooking “reach” for adults in wheelchairs.**

A – Dimensions are those stipulated by Australian Standards and have been certified by an access consultant. Push-button forces are often determined by water pressure in a given location or the amount of sand that can infiltrate the mechanism.

**Q – The planting palette is very good. However, parks can have important existing natural / ecological assets which require protection and management. Will this be addressed by the Manual? Will there be any guidance about site rehabilitation / revegetation and the practitioners who undertake it, as many are unqualified?**

A – Site rehabilitation will be dealt with in the next volume of the Manual, which could possibly include performance criteria to guide selection of suitably qualified personnel. Both the plan and the planting need to be done by the right people to ensure success on the ground.

**Q – Will the Manual prevent issues like spiky plants being planted beside footpaths at the eye level of children and guide dogs?**

A – Yes. The Manual's planting section shows preferred planting offset distances and has diagrams showing clear zones for spikey plants. It will also show preferred offsets for situations like road medians and roundabouts in volume two.

**Q – With regards to development assessment, will the Manual affect bonding arrangements?**

A – No

**Q – Will development conditions be updated?**

A – Yes, but not necessarily based on the Landscape Infrastructure Manual. The Manual is guidance, not legislation, as it sits outside of the planning scheme. There may be advice notes on development conditions to the effect that guidance about park construction details (for example) can be found in the Manual. Such guidance, especially in the design stage, should make it easier for developers to meet standards and conditions and enable development applications to be approved more quickly.

**Q – Will it reduce the number of conditions?**

A – Possibly, but it's more likely to be referenced by an advisory note to conditions.

**Q – Why does the Manual sit outside of the planning scheme?**

A - So that it can be updated easily without having to be resubmitted to Council for endorsement every time a product or installation technique is changed.

**Q – Will the Manual be continually updated?**

A – Yes. It's a “living document” and a rolling program of continuous business improvement which will be regularly updated to reflect feedback from staff and industry as products and materials are trialed.

**Q – Will Council de-amalgamation's effects on the planning scheme also affect the Landscape Infrastructure Manual?**

A – No, because the Manual sits outside the planning scheme and it not area specific.

**Q – What's the roll-out of the next volume of the Manual?**

A – Volume 2 is already underway. It is intended to follow the same format and consultation process as Volume 1. It is hoped that Volume 1 will be endorsed in April, after which it will be an official tool for Council's development assessment team and generally available on Council's website.

**Q – Will Council have copyright on Manual drawings?**

A – No. It's like an “open source Wikipedia” with all information available for general use. Initially the drawings will be in PDF format, but in time they will be in AutoCAD format so that designers can import them easily to their own plans. Actual products included in the Manual are there with supplier permission, and their inclusion is based on a compliance basis rather than a preferred supplier basis. It therefore provides a platform via which other suppliers can lift their game in terms of compliance and sustainability.

**Q – Will the Manual include a register of suppliers?**

A – Supplier items will be included in sections about individual embellishments. Or there might be a picture of the embellishment (eg a bin) with a list of its performance requirements and a list of suppliers that meet those standards and whose products have been trialed. The Manual is performance based but doesn't replace Council's formal procurement process.

**Q – With regards to “activity areas”, does the Manual say where to locate activities like playgrounds and dog off-leash parks?**

A – No, it provides guidance for design and construction of the activity area. Actual locations are to be negotiated with the community in the context of relevant Council strategies.

**Q – Is there a danger of the Manual whitewashing the Sunshine Coast with the same “one size fits all” character? How will we retain and enhance individual character areas?**

A – No, the Manual isn't intended to prescribe character. It provides a default position for compliance and sustainability. The onus is on designers and developers to meet or improve upon this position. Council is also preparing masterplans and centre design palettes for identified character areas. Ideally, the Manual should dovetail with these to ensure that individual character areas are designed and constructed in a compliant and sustainable way.

Designers will still have to conform to the park category and respond to individual site conditions. The Manual will save designers time because it provides drawings and

information which are deemed to comply with Council requirements. It enables them to spend time on site specific details rather than on researching the basics.

The Manual is very useful for the many small local parks which can have a level of standardisation to ease maintenance. More detail and individuality can be included in larger and higher profile parks.

Council will try to keep levels of park embellishment in line with its Open Space Strategy, but some developers and masterplans want extra. These will need to be negotiated in consultation with clients and designers.

**Q – Will the Manual help Council’s maintenance crews?**

A – Yes, by providing a palette of items that meet performance criteria – ie they are functional, durable and long-lived, and as maintenance-friendly as possible. Council’s park maintenance staff have been strongly involved in the development of the Manual. It not only provides drawings and information, it also interprets relevant Australian Standards for each topic. This should also assist designers and contractors. Standardising basic products such as keys and locks saves time and money.

Council needs to view designs and assets from a maintenance perspective. The Manual provides a feedback mechanism via which Council can advise designers what modifications need to be made, especially if it develops and monitors product trial sites.

**General comments**

- Can Council consider pavement colours and patterns in tandem with requirements for the visually impaired? Sometimes a colour change may be misinterpreted by the visually impaired as a change of level. Aesthetics need to balance with practicality.
- I work with people with disabilities and my clients and I are very happy with the Manual to date.
- The Manual is very good in that it covers a range of disability groups, not just wheelchair users.
- It is very good that the Manual is outside the Planning Scheme so that the input from the development industry can provide continuous updates so that it will be a living document, and a source of shared experience and knowledge.