

EQUITY BY DESIGN

Applying the 7 Switches to transform
the built environment

Champions of Change Architecture Group



WE RECOGNISE PEOPLE OF ALL GENDERS, IN ALL THEIR DIVERSITY.

By highlighting the specific demographics of people who experience exclusion, we increase their visibility and boost understanding of how exclusion is experienced within organisations and in society more generally.

Inclusive gender equality recognises that diversity, equity and inclusion strategies must consider and engage all genders in global efforts to achieve gender equality, with a particular focus on elevating and advancing currently under-represented and marginalised groups, including women in all their diversity.

At its core, the intent is to create respectful, safe and inclusive cultures of belonging for all.

In referring to people experiencing intersecting inequalities, we mean the structural inequalities and multiple, intersecting and compounding barriers to inclusion and progression faced by:

- women and girls
- socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds
- First Nations people
- ethnically and/or racially marginalised
- single parents and sole caregivers
- people with disability (visible or invisible)
- neurodivergent people
- LGBTQIA+ people

When referring to diverse people, we mean the wealth and variety of people and aspects of identity that broadly make up Australia's population.

Champions of Change Coalition acknowledges Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we work and live. We pay our respects to Elders past and present and commit to building a brighter future together. Our head office is located on the lands of the Gadigal people of the Eora Nation. The 'Eora people' was the name given to the coastal Aboriginal peoples around Sydney. 'Eora' means 'here' or 'from this place'.

The workplaces of our people and Champions of Change Coalition Members span the nation and the world. We extend our respects to the Traditional Custodians of all the lands on which we and our Members and communities work and live.



Image source: Hassell.

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THE POWER OF DESIGN FOR EVERYONE

Setting New Standards in Architecture

At the Champions of Change Coalition Architecture Group, our ambition is to design for everyone.

We seek to address historical inequities in the built environment by proactively challenging systemic biases. Our primary focus is making gender equality a fundamental part of our projects, from feasibility studies through to built work. Once we question the gendered opportunities and repercussions of the spaces we make, we naturally integrate diversity in all its forms.

Our approach starts with shaping diverse project teams that mirror the communities we design for. With improved representation on design teams,

we can radically affect the spaces we live in—from infrastructure to urban design, healthcare, education, transport, residential, community rooms and beyond.

Equity by Design is a choice. This guide outlines our processes by leveraging the “7 Switches” framework to provide practical strategies that integrate gender-aware design principles into every aspect of the built environment. It is about embedding equity into our future foundations through projects that respond to accessibility, health and safety, wellbeing, belonging, and participation, transforming spaces and lives by designing for everyone.

Our Vision:

To build equity by designing for everyone

By applying the lens of the “7 Switches” as an integral part of project design considerations we move beyond legislative standards towards best practice. The “7 Switches” provides a framework to ensure our built environment considers:

1 Represented and engaged end to end:

We ensure diverse voices are heard from the start to the finish of our design process.

2 Visible, understood, respected, and valued:

Our designs and processes consider and respect everyone’s physical and emotional needs.

3 Health and safety without compromise:

We go beyond legislated health and safety standards to create environments that facilitate psychological safety and wellbeing.

4 Customised and accessible:

We tailor our designs to be usable and welcoming for all genders and abilities.

5 Progressive and supported:

Our spaces promote wellbeing and are easy for everyone to use.

6 Free and empowered:

We design spaces where everyone can feel safe and valued, contribute and thrive.

7 Invested in:

We collaborate with clients, stakeholders and users to prioritise gender-inclusive design.

Partner with us to Lead in Equity by Design

The built environment signals our values and priorities. Whether you're passionate about equitable design or just beginning to see its importance, we're here to help you realise it in your projects.

Our approach focuses on practical solutions to eliminate bias, considering the full spectrum of human identity—gender, age, culture, economic status and ability—to shape safe, functional, welcoming spaces that benefit and potentially transform the lives of everyone.

Let's collaborate to make Equity by Design a core part of the spaces we live and work in.

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UNSW Bookshop, Kensington, NSW. Image source: SJB

FOREWORD

***Equity by Design* is a new resource from our Champions of Change Architecture Group which demonstrates how workplaces, communities, and public spaces can be better designed to reflect and respond to the diverse needs of all people.**

Why is this so critical? The environments we navigate daily—whether it's a workplace, sports stadium, or public park—shape how we live, how we interact, and the opportunities we can access. These interactions are at the heart of human dignity. When we design with equity in mind, we break down long-standing barriers to participation, access and empowerment for all. The ultimate goal is to create physical spaces where everyone can feel safe and valued, contribute and thrive.

The Architecture Group played a pivotal role in developing the Champions of Change Coalition's "7 Switches" framework, which provides a comprehensive guide for embedding gender equality into any decision-making or design process.

The framework is brought to life through the case studies in this resource, demonstrating the lasting benefits of integrating gender-aware and equitable thinking into design from the outset.

Designers by their very nature envisage and pursue a better world. While inequality remains a reality in so many parts of our world, *Equity by Design* offers both a powerful vision for the future and a practical path forward.

Together, we are laying the foundation for a more inclusive, empowering and equitable world.



Elizabeth Broderick AO
Founder Champions of
Change Coalition



The world of 8 billion presents an unparalleled opportunity to create a more equitable future—one where every person has equal opportunities to thrive. Yet, a substantial body of evidence reveals systemic biases in the design of science, technology, and financial solutions, leaving many women underserved across industries.

Women navigate a world not designed for them. From healthcare products to safety equipment, from cars to buildings, furniture, and transportation, the exclusion of women's needs often results in outcomes ranging from inconvenient to life-threatening. But these inequities are not insurmountable—they are solvable.

As the famous designer Dieter Rams aptly stated, "You cannot understand good design if you do not understand people." Achieving equity demands more than ambition—it requires intentionality, collaboration, and sustained action. It means embedding equity by design into every solution, across sectors and geographies, and addressing the overlooked needs of women and girls.

The *Equity by Design* report from Champions of Change Coalition highlights actionable strategies, such as the "7 Switches" framework, to guide leaders and organizations toward equity-focused solutions. As we seize this pivotal moment, let this report inspire bold ideas, foster collaboration, and drive meaningful change. Collectively, we can build a future where equity is the foundation of innovation and sustainable development.

The world is not designed for women. Let's redesign the world!

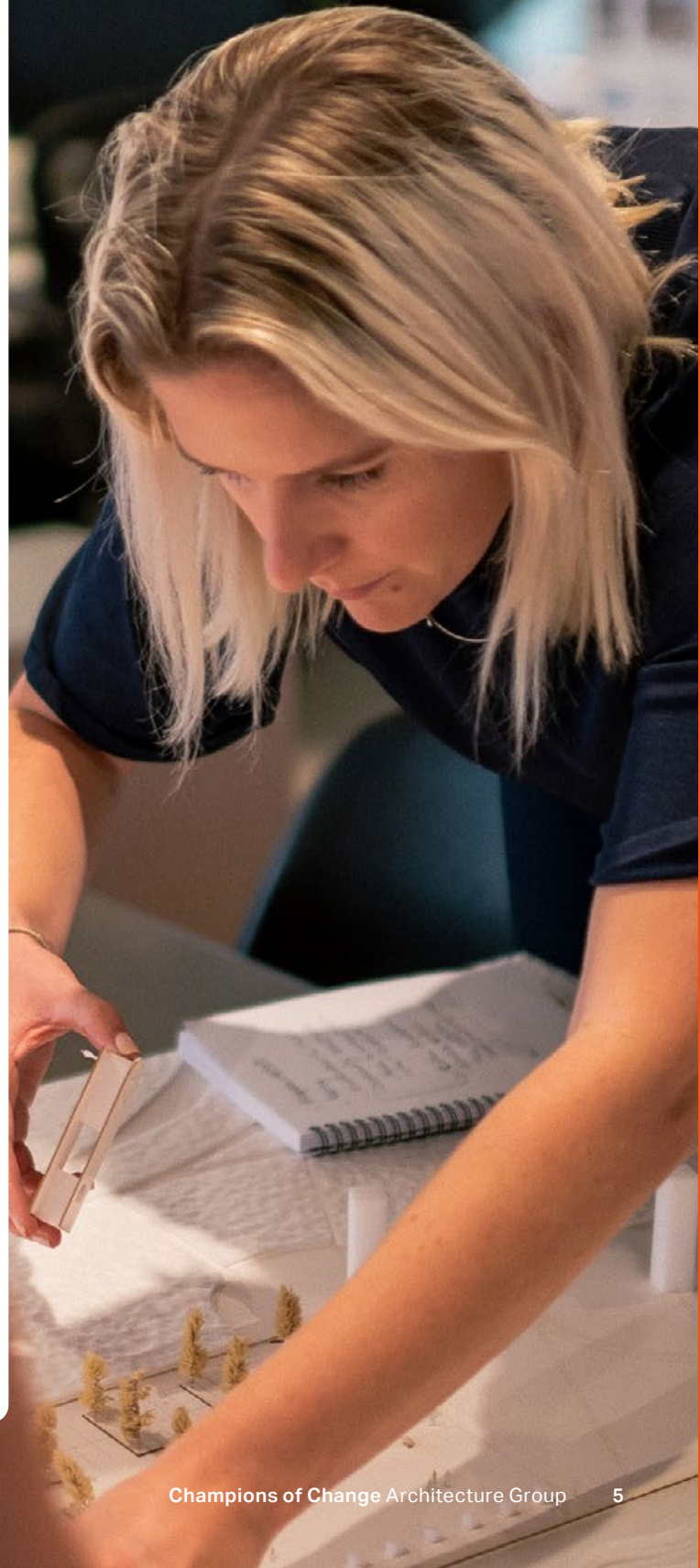


Dr. Nigina Muntean
Chief of Innovation
Co-founder of the Equity 2030 Alliance
United Nations Population Fund





7 SWITCHES AND EQUITY BY DESIGN PRINCIPLES



INTRODUCTION: THE PATHWAY TO EQUITY BY DESIGN

As our awareness of the diverse needs in our community grows, equitable approaches to architecture, design, and urban planning must create spaces that meet everyone's needs.

Equity by Design thrives when it is embedded from first principles, shaping a design vision, brief, priorities, and funding that responds to the diverse needs of the community served. This requires a commitment to equity before the designer is even engaged, laying a strong foundation for sustainable, inclusive outcomes throughout the life of the project.

"7 Switches" from Champions of Change Coalition provides a framework to check bias and seek Equity by Design. This guide explores that framework, using case studies and practical principles to show how equitable design can transform how we live and work. By listening to diverse perspectives from the outset and challenging traditional norms and power dynamics, the "7 Switches" framework helps us to consciously and systematically prioritise equality.

Equity by Design brings this process to life, rethinking how physical spaces can foster equitable access and safety, find opportunities to better share care responsibilities, and empower all people through listening and learning to address social and historical imbalances, ultimately contributing to long-term social sustainability.

Designing for equity is a continuous process—one that evolves as we learn more about people's nuanced needs and as new techniques and technologies emerge.



Allianz Stadium. Image source: COX

1

REPRESENTED AND ENGAGED END TO END

EQUITY BY DESIGN PRINCIPLES



Co-Design:

Design with, not for, by involving diverse individuals.¹



Diverse Teams:

Build project teams that reflect a broad spectrum of society.²

MALFUNCTION EXAMPLES

- Exclusion of women and gender-diverse voices in initial planning stages.
- Project teams composed predominantly of one gender, lacking diversity in perspectives.
- Designing based on current target audiences rather potential or excluded audiences.

CIRCUIT BREAKER QUESTIONS

- ? Are women and gender-diverse individuals actively involved in all stages of the decision-making process?
- ? Does the composition of the decision-making team reflect the full diversity of the community it serves, including cultural, racial, age, ability, and LGBTQIA+ perspectives?
- ? How are we ensuring that the voices of those most affected by our decisions are heard and prioritised?
- ? How can we upskill all members of the design team to consider equity by design?

SWITCHED ON DESIGN EXAMPLES

- ✓ Involving diverse community members in the planning and design of a new community centre to ensure it meets the needs of all users, including spaces that accommodate various cultural practices.
- ✓ Using diverse focus groups including people of all genders to gather feedback on public transportation safety features.
- ✓ Analysing user patterns in public space to design urban areas that meet needs for communal spaces, caregiving, recreation, and social interaction.

1. Many inclusive design guides have a similar principle. See for example Terraza, H., Orlando, M.B., Lakovits, C., Lopes Janik, V. and Kalashyan, A. (2020). *Handbook for Gender-Inclusive Urban Planning and Design*. Washington, DC: World Bank. Available at: World Bank Open Knowledge Repository. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/33197>, Process Guideline 3. Participatory Planning and Design, p 73.

2. See for example, Royal Institute of British Architects (2023). *Inclusive Design Overlay for the RIBA Plan of Work*. Available at: www.architecture.com/knowledge-and-resources/resources-landing-page/inclusive-design-overlay-to-riba-plan-of-work. This guide provides clear guidance on the diversity of role and skill sets for the design team in Section 2, Roles.

2

VISIBLE, UNDERSTOOD, RESPECTED, AND VALUED

EQUITY BY DESIGN PRINCIPLES



Gender-Aware:

Proactively challenge gender norms and inequalities, creating inclusive spaces that address power dynamics, equitable access, safety, and opportunities for all genders.³



Emotional Wellbeing:

Incorporate design elements that enhance emotional wellbeing.⁴

MALFUNCTION EXAMPLES

- Public spaces that lack adequate seating and overly dim or harsh lighting, making them unwelcoming for certain groups.
- Work environments that fail to consider the ergonomic needs of all employees, leading to discomfort, lack of accessibility and potential injury.
- Workplaces that do not ensure appropriate ratios of bathrooms and amenities for workers and visitors of all genders.
- Facilities that disproportionately and unjustifiably prioritise and celebrate men as the embodiment of leadership or expertise.

CIRCUIT BREAKER QUESTIONS

- ? Are we recognising and valuing the contributions of all genders in our designs and decisions?
- ? Does our project eliminate biases and stereotypes that may affect the visibility and treatment of different genders?
- ? How do we measure and enhance the visibility and impact of marginalised or under-represented groups within our projects?

SWITCHED ON DESIGN EXAMPLES

- ✓ Designing workplaces that include various types of workspaces, from standing desks to quiet zones, catering to different physical and emotional needs, communication styles and work preferences.
- ✓ Designing to reflect the way women and diverse communities use and move through space (vs rigid, masculine structures of the past).
- ✓ Public parks with varied types of seating, lighting, equipment, and amenities to accommodate different ages, sizes, and abilities, ensuring usability and comfort for all.
- ✓ Sports stadiums that equally recognise and celebrate athletic achievement across genders, such as names, monuments and facilities.
- ✓ Areas to support trauma, spaces for relaxation and social interaction, recognising different emotional responses and needs across genders.
- ✓ Implementing a 1.8:1.0 ratio of female to male bathroom facilities, plus providing gender-neutral and children's facilities to reduce wait times and improve access for women and girls.

3. See for example, Kalm, N (2024). *She City: Designing Out Women's Inequity in Cities*, Bloomsbury

4. COX Architecture (2022) *Trauma-Informed Design, Principles and Framework* (unpublished white paper)

3

HEALTH AND SAFETY
WITHOUT COMPROMISEEQUITY BY DESIGN
PRINCIPLES**Safety First:**

Prioritise safety in all design decisions, ensuring that environments are secure and have protective measures.⁵

**Health and Wellbeing Integration:**

Integrate health-promoting features into the built environment.⁶

MALFUNCTION EXAMPLES

- Inadequate or poor-quality lighting in parking structures and walkways, compromising safety, particularly for women and vulnerable populations.
- Lack of gender sensitive facilities or considerations within public or community spaces.

CIRCUIT BREAKER QUESTIONS

- ? Does our design ensure the safety and health of all genders without compromise?
- ? Are safety measures defined and implemented through a gender-aware lens?
- ? How do we address the specific health and safety concerns that may not be well represented in standard design processes?

SWITCHED ON DESIGN EXAMPLES

- ✓ Vibrant, open public spaces with integrated lighting, social activities, and communal participation that empower women to take equal ownership of the space.
- ✓ Well-lit transport hubs equipped with communal resources—such as spaces for resting, socialising, or working—can transform transit areas from spaces where people feel unsafe into empowering environments.
- ✓ Consideration of travel needs and routines in the design of cities and public transport to support people with caring responsibilities and to prevent risk of harassment or violence. Implementation of non-slip floors in all public bathrooms to ensure safety for all users, including catering for a range of footwear and mobility needs.
- ✓ Inclusion of emergency call buttons in secluded areas of parking lots to enhance security for everyone, especially during late hours.
- ✓ Incorporating wellbeing elements such as air quality enhancements, indoor green space, ergonomic designs, and outdoor spaces that encourage social and physical activities for wellbeing.

5. See for example, XYX labs (2023) *Safe Spaces* www.monash.edu/mada/research/labs/xyx/projects/safe-spaces-understanding-and-enhancing-safety-and-inclusion-for-diverse-women

6. Arup (2022) *Cities Alive, designing cities that work for women* www.arup.com/perspectives/publications/research/section/cities-alive-designing-cities-that-work-for-women, Strategy 2 p. 82

4

CUSTOMISED
AND ACCESSIBLEEQUITY BY DESIGN
PRINCIPLES**Universal Access:**

Ensure that all spaces and facilities are gender-inclusive and accessible.⁷

**Specific Adaptations:**

Provide specific adaptations where necessary to meet unique needs of various user groups.⁸

MALFUNCTION EXAMPLES

- Public buildings without adequate access for wheelchair users, walking aids or people using strollers.
- Insufficient soundproofing in areas designed for neurodiverse individuals.
- Design assumptions that cater to men's use of space and comfort within it.

CIRCUIT BREAKER QUESTIONS

- ? Have we considered the unique needs of different genders at every stage of life in our designs?
- ? Are our facilities and services equally accessible to all genders, including parents or carers of either gender, transgender and non-binary individuals?
- ? What mechanisms are in place to ensure our designs eliminate barriers for various user groups, considering age, mobility, sensory ability, cultural background, economic status, neurodiversity and gender?

SWITCHED ON DESIGN EXAMPLES

- ✓ Inclusion of ramps, automatic opening wide doorways and corridors to support parents with prams and people with mobility aids.
- ✓ Catering to all genders, people of all abilities and ages, using principles of universal design.
- ✓ Creation of quiet corners in public libraries that serve neurodiverse individuals or those who require a calm environment to avoid sensory overload.
- ✓ Accessible bathrooms and walkways, wayfinding, feeding and nursing rooms for new parents.
- ✓ Climate controlled environments, adjustable for different users.

7. Centre for Excellence in Universal Design (2024). *Building for Everyone: A universal design approach* https://universaldesign.ie/uploads/publications/Entire-Series-Books-1_10.pdf

8. Victorian State Government Department of Sport and Recreation (2024). *Design for Everyone Guide*. Available at: <https://sport.vic.gov.au/resources/design-for-everyone-guide>

5

PROGRESSIVE
AND SUPPORTEDEQUITY BY DESIGN
PRINCIPLES**Facilitative Design:**

Design spaces that facilitate ease of use, personal growth, and empowerment.⁹

**Inclusive Roles:**

Design environments that actively challenge traditional gender roles and stereotypes.¹⁰

MALFUNCTION EXAMPLES

- Limited availability of baby change and feeding facilities that support all genders as active caregivers.
- Work environments that fail to facilitate flexible working arrangements for all.

CIRCUIT BREAKER QUESTIONS

- ? How are we supporting progressive gender roles and breaking down outdated stereotypes through our designs?
- ? Does our project foster an environment where all genders can thrive equally?
- ? How are we challenging and transforming traditionally gendered caregiving roles through our design?
- ? How are we accommodating care givers beyond parents?

SWITCHED ON DESIGN EXAMPLES

- ✓ City designs that prioritise caregiving spaces, ensuring that care work is valued and that carers have equitable access to shared caregiving resources.
- ✓ Facilities like feeding, childcare areas, kitchens, and bathrooms are designed to be welcoming and accessible to people of all genders and ages, encouraging shared responsibilities and dismantling outdated norms.
- ✓ Providing a gender-neutral approach to changing stations to ensure caregiving spaces are accessible to all parents, carers and guardians.

9. ACT Government (2023). *Gender Sensitive Urban Design Toolkit*. Available at: https://hdp-au-prod-app-act-yoursay-files.s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/4116/9017/9791/GSUD_Implementation_Toolkit-access-v2.pdf.

10. See for example ACT Government (2023). *Gender Sensitive Urban Design Toolkit*. Available at: https://hdp-au-prod-app-act-yoursay-files.s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/4116/9017/9791/GSUD_Implementation_Toolkit-access-v2.pdf.

6

FREE AND EMPOWERED

EQUITY BY DESIGN PRINCIPLES

**Inviting Spaces:**

Design spaces that are welcoming and engaging for all, accommodating cultural and religious diversity that embraces community interaction.¹¹

**Supportive Environments:**

Create environments that enable a variety of activities and users.¹²

MALFUNCTION EXAMPLES

- Public spaces that do not consider the needs of women or cultural and religious minorities.
- Public spaces that fail to accommodate those with mobility challenges.
- Lack of support structures for diverse families in community centres.

CIRCUIT BREAKER QUESTIONS

- ? How are we supporting progressive gender roles and breaking down outdated stereotypes through our designs?
- ? Does our project foster an environment where all genders and abilities can thrive equally?
- ? Is caregiving considered and supported in our workplace or design?
- ? Does our design accommodate diverse cultural and religious practices?

SWITCHED ON DESIGN EXAMPLES

- ✓ Housing developments designed to include workspaces, childcare, and community gardens, minimising travel time for those responsible for caregiving and domestic labour.
- ✓ Incorporating cultural elements into public space designs to ensure they resonate with the diverse identities and histories of the community.
- ✓ Designing sports facilities with areas that are inviting to all genders.
- ✓ Using innovative materials, smart technology, or community feedback mechanisms to enhance Equity by Design.
- ✓ Transport facilities that enable carers or people with a disability to move freely, easily and independently, without the need for additional support.

11. Tower Hamlets Council (2023). *This is for the majority: Gender inclusive design, creating a safe, inclusive and restorative borough*. Available at: <https://talk.towerhamlets.gov.uk/17424/widgets/50365/documents/49999>

12. Victorian State Government Department of Sport and Recreation (2024). *Design for Everyone Guide*. Available at: <https://sport.vic.gov.au/resources/design-for-everyone-guide>; City of Whittlesea (2017). *Gender Equity in Design Guidelines*. www.mav.asn.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/7306/Whittlesea-City-Council-Gender-Equity-in-Design-Guidelines.pdf

7

INVESTED IN

EQUITY BY DESIGN
PRINCIPLES**Funding Prioritisation:**

Allocate budgets specifically for gender-aware design across the end-to-end project lifecycle.¹³

**Long-term Value:**

Recognise and communicate the long-term social and economic benefits of gender equitable design to stakeholders to secure ongoing investment.¹⁴

MALFUNCTION EXAMPLES

- Historical underinvestment in infrastructure projects that cater to the needs of women and gender-diverse individuals.
- Limited funding and resources allocated to research in women's built environment needs.

CIRCUIT BREAKER QUESTIONS

- ? Are investments being made equitably to enable gender awareness in our projects?
- ? How do we assess the impact of our investments on different genders?
- ? What strategies are in place to correct historical underinvestment in projects related to specific genders?

SWITCHED ON DESIGN EXAMPLES

- ✓ Selection criteria that prioritises gender-aware design and equitable design approaches.
- ✓ Allocating a specific percentage of all urban development budgets to ensuring gender equitable design in all new public infrastructure projects.
- ✓ Time and budget allocated specifically to consult with and meet the physical space needs of girls, women and underrepresented groups.

13. See for example Terraza, H., Orlando, M.B., Lakovits, C., Lopes Janik, V. and Kalashyan, A. (2020). *Handbook for Gender-Inclusive Urban Planning and Design*. Washington, DC: World Bank. Available at: World Bank Open Knowledge Repository. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/33197>, p 57.

14. See for example, references to long term vision and investment in Hopkin's Centre in Collaboration with Cross River Rail Delivery Authority (2023) *Cross River Rail Toolkit: Embedding Accessibility Co-design into the Delivery of Public Transport Infrastructure* https://cross-river-rail.s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/21084522/231219-Hopkins-Co-Design-Toolkit-Accessible_v17.pdf, p. 57

PRACTICAL ACTIONS: EMBEDDING THE 7 SWITCHES FOR EQUITY BY DESIGN

The “7 Switches” framework invites an ongoing process to question bias and embed gender equality through design thinking.

Flexible and enduring, the framework invites adaptation as we cultivate and learn equitable design. Iterative by nature, the “7 Switches” framework is a tool that realises social responsibility in specific and genuine ways, through innovation, economic growth, productivity and social engagement. Below are ways that organisations can activate the “7 Switches” in their approach to project planning and the design of facilities and infrastructure.



Image source: AJC

1.

Engagement and representation from start to finish

INITIATE DIALOGUE

Engage with experienced professionals to integrate Equity by Design principles from across all stages of a project, from inception to completion. Ensure there is time and budget set aside by the project team for meaningful and effective engagement with communities, stakeholders and/or users throughout the design process.

COLLABORATIVE WORKSHOPS

Use the “7 Switches” to host listening and learning workshops that bring together diverse stakeholder groups to co-design solutions that address specific community needs. Use the framework to consciously and systematically challenge biases and identify new opportunities.

2.

Visibility and respect in design implementation

CONDUCT AN EQUITABLE DESIGN AUDIT

Review existing and ongoing projects against equitable design principles, with a particular focus on the needs of women and girls.

USE GENDER DISAGGREGATED AND GENDER-AWARE DATA

Collect or use existing data on the needs of women and girls to inform the design process and outcomes.

VISIBLE REPORTING

Document and share findings with key project stakeholders to influence future projects, ensuring that design solutions are visibly informed by and adapted to diverse community insights.

3.

Health and safety without compromise

LIFT THE BAR FOR WELLBEING

Elevate expectations to prevent health and safety risks towards creating environments that proactively facilitate wellbeing for communities.

ADVOCATE FOR POLICY ENHANCEMENTS

Collaborate with professional bodies and government entities to advocate for statutory and legislative compliance that explicitly addresses the needs of women and girls, alongside other vulnerable groups.

DEVELOP AND REFINES STANDARDS

Assist in updating industry guidelines that integrate gender-aware and equitable design principles across all stages of architectural and urban development. Focus on raising the standard of health, safety and wellbeing.

4.

Customised and accessible design solutions

PROACTIVE INTEGRATION IN NEW PROJECTS

Embed Equity by Design principles at project initiation, ensuring equitable design is prioritised in project briefs, specifications, and budget allocations.

RESOURCE ALLOCATION

Protect specific budget allocations for equitable practices, ensuring that project resources and investments adequately support gender-aware and Equity by Design initiatives.



Image source: Hassell

5.

Supportive and progressive environments

CONTINUOUS PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT

Promote ongoing education in gender-aware and equitable design through professional development opportunities such as workshops, seminars, and conferences.

COMMUNITY AND NETWORK BUILDING

Establish and nurture a community of practice dedicated to advancing Equity by Design, sharing knowledge, challenges, and successes within a supportive network.

6.

Empowered participation and ownership

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT AND ADVOCACY

Lead public campaigns that highlight the significance of equitable design. Engage the broader public in discussions about the impact of design on community wellbeing and social equity.

FEEDBACK MECHANISMS

Set up systems to gather continuous user feedback, allowing for the iterative improvement of spaces in response to the lived experiences of diverse communities.

7.

Investment in Equity by Design

CLIENT AND STAKEHOLDER EDUCATION AND ADVOCACY

Inform and influence clients and stakeholders in the long-term benefits of investing in equitable design from the outset of projects to build positive community benefits.

CASE STUDIES





This section presents a collection of case studies that exemplify how the “7 Switches” framework can be applied in architecture, design and planning projects.

Each case study illustrates the practical implementation of Equity by Design principles, showcasing projects that have successfully integrated equitable design from project inception through to completion. By exploring these case studies, we gain a deeper understanding of how deliberate, thoughtful design can create spaces that are accessible, safe, and welcoming for all community members, particularly women and girls.



We present projects that are built or in final stages of building that have used equitable design principles that map to the “7 Switches”:

- Coogee Surf Life Saving Club
- Campbelltown Hospital
- Allianz Stadium
- Cross River Rail
- Nightingale Marrickville



Following this we have a series of projects in design and planning phase that will activate the “7 Switches” through the design process:

- Newington College Eungai Creek Campus
- Bendigo District Aboriginal Co-operative Medical Centre
- Hobart Stadium
- BlueScope Land Transformation Project
- Quantifying Quality

CASE STUDY



A NEW WAVE OF EQUITY: TRANSFORMING COOGEE SURF LIFE SAVING CLUB

Project Title: Coogee Surf Life Saving Club Redevelopment

Location: Coogee, NSW, Bidjigal and Gadigal Country

Sector: Community and Recreation

Architecture Firm: AJC Architects

Project Lead(s): Michael Heenan, CEO & Director

Client: Randwick City Council, Coogee SLSC NSW

Key Stakeholders:

Local community, club members, visitors to Coogee Beach





Set on the stunning coastline of Coogee, NSW, within Bidjigal and Gadigal Country, the Coogee Surf Life Saving Club (SLSC) has undergone a transformative redevelopment. Reimagined by AJC Architects, this project revitalises one of Australia's oldest surf life-saving clubs, enhancing its role as a vital community hub designed for everyone.

The redevelopment project was driven by the need to maximise beach patrol and surveillance capabilities, achieve full accessibility and future-proof the club's role for its members and the broader community. The project included repairing and strengthening the club's exterior; redesigning the interior to address access, capacity, and operational issues; and incorporating sustainable design features.

"7 Switches" activated in Coogee SLSC

1

Represented and engaged end to end:

The process engaged with a wide range of stakeholders to ensure the new facility would meet the diverse needs of club members and the wider community. The involvement of people of all genders, ages, and abilities helped identify key challenges and highlight community values.

2

Visible, understood, respected, and valued:

A key vision for the club's redesign was to shape a community home fully accessible by all. This value was made visible with improved circulation and a new platform elevator to support those with mobility needs. It also saw the enhancement of amenities which included a Changing Places facility. Often, individuals with high support needs are excluded from community life through a lack of places to safely go to the toilet. Changing Places amenities are sized for individuals and their carers, providing a hoist for safe movement and a screen for privacy. By installing this facility, Coogee SLSC went beyond legislation ensuring all users feel dignified, respected, valued and able to fully participate within their community.

3

Health and safety without compromise:

Spaces and facilities were upgraded to allow the club to do what it does best—save lives and train the community to be safe in the surf and surrounds. Responding to the building's location, durable materials were used to withstand severe weather and the risk of injury from material decay. Large windows were installed with expansive views of the beach to improve lifeguard visibility for effective surf patrol. The hoist in the Changing Places facility improved safety for carers and individuals, and circulation upgrades provided safe paths of travel, especially for people with mobility aids and families with strollers.

4

Customised and accessible:

Improving operational efficiency was emphasised during stakeholder consultation. The design was developed to shape flexible spaces that could be adapted for a variety of community uses. Wayfinding improvements and new amenities made the club fully accessible to everyone, especially those with mobility needs.

5

Progressive and supported:

By installing sustainable features like rooftop solar panels, the redevelopment enabled both environmental responsibility and operational efficiency. The club now includes flexible spaces that serve the community's social, sporting, lifesaving, and safety needs.



6

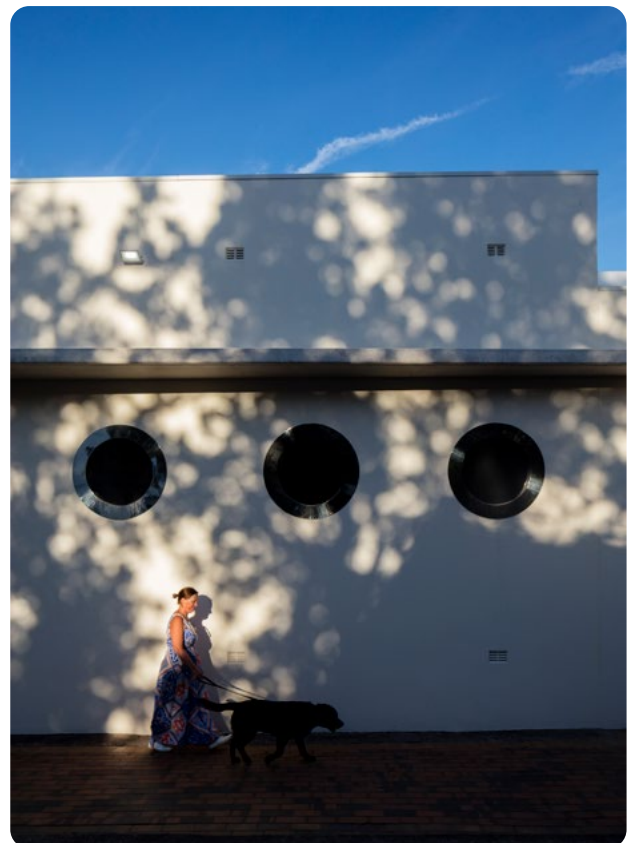
Free and empowered:

Wheelchair-accessible pathways, a new elevator, and open, adaptable spaces allow community members of all genders and all abilities to participate in club activities independently, fostering a welcoming and equitable environment.

7

Invested in:

The transformation of one of Australia's oldest surf life-saving clubs shows an investment in the historical and cultural significance of the building to the people of Coogee and their commitment for a more sustainable future, accessible to all.



“

The club renovation allowed us to rethink lifesaving. At the start of the project I didn't see anyone with a disability wearing the red and yellow [lifesaver's] uniform. We felt that had to change. And it has.

Tony Waller, Life member, former president and club captain – Coogee SLSC



Outcomes and Impact

The redevelopment has dramatically increased the capacity of the main function space, improved operational efficiency, and enhanced the visual connection with the beach. The club has become a pilot site for Project Livetas, training kids with different abilities to become surf lifesavers, significantly enhancing community participation and engagement. In 2021 Coogee SLSC was recognised at the 2021 IOC IPC IAKS Architecture Prizes in Cologne, Germany, receiving a Distinction for Accessibility from IPC/IAKS.



Lessons Learned

Coogee Beach has one of the highest ambulance call-outs for suspected spinal injury on the NSW coastline. The project highlighted the community's commitment to shaping spaces that enable everyone, regardless of mobility needs, to contribute to this vital civic role. Engaging with diverse stakeholders throughout the design process led to innovative and effective solutions that challenged assumptions and transformed the practice of surf life-saving.



Looking Ahead

The Coogee SLSC redevelopment serves as a blueprint for future community-centred projects. AJC Architects recommend continuing to prioritise equitable design and sustainable practices to create more efficient and welcoming environments. The success of this project has led to further refurbishment tasks to enhance gender amenities and accessible facilities, ensuring the club remains a cornerstone of the community.

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CASE STUDY



DESIGNING FOR WELLNESS: CAMPBELLTOWN HOSPITAL'S COMMITMENT TO COMMUNITY & FAMILY-FOCUSED CARE

Project Title: Campbelltown Hospital Redevelopment - Stage 2

Location: Campbelltown, Sydney, Dharawal Country

Sector: Healthcare

Architecture Firm: Billard Leece Partnership (BLP)

Project Leads: Tara Veldman, Adam Muggleton, Kelsey Godwin-Smith, Matt Kenchington, Michael Whitley

Project Team Members: Simon David, Nirmisha Shrestha Baral, Ryan Gaul, Katerina Vrdoljak, Katharina Koschitz, Mindy Nass, Rebecca Yeo

Client: Health Infrastructure NSW

Key Stakeholders: SWSLHD, Campbelltown Arts Centre, Campbelltown City Council, Uncle Ivan





Generously proportioned maternity suite with full height windows

Situated in Sydney's southwest on Dharawal Country, the Campbelltown Hospital Redevelopment by Billard Leece Partnership (BLP) is an example of progressive healthcare design. This project integrates clinical excellence with equitable design, specifically to enhance wellbeing outcomes and meet the diverse needs of the growing Macarthur community.

This extensive redevelopment includes a new 12-storey clinical services building that includes medical, paediatric, maternity, and mental health services. Emphasising a holistic approach, the project integrates an arts and wellbeing strategy, fostering a healing environment that respects the cultural significance of its location and nurtures the wellbeing of patients and visitors.

"7 Switches" activated in Campbelltown Hospital

1

Represented and engaged end to end:

The project engaged local community members, including women and First Nations people, in the design process to ensure their needs were addressed. The project used a holistic approach to healthcare design, integrating community input to ensure a culturally safe outcome.

2

Visible, understood, respected, and valued:

Gender-aware facilities such as private maternity wards, lactation rooms, and family-friendly zones were included to ensure the hospital supports women's and families' privacy and emotional wellbeing. Cultural narratives were incorporated through Indigenous artworks, reflecting the local community's heritage.

3

Health and safety without compromise:

Extensive facilities dedicated to women's health, including birthing suites and a maternity ward, are designed with privacy and comfort front of mind. These spaces respond to women's health needs while promoting a safe and welcoming environment. Enhanced safety features, particularly in vulnerable areas like waiting rooms and consultation spaces, prioritised the security of women, children, and families. The facility includes expansive lounge areas designed for both patient and family comfort, fostering a supportive environment.

4

Customised and accessible:

The hospital layout was designed to be intuitively navigable by all, with particular enhancements to maternal and childcare services. Accessibility improvements ensure that people of all abilities can move freely throughout the facility.



Unexpected activity spaces, including enclosed basketball court



Community Interactive Arts Workshop

5

Progressive and supported:

Family and community-focused spaces, including kitchens and BBQ areas, provide a supportive environment where patients and their families can gather, connect, and relax. This progressive design fosters holistic wellbeing for the broader community.

6

Free and empowered:

The hospital design allows patients, particularly women and families, to navigate the space independently. Services are easily accessible, empowering patients to manage their healthcare experience with autonomy.

7

Invested in:

Significant investments were made in designing a facility that prioritises the needs of women and families. Indigenous cultural elements and state-of-the-art health services highlight a long-term commitment to providing safe, welcoming and equitable healthcare for future generations.

**Outcomes and Impact**

The redesign of Campbelltown Hospital is set to serve as a model for future healthcare facilities, focusing on accessibility, equity, family wellbeing and community engagement. The integration of specific design elements for women and families ensures that the facility will significantly enhance health outcomes and provide a supportive environment for the community.

**Lessons Learned**

The project highlights the importance of embedding gender-aware and culturally responsive design principles from the outset. Engaging with the community and understanding their specific needs has been key in shaping a facility that truly serves its users.

**Looking Ahead**

The Campbelltown Hospital Redevelopment project highlights the importance of designing healthcare facilities that are not only medically comprehensive but also foster wellbeing by being gender, culturally and socially inclusive. As this facility is used, it will influence how future healthcare environments are designed to serve diverse communities while receiving care, with particular attention to empowering women, families and ensuring all community members feel respected and valued.



Illustrations in paediatric unit offer playfulness, distraction and comfort

“

Art certainly complements the physical healing we see in hospital by acknowledging the whole person and their emotional and spiritual needs as well. There is a growing body of evidence worldwide to demonstrate the measurable impact of art on health outcomes. The art strategy came about because it is very important for us to incorporate and respectfully reference the local Dharawal people, their history, and their experience as traditional owners of the land where the hospital sits, utilising local fauna, flora, totems, and language.

Loretta Anderson, Director of Allied Health, Campbelltown, and Camden Hospital



Hospital Street showing a section of the 80m long mural of local flora and fauna

CASE STUDY



CHAMPIONING EQUITY BY DESIGN: THE ALLIANZ STADIUM REDEVELOPMENT

Location: Sydney,
Gadigal Country

Sector: Sports and
Public Realm

Architecture Firm:
COX Architecture

Project Leads:
Russell Lee, Alex York,
Lydia Vegas

Key Team Members: Alastair Richardson, Andrew Butler, Andrew Lyons, Andy Leong, Andy Medhurst, Anthony Crozier, Brendan Nolan, Brooke Lloyd, Cara Cecilio, Claudio Porley, Cynthia Wu, Danny Nguyen, Emilia Firus, Emily Leung, Hannah Clifton, Harry Mazzarolo, Imad Khan, Ingrid Kelly, Isabel Chia, Isobel Hall, Ivana Yaco, Jackson Walker, Joe Agius, John Ferendinos, Johnson Kuo, Julia Farleigh, Karen Morris, Lauren Garth, Lloyd Caneta, Mark Kowalyov, Mark McKenna, Martin Gaardboe, Matthew Batchelor, Michael Ferreyra, Naomi Evans, Patrick Ness, Pete DuPreez, Pete Sullivan, Prerna Bhaskar, Rola Tarawn, Rowan Lear, Sav Cremona, Sef Kazi, Shohan Somasundaram, Stuart Harper, Sue Zhao, Tom Wyburn, Zia Gatti

Client: Infrastructure
NSW, Venues NSW and
John Holland

Key Stakeholders:
Julie Shires, Tara Alcorn,
Deirdre O'Neill, Kerrie
Mather – CEO Venues
NSW, Stephanie Ballango
– Urbis Planning



Image courtesy of Venues NSW

Image courtesy of: Christopher Frederick Jones



Located in the heart of Sydney, Gadigal Country, the Allianz Stadium redevelopment by COX Architecture sets a new benchmark for public arenas, combining safety, accessibility, and sustainability. The redesign creates a versatile space for sports and community events, making the stadium a central hub for Sydney's inner-city.

The redevelopment upgraded the stadium to world-class standards while ensuring equity for athletes and spectators of all abilities. Key challenges included integrating the design with its parkland setting, enhancing accessibility, and catering to diverse groups, including people with disabilities, families, and the neurodiverse community.

As a venue for football, rugby, and community events, Allianz Stadium embraces its 'stadium in the park' concept, blending seamlessly with the green surroundings to enhance recreation and contribute to Sydney's reputation as a premier event host.

The project also prioritised sustainability, using 40% less steel in the roof and doubling tree numbers around the stadium, reducing environmental impact while enriching local biodiversity.



Image courtesy of: Christopher Frederick Jones

“

Our mission: an unwavering link to the city's heartbeat. We've melded interiors and architecture to craft a stadium that is imbued with the soul of Sydney—driven by the rich tapestry of its past, present, and people.

Brooke Lloyd, COX Director



“7 Switches” activated in Allianz Stadium

1

Represented and engaged end to end:

The project included diverse stakeholders from the start, including women and accessibility groups, ensuring the new stadium addressed a wide range of user needs. Female representation in both the design team and client group was a priority throughout the project.

2

Visible, understood, respected, and valued:

Moving beyond legislation for an equitable approach to public amenities, the project provided increased female facilities to reduce wait times. These facilities were equipped with sanitary dispensers and located close to stadia to improve accessibility. All-gender bathrooms were added across the precinct, responsive to the gender-diverse needs of community. The stadium's change rooms in the Tunnel Club area are designed for flexibility, with separate urinals in designated rooms to accommodate both male and female sports teams. Indigenous artworks celebrate and honour local cultural heritage, anchoring the space to create a shared sense of belonging.

3

Health and safety without compromise:

The stadium's design includes improved lighting and open green spaces to enhance safety and visibility. A diverse retail food and beverage selection caters to the increased number of female and family member spectators. The Sporting Club of Sydney adds a layer of luxury and wellbeing focus with facilities including a day spa, gym, yoga, pilates, swimming pool, sauna, and steam rooms, creating a social hub for relaxation and fitness. Safety measures, including improved lighting and clear wayfinding, were embedded throughout the stadium. Accessible routes and seating for people with disabilities ensure safety for all users, including vulnerable populations.

4

Customised and accessible:

The stadium features more than 330 wheelchair viewing positions and accessible bathroom facilities across all levels. Gender-diverse change rooms were added, accommodating male, female, and gender-diverse athletes.

5

Progressive and supported:

Family zones, quiet sensory rooms, and alcohol-free areas provide a supportive environment for neurodiverse individuals and families. The diverse food and beverage options enhance the stadium's appeal to a broad range of spectators.

6

Free and empowered:

Enhanced public transport connections and fully accessible facilities empower all users to navigate the stadium freely and independently, fostering a sense of autonomy.

7

Invested in:

The stadium's redevelopment represents a major investment in equitable design, ensuring the facility meets the needs of all genders, ages, and abilities. The project sets a benchmark for future stadium designs, particularly in its progressive response to gender-equitable design and accessibility.



Pictured: Inclusion of female athletes in artworks

“

It's great to see that this issue (catering to women's sport) has been rectified in the new stadium.

Being able to use safe changing rooms that are separate from the male area but also have a communal team area is fantastic and provides a more welcoming facility for females in sport.

Kasey Badger, NRL Referee



Outcomes and Impact

The redesign has been widely praised for its accessibility features and its thoughtful integration with the surrounding environment. The stadium now includes improved amenities and services that cater to a wide spectrum of needs, promoting an inclusive atmosphere that respects all users' dignity, accessibility, wellbeing, and safety. The project has won multiple awards recognising its innovative urban, interior and architectural and landscape design.



Lessons Learned

One of the main insights from this project is the value of early and comprehensive stakeholder engagement to ensure that the facilities meet the actual needs of future users. The design process highlighted the importance of going beyond compliance to genuinely understanding and addressing the varied experiences of athletes and spectators. The inclusion of a sensory room as respite for neurodiverse people is now an amenity that the client is looking to include in all their future venue designs.



Looking Ahead

The Allianz Stadium redevelopment serves as a model for future projects, emphasising the importance of equitable design, sustainability, and community engagement in urban design. It sets a precedent for how stadiums and large public venues can serve as hubs for community interaction, wellbeing, and cultural celebration.

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CASE STUDY



BRIDGING BARRIERS: HOW CROSS RIVER RAIL IS SHAPING EQUITABLE PUBLIC TRANSPORT

Location: Brisbane, Queensland,
Australia – Jagera and Turrbal
Country

Sector: Urban Transport

Architecture Firm: Hassell

Project Lead: Tanya Golitschenko

Team Members: Keith Allen, Kevin
Lloyd, Caroline Diesner, Ewen
Wright, Dan Kallis, David Gowty,
Emma Townsend

Client: CPB Contractors

Key Stakeholders: CPB
Contractors, Dot Dash, Maynard



Concept Image: Hassell

Fuelled by growth in Brisbane, Jagera and Turrbal Country, the Cross River Rail project exemplifies equitable urban transport.

Designed to improve infrastructure and redefine accessibility, it prepares for future population growth and the influx of visitors for the 2032 Olympics and Paralympics, transforming the travel experience for residents, athletes, and tourists. Hassell participated in a co-design process to develop stations that set new standards for equitable design through collaboration, mutual understanding, and shared decision-making, resulting in innovative design solutions.

Addressing South East Queensland's projected 40% population growth by 2036, the project relieves pressure on the transport network while driving urban regeneration. A key challenge is seamlessly integrating new stations with existing infrastructure to ensure a cohesive, efficient system.

This design is led by Hassell, with the Cross River Rail Delivery Authority as the client. The project includes four new underground stations at Roma Street, Albert Street, Woolloongabba, and Boggo Road, plus the rebuild of eight existing stations.

Albert St Station concept Image: Hassell.



Accessibility reference group members experiencing the new Fairfield Station design via a 3D Tactile Braille model

“

Co-design unites the designer's skill with the user's lived experience. They meet as peers in a forum where knowledge is exchanged, and problems are solved before the asset or service is realised or constructed.

John MacPherson, Manager of the Accessible Transport Network, Department of Transport and Main Roads

"7 Switches" activated in Cross River Rail

1

Represented and engaged end to end:

The project involved a co-design process from start to finish, bringing together stakeholders from various backgrounds. This included community groups, women, traditional owners, and individuals of diverse abilities, such as vision-impaired users who provided feedback through tactile 3D models. These collaborative efforts ensured that the stations met the needs of all demographics.

2

Visible, understood, respected, and valued:

Communication of designs was adapted to include large fonts and contrasting colours for visually impaired users, ensuring that every participant felt valued. The design choices reflected a commitment to accessibility and respect for all users, with a strong focus on integrating feedback from underrepresented groups in the design process.

3

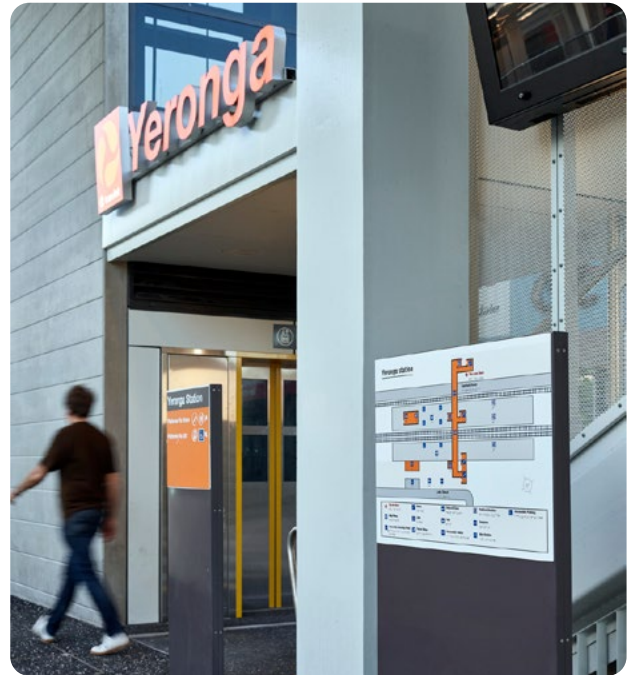
Health and safety without compromise:

An additional layer of safety was embedded in the design, with non-slip surfaces, universally accessible safety messaging, ample lighting, seating, and passive surveillance ensuring the stations are safe for everyone, including women, children, people with disabilities, and carers. Features like wide, obstacle-free pathways and well-marked emergency exits were included to maintain high safety standards without compromising functionality. Stations were also equipped with filled platform gaps to assist people using mobility aids.

4

Customised and accessible:

Every aspect of the station was designed to accommodate people of all ages, genders, and diverse-access needs. This included barrier-free access points, lifts, and escalators, as well as universal signage and messaging, including Braille maps at station entries. The design also featured adjustable ticket counters and accessible bathroom facilities with flexible fixtures and fittings. The stations also accommodate assistance animals by providing shelter, seating, water stations, and toilet areas.



5

Progressive and supported:

Modern and progressive features were integrated into the project, including Wi-Fi connectivity, electronic signage with real-time updates, and seating that accommodated various body types and needs. These enhancements provide support for the changing needs of commuters and ensure comfort and accessibility for all. Artwork by Indigenous artists features prominently at station entries as a reminder of place and a connector to Country.

6

Free and empowered:

The improved connectivity and reduced travel times empower all residents to navigate Brisbane with ease. The design allows everyone, from women to individuals with disabilities, to use the stations independently and confidently, fostering a sense of freedom and empowerment in public transport.

7

Invested in:

Significant investments were made to ensure the rail network was built with equitable design in mind from the outset. This included not only financial commitments, but also ongoing community engagement to adapt the design based on evolving needs. The project leaves a legacy of accessible, user-friendly urban transport for all demographics.



“

As an architect, you're always guided by legislation and standards. But there's a big difference between doing something because you have to, and doing it because you understand the difference it will make in someone's life.

Tanya Golitschenko,
Lead Architect, Hassell



Outcomes and Impact

The result is a public transport system that exceeds current standards of accessibility. The newly designed stations feature enhanced safety measures such as non-slip surfaces, ample lighting, tactile maps, filled platform gaps for mobility aids and strollers, and parent and carer facilities. These features support women and men, people with diverse physical or sensory abilities and their assistance animals, accommodating the needs of workers, parents, carers, and children. The feedback from the community, particularly the Accessibility Reference Group, has been overwhelmingly positive, highlighting the project's success in setting new benchmarks for equitable design in public infrastructure.



Lessons Learned and Future Pathways

Key to the process was the early and ongoing engagement with all stakeholders, particularly those from marginalised or disadvantaged groups. This engagement fosters a deeper understanding and appreciation of the diverse needs within a community, ensuring that the final designs are not only about physical safety and accessibility, but also about creating spaces where everyone feels welcome, served and valued.



Looking Ahead

As Brisbane continues to evolve and prepare itself for the Olympic events, the lessons learned from the Cross River Rail project provide a blueprint for future equitable urban development projects. The success of this project advocates for a continued and enhanced focus on equitable design, urging other professionals in the field—designers, builders and government—to consider how codesign with empathy and equitability can be interwoven into the fabric of our built environments to foster cities and communities that are cohesive and improve everyone's quality of life.

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CASE STUDY



REDEFINING AFFORDABLE HOUSING: NIGHTINGALE MARRICKVILLE'S COMMUNITY APPROACH

Location: Marrickville, Sydney, Wangal, Kameygal and Bediagal People of the Eora Nation

Sector: Affordable Housing, Multi-Residential, Build-to-Rent

Architecture Firm: SJB Architects with design consultancy from Nightingale Housing

Project Lead: Gabrielle Suhr, Juan Muñoz-Tamayo, Charlotte Wilson

Team Members: Jemima Frank, Mitchell Solomonson

Client: Fresh Hope Communities

Key Stakeholders: Nightingale Housing; Breathe Architecture; Fresh Hope Communities; Kingsway care temporary accommodation



Nightingale Marrickville by SJB Architects, in collaboration with Nightingale Housing for Fresh Hope Communities, is redefining affordable housing in Sydney's inner west on the lands of the Wangal, Kameygal and Bediagal people.

This build-to-rent development is designed to be priced 20% below market rates and dedicates 50% of its units to First Nations Australians, those with a disability, essential workers, and single women over 55, emphasising affordability, sustainability, gender equity and community integration.



"7 Switches" activated in Nightingale Marrickville

1

Represented and engaged end to end:

The project was shaped by comprehensive community engagement, ensuring that the perspectives of women, single parents, and other under-represented and marginalised groups were incorporated from inception to completion. This equitable approach helped balance affordability, superior design, and sustainability in a high-demand urban setting.

2

Visible, understood, respected, and valued:

The design recognised the unique needs of women and vulnerable groups with the inclusion of shared amenities like large communal kitchens and living spaces that are welcoming, flexible, and support everyday tasks while encouraging social connection.

3

Health and safety without compromise:

Prioritising safety, the project introduced strategic design elements that enhanced security for women and children. This included secure, visible public spaces and communal areas designed to foster passive surveillance, ensuring safety is embedded without compromising other design elements.

4

Customised and accessible:

The project provided adaptable living spaces and amenities, catering to diverse populations, including First Nations people, women, the elderly, children, and people with disabilities. Special attention was paid to the needs and desires of single people through flexible communal areas that offer both privacy and opportunities for community engagement.

5

Progressive and supported:

Community-centric design, with shared kitchens and garden spaces, encouraged social interaction, fostering a supportive environment. These communal areas were tailored to facilitate both independent living and mutual support among residents, helping to build connections and reduce social isolation.

6

Free and empowered:

Residents were empowered through easy access to public transport and essential services, supporting their autonomy and reducing reliance on non-renewable energy. Features like rooftop solar panels contributed to lower utility costs and environmental sustainability.

7

Invested in:

The project demonstrated a long-term commitment to sustainable, equitable design and affordable housing which has implications for maximising future investments.



Outcomes and Impact

Nightingale Marrickville has received acclaim for its progressive approach to affordable housing, significantly improving residents' lives by blending private sanctuaries with communal living benefits. This residence not only offers financial relief but also enriches community ties among diverse groups, especially benefiting women and the elderly.



Lessons Learned

This project illustrates the importance of integrating community input, ensuring the architectural solutions align closely with the needs of diverse current and future residents, especially vulnerable groups like single older women. The approach is one that can be replicated to extend the impact to other places.



Looking Ahead

As a benchmark for affordable housing, Nightingale Marrickville sets a precedent for future developments to combine affordability, equitable design, and environmental sustainability as fundamental components of urban residential projects.



“

I can see it's going to work...It's an amazing opportunity to be in a new apartment, I've never in my life, never lived in a new apartment, or anything new...

Karen, Nightingale Marrickville (Teilhaus) resident

CASE STUDY



SHAPING FUTURES TOGETHER: EMBRACING CO-EDUCATION AT NEWINGTON COLLEGE EUNGAI CREEK CAMPUS

Project Title: Newington College
Eungai Creek Campus

Location: Eungai Creek, NSW,
Dunghutti Country

Sector: Education

Architecture Firm: AJC Architects

Project Lead(s): Michael Jones

Client: Newington College

Key Stakeholders: Midson,
Lipman Pty Ltd





Located on a vast 200-hectare rural property in Eungai Creek, NSW, on Dunghutti Country, the Newington College Eungai Creek Campus, designed by AJC Architects, represents a pioneering educational and architectural initiative. This project is aimed at enriching Year 9 students' experiences through immersive community service and learning about traditional land management practices from local First Nations knowledge holders.

The campus includes student accommodation cabins, a health centre, reception, and dining hall, designed to foster a community-oriented, sustainable living and learning environment. The design anticipates the transition of Newington College to a co-educational system, welcoming its first cohort of female students by 2030, underlining the importance of equitable and gender-aware design.

Newington College's decision to transition to a co-education model is a strategic response to community consultation and engagement, research into evolving societal norms, and the recognition of the enhanced benefits for both students and the broader community with the addition of girls to the school cohort. This significant shift is aimed at embracing diversity and preparing students for a future where gender interactions are seamless and collaborative. The decision, driven by extensive research and community consultation, demonstrates a commitment that mirrors broader societal shifts towards gender equality. Integrating girls into the campus is expected to enrich the educational experience, fostering a more holistic development environment that mirrors the real world. This aligns with Newington's longstanding commitment to diversity and equitable design, ensuring all students are well-prepared for the complexities of contemporary society.¹⁵



15. Newington College, 2024, *Why Coeducation?* Available at: https://librislite.s3.eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/libris_lite/7cadb811-e23d-4e19-b771-805f96ae9243/pageturners/users/4ae90177-5d91-4d88-a850-c14233f94298/20f7127e-4e3c-4bdc-86dd-5357bb484069.pdf?v=5



"7 Switches" to be activated in the Eungai Creek Campus

1

Represented and engaged end to end:

Local First Nations Elders and community members were engaged to ensure the design respected traditional land management practices and incorporated Indigenous knowledge. The transition to a co-educational model was informed by extensive community consultation, ensuring diverse voices were heard from the start. Research into learning outcomes for girls and boys and the impact of co-education for both genders were closely examined.

2

Visible, understood, respected, and valued:

The campus design anticipates the arrival of female students by 2030, with gender-aware and gender-neutral spaces and amenities already incorporated. The inclusion of cultural elements ensures all students feel respected and valued within the learning environment.

3

Health and safety without compromise:

Safety was a priority in both the design of student accommodations and communal spaces, ensuring that all students, regardless of gender or ability, feel secure. Simple, functional designs also enhanced safety and a sense of belonging across the campus.

4

Customised and accessible:

The campus is designed to be accessible to students of all abilities and genders, with various types of communal and private spaces that cater to neurodiverse students and those with different social and sensory needs. Gender-neutral facilities are available to normalise gender diversity.

5

Progressive and supported:

The design encourages independence, with self-contained spaces that allow students to practice daily life skills. Flexible learning environments support diverse educational experiences and promote holistic development.

6

Free and empowered:

Students are empowered to take responsibility for their learning and living environments, with designs that support autonomy and safety. The inclusion of culturally sensitive spaces fosters respect and empowerment for all students.

7

Invested in:

Long-term investments in the campus infrastructure ensure it remains adaptable to future needs, particularly the transition to co-education. The design reflects Newington College's commitment to creating a welcoming, supportive educational environment for all.



Future Outcomes and Impact

Once operational, the campus is expected to serve as a model for future educational developments, promoting a deeper connection with local culture, sustainability, and community engagement. The emphasis on gender-aware design is projected to enhance student wellbeing and foster a supportive, equitable learning environment.



Lessons Learned

Early and ongoing stakeholder engagement has been crucial. Future projects are encouraged to integrate flexibility in their designs from the outset, considering broad and diverse usage to accommodate shifts in educational paradigms and community needs.



Looking Ahead

The Eungai Creek campus sets a precedent for integrating educational facilities with community and environmental stewardship. It showcases how architectural design can embody the principles of healing and sustainability, providing a blueprint for future projects to adopt holistic and equitable design strategies.



CASE STUDY



HEALING ON COUNTRY: THE BENDIGO DISTRICT ABORIGINAL CO-OPERATIVE MEDICAL CENTRE'S JOURNEY TO EQUITABLE DESIGN

Project Title: Bendigo District Aboriginal Co-operative (BDAC) Medical Centre

Location: North Bendigo, Dja Dja Wurrung Country

Sector: Healthcare and Community Services

Architecture Firm: Billard Leece Partnership (BLP) and Workshop Architecture (WA)

Project Lead(s): Tonya Hinde (BLP), James Staughton (WA)

Client: Bendigo District Aboriginal Co-operative (BDAC)

Key Stakeholders: VHBA (government), On To It (Project Managers), Spiire (Town Planners), Slattery (QS)



Illustration: Site View Sketch

Set on Dja Dja Warrung Country in Bendigo, and led by Billard Leece Partnership (BLP) and Workshop Architecture (WA), the BDAC Medical Centre is a major step forward in equitable design in regional health.

The project emphasises cultural sensitivity and community engagement to create a healthcare environment that is welcoming and accessible to all members of the Dja Dja Warrung community. A key opportunity emerged to integrate Connecting with Country principles, raising cultural awareness within the design team and ensuring deep respect for the land and its history.

Scheduled for completion by March 2025, the centre will provide medical, dental, and community support services. It is also designed as a cultural hub, fostering connections, advocating for health, and supporting ongoing community engagement.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women in Australia face significant health disparities, with a life expectancy of 73.7 years compared to 83.1 years for non-Aboriginal women. Chronic health conditions and high rates of family violence highlight the need for focused healthcare facilities. The BDAC Medical Centre will play a key role in addressing these disparities and supporting both Aboriginal women and the broader community.¹⁶



Client and community engagement with 1:1 projections at BIG PLANS in Melbourne

Community consultation in Bendigo – ‘Listening Tent’ Day on site



16. www.whv.org.au/resources/whv-publications/aboriginal-and-torres-strait-islander-womens-health

Community feedback: 'Listening Tent' Day on site in Bendigo



"7 Switches" to be activated in the BDAC Medical Centre Project

1

Represented and engaged end to end:

The project engaged the Dja Dja Wurrung community through initiatives like The 'Listening Tent', and 1:1 projections to simulate real size designs, ensuring that community voices shaped the design from the beginning and throughout the process. The focus was on creating a space that meets the cultural and healthcare needs of the community.

2

Visible, understood, respected, and valued:

Indigenous artwork and culturally safe design features ensured the space reflected and respected Aboriginal culture. Gender-specific facilities were provided, including all-gender options, to promote equity by design.

3

Health and safety without compromise:

The centre promotes health services and wellbeing for the community. It includes prioritised safety through features like wheelchair-accessible spaces and independent parenting rooms. Special attention was given to creating safe, private spaces for women and families, supporting both physical and emotional wellbeing.

4

Customised and accessible:

All client-facing services are located on the ground floor for easy access. The design ensures that people of all abilities, including children and the elderly, can comfortably navigate the facility.

5

Progressive and supported:

The centre's open-plan reception area encourages community interaction, while the dedicated paediatric waiting area and external 'play deck' provide welcoming spaces for children, including those who are neurodiverse.

6

Free and empowered:

The design fosters a sense of empowerment by creating spaces that not only serve medical needs but also act as gathering places for the community. The centre enables free movement and interaction, reinforcing a strong community bond.

7

Invested in:

The project reflects a long-term investment in providing culturally safe, gender-aware healthcare. The medical centre is designed to adapt to the community's evolving needs, ensuring it remains a vital resource for future generations.



Future Outcomes and Impact

Upon completion, the BDAC Medical Centre is positioned to transform community health and engagement in Bendigo. As a culturally safe space, it is designed to facilitate regular health interactions and strengthen community bonds. By setting new benchmarks in equitable design within healthcare, it aims to enhance health outcomes and cultivate a sense of belonging among the Aboriginal community. This facility will not only serve the current community but also adapt to its evolving needs, embodying the principles of flexible and sustainable design.



Lessons Learned

The project emphasises the role of early and thorough community engagement in architectural design. A key lesson learned is that outside is just as important as inside for a healing environment, so all consulting and yarning rooms open to the outdoors.



Looking Ahead

Future projects should use empathy mapping and equitable design workshops to ensure responsiveness to diverse needs. A Post Occupancy Evaluation will assess social value, flexibility, and functionality to guide improvements. The BDAC Medical Centre integrates gender, family, cultural, and community needs, promoting health and inclusion within Aboriginal communities. By understanding the land's features and considering diverse needs across gender, age, and ability, the project sets a model for culturally respectful, community-focused designs.



Family yarning room connects directly to outside

CASE STUDY



A NEW ERA FOR TASMANIAN SPORTS AND CULTURE: MAC POINT MULTIPURPOSE STADIUM

Location: Macquarie Point, Hobart, Tasmania, Nipaluna Country

Sector: Sports, Events, Urban Regeneration

Architecture Firm: COX Architecture in collaboration with Cumulus Studio

Project Leads: Stuart Harper, Alastair Richardson, Lachlan Abercrombie

Key Stakeholders: TasPorts, Department of State Growth, Stadiums Tasmania, Aboriginal community groups



The Macquarie Point Multipurpose Stadium is set to become an iconic Tasmanian venue on Nipaluna Country, establishing new benchmarks for inclusive and innovative architecture in Australia.

Designed by COX Architecture in collaboration with Cumulus Studio, the stadium will integrate cutting-edge technology and thoughtful urban design into its waterfront location. With a fixed roof offering full oval coverage—a world first—the stadium is primed to host elite sports, concerts, and cultural events, solidifying Hobart's position on the international stage.

The design team faces a unique set of physical, environmental, and social challenges. Located on sensitive reclaimed land, the project has to balance environmental sustainability with functionality. Moreover, public concerns around access, community integration, and inclusivity requires innovative design strategies. In response, the stadium prioritises gender-aware facilities and accessibility for all, including those with disabilities and families.

"7 Switches" to be activated in Mac Point Multipurpose Stadium

1

Represented and engaged end to end:

Community stakeholders, including local Indigenous groups and underrepresented populations, will play an active role in shaping the design and activation of the precinct. This ensures the stadium reflects the diverse voices and needs of the broader Hobart community.

2

Visible, understood, respected, and valued:

The project integrates Tasmanian Aboriginal cultural elements, ensuring that public art and spaces honour both Indigenous and European heritage. These elements foster a sense of belonging and respect for cultural history, showcasing the region's diverse cultural roots.

3

Health and safety without compromise:

Prioritising safety and security, the design incorporates well-lit, visible pathways and public areas, ensuring comfort and safety for all users, particularly women and families. A detailed lighting study addresses high-glare streetlights and dark shadows, increasing women's comfort and safety during evening events and encouraging broader community participation.

4

Customised and accessible:

The stadium is designed with inclusivity at its core, offering step-free access integrated with Hobart's CBD, making it accessible for people with mobility challenges and families. Gender-aware bathrooms, gender-neutral changing rooms and match officials' facilities, as well as parents' rooms at all WC facilities, ensure inclusivity for athletes, caregivers, and families. Flexible wheelchair seating arrangements allow users to sit with companions, accommodating a variety of needs.

5

Progressive and supported:

Innovative design features like flexible communal spaces and adaptive seating arrangements create an inclusive environment for both sports and non-sporting events. Recovery facilities and match officials' areas are gender-neutral, promoting equitable access for all athletes—both men's and women's teams, and ensuring the stadium serves the community at large.

6

Free and empowered:

The precinct is designed to support independent navigation, offering easy access and movement for all visitors, particularly women and those with mobility needs. This fosters greater empowerment by allowing everyone to freely and comfortably engage with the space, both during events and in daily life.

7

Invested in:

As a key infrastructure project, the Mac Point Stadium will serve as a long-term investment in the local community. By embedding gender-aware and accessible principles into the design, the stadium will set a new benchmark for inclusive sports, arts, and community spaces, positioning it as a model for future developments in Tasmania and beyond.



Future Outcomes and Impact

Mac Point Multipurpose Stadium is set to be Tasmania's premier destination for sports, arts, and events. With a focus on inclusivity, accessibility, and sustainability, the stadium will not only host elite sporting events but also serve as a cultural hub that benefits the broader community. The project is expected to set new standards for gender equality in sports and urban design, with long-term impacts on community wellbeing and engagement.



Lessons Learned

By engaging community stakeholders and prioritising inclusivity, the project underscores the importance of designing public spaces that meet the diverse needs of all users. Lessons from the stadium's gender-aware and accessible design will inform future developments, ensuring that inclusivity remains central to Tasmanian infrastructure projects.



Looking Ahead

As a model of progressive sports architecture, the Mac Point Multipurpose Stadium will influence the future of inclusive design across Australia. With its commitment to gender neutrality, accessibility, and cultural respect, the project will inspire a new generation of public spaces that are welcoming, safe, and empowering for all.

CASE STUDY



EQUITY INSPIRES INNOVATION: BLUESCOPE LAND TRANSFORMATION PROJECT

Location: Port Kembla, Wollongong, Dharawal, Wadi Wadi, and Yuin Peoples' Land

Sector: Urban Development, Education, Industry, and Public Space

Landscape Architecture Firm: Hassell

Project Lead: Jason Cuffe

Team Members: Elena Mehrabani, Josh Small, Chloe Walsh, Yue Rao, Naomi Chan, Jon Hazelwood, Samantha Peart.

Client: BlueScope Steel, ColonySix (Development Manager)

Collaborators: Bjarke Ingels Group (BIG), Architectus, Woods Bagot, Northrop, Arup, Bangawarra

Key Stakeholders: BlueScope Workforce, Educational Institutions, Port Kembla Residents, Local Communities



BlueScope No.1 Works Aerial View artist impression, supplied by Colony Six

The BlueScope Land Transformation Project spans 20 hectares and serves as the catalyst for Project Emily, a large-scale redevelopment of over 200 hectares of BlueScope's surplus land in Port Kembla, Dharawal, Wadi Wadi, and Yuin Peoples' Land.

Designed as a hub for innovation and community development, it will include facilities for BlueScope, industry partners, educational institutions, research, and a purpose-built TAFE. A complex

site, the redevelopment faces challenges with an industrial setting, addressing perceptions of BlueScope's environmental impact, and extending beyond historically male-dominated spaces to ensure the project embraces and benefits all community members. The precinct aims to revitalise this industrial land, creating opportunities and economies for local communities, one that supports a low-carbon future for steel.

"7 Switches" to be activated in BlueScope Land Transformation Project

1

Represented and engaged end to end:

The project will initiate a co-design process involving diverse stakeholder groups, including local communities and BlueScope's workforce. These groups, particularly women and underrepresented populations, will actively shape the design, embedding inclusive and holistic solutions from the outset. Involvement of local Indigenous communities will be central in representing the land's heritage in the design.

2

Visible, understood, respected, and valued:

Balanced representation within the project team and design reviews will ensure diverse voices are heard. Public spaces will be designed to respect the cultural heritage of Indigenous communities, incorporating art and cultural elements that reflect local traditions and foster a sense of belonging.

3

Health and safety without compromise:

Safety will be prioritised through thoughtful spatial planning and lighting design, enhancing security and accessibility, particularly for women and vulnerable populations. Public areas will be designed with visibility and safety in mind, creating well-lit and secure environments to ensure all users feel safe.

4

Customised and accessible:

The precinct's public spaces will embrace equitable design, with spatial layouts and materials chosen to ensure accessibility and dignity for all users. This will include gender-diverse and accessible bathrooms, pathways, and meeting areas that accommodate a wide range of community members, including those with disabilities.

5

Progressive and supported:

The project will explore innovative technologies and regenerative design principles aimed to be led by Country that deliver both environmental sustainability and educational opportunities. The design will encourage workplace equality, offering adaptable spaces that meet the diverse needs of industry partners, educational institutions, and the local community.

6

Free and empowered:

Physical and virtual models will be used during user testing to ensure the design meets diverse community needs. This will empower users to actively participate in the development process, ensuring the precinct provides inclusive and accessible spaces that support independent and community-based activities.

7

Invested in:

The BlueScope Land Transformation project will serve as a benchmark for equitable landscape design, demonstrating a long-term commitment to fair and sustainable development in the Wollongong region. Investments in gender-responsive technologies and community-driven design will ensure the precinct continues to serve diverse populations for generations to come.



Future Outcomes and Impact

The BlueScope Land Transformation will set a new standard for the redevelopment of industrial precincts. By prioritising community engagement, it will create safer, more accessible spaces that support innovation, learning, and wellbeing, in a setting that regenerates Country and exemplifies equity by design. The project will boost public safety and community participation, shaping a sustainable and welcoming environment for all.



Lessons Learned

The project highlights the need for early stakeholder engagement, particularly with underrepresented groups, to ensure diverse perspectives are incorporated from the start. Designing for dignity practices have shown that addressing gender, accessibility, and cultural needs fosters more welcoming environments and strengthens community ties. This approach can mitigate the challenges industrial precincts face in redefining traditionally male-dominated sectors.



Looking Ahead

Future projects can build on these strategies by embedding designing for dignity from inception, using empathy mapping and co-design workshops to stay aligned with community needs. Post-occupancy evaluations will guide continuous improvements, ensuring long-term adaptability and relevance to evolving societal needs.



Masterplan aerial view, supplied by Colony Six



Project team site visit



Existing site



CASE STUDY



BUILDING EQUITABLE CITIES: DESIGNING THROUGH QUANTIFYING COMMUNITY VOICES

Location: Multiple urban spaces across Greater Sydney. Work completed on Gadigal Country

Sector: Urban Design and Public Space Planning

Architecture Firm: SJB

Project Lead: Jordan Mathers (SJB), Mohammed Makki (UTS), Linda Matthews (UTS), Nimish Bilorla (UTS) and James Melsom (UTS)

Team Members: Jonathan Knapp (SJB), Frankie Layson (SJB), Marlin Hannam (SJB), Blake Raymond (SJB & UTS), Kim Ricafort (UTS), Jacky Cheung (UTS).

Collaborators: University of Technology Sydney (UTS)

Key Stakeholders: Community members





“Quantifying Quality” is an innovative research project led by SJB in collaboration with the University of Technology Sydney. The project aims to disrupt traditional urban design by quantifying the quality of public spaces based on community input and advanced computational design.

By integrating both qualitative and quantitative data, the project develops a responsive design process that truly reflects community desires, enhancing the sustainability and wellbeing of urban spaces. By correlating qualitative data via community engagement (personal), with quantitative data (social/cultural, built and natural), we can determine the most valuable aspects, or dominant factors, that define the quality of public space. With those findings, we can use generative design to optimise a design solution that is more responsive to local communities, designed for a place or community-based outcome.

Traditional urban design methodologies often fail to capture the nuanced needs and preferences of diverse community members, especially women and gender-diverse individuals. “Quantifying Quality” addresses these gaps by employing a three-stage process:

- **Analyse:** Using a web-based image survey to gather community perceptions of public spaces.
- **Generate:** Applying machine learning to generate design solutions that incorporate community feedback.
- **Visualise:** Using artificial intelligence (AI) to visualise optimal design solutions, ensuring they are both practical and appealing.

This approach ensures that the planning and redesign of public spaces are democratic, equitable, and grounded in the real needs and preferences of the people who use them daily.



"7 Switches" activated in the Quantifying Quality Methodology

1

Represented and engaged end to end:

This approach begins the design process with deep community engagement. It uses tools like empathy mapping, web-based image surveys, and crowd-sourced data to ensure that diverse voices and perspectives influence the project from the start. By involving the community early, design outcomes become more aligned with their real-world needs and desires.

2

Visible, understood, respected, and valued:

The process incorporates feedback and data from all demographics, including gender, cultural, and age diversity, ensuring that each group feels represented. Qualitative data is used to capture and reflect the values and experiences of the community, so the final design fosters a sense of belonging and respect for all users.

3

Health and safety without compromise:

The quantitative approach can inform how to prioritise the safety and wellbeing of all users by incorporating the right amount of features such as lighting, visibility, accessibility, and natural elements into the design. Data and modelling can ensure and test that public space designs provide comfort, security, and equitable design for vulnerable groups like women and children, benefitting the community as a whole.

4

Customised and accessible:

Data on needs and preferences can help designs to accommodate a wide range of physical abilities, neurodiversity, and sensory needs. This includes making spaces physically accessible, creating adaptable areas, and ensuring that materials and environments are supportive of diverse user needs.

5

Progressive and supported:

Using advanced technologies, like AI and machine learning, help to optimise design solutions to better meet the community's qualitative and quantitative needs. This data-driven approach allows for flexible, forward-thinking designs that can be adjusted based on community feedback and iterative review.

6

Free and empowered:

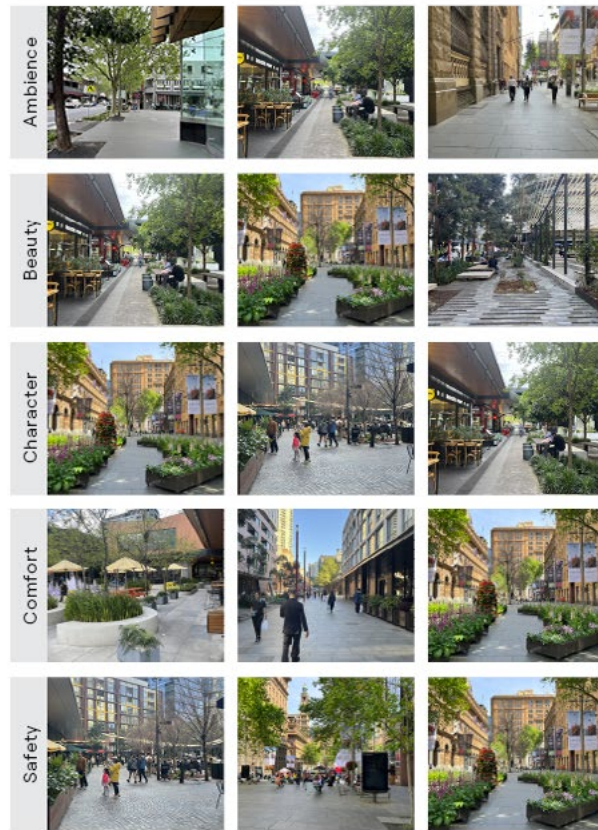
The process itself uses community feedback at its core to ensure that community members feel empowered in the design process and their needs are met in the design outcome.

7

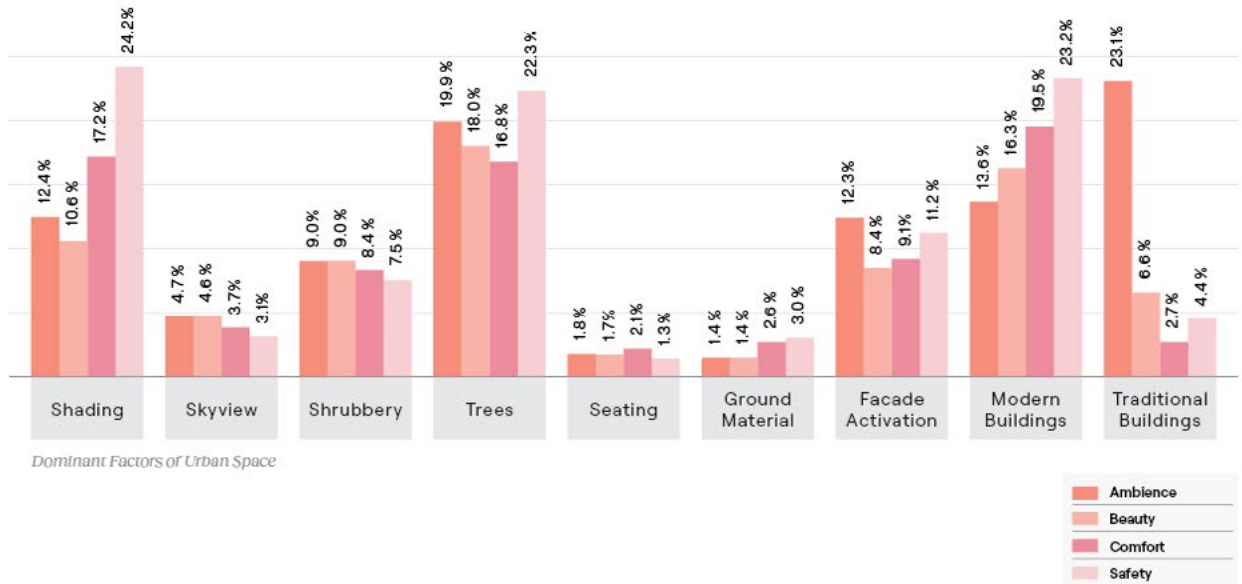
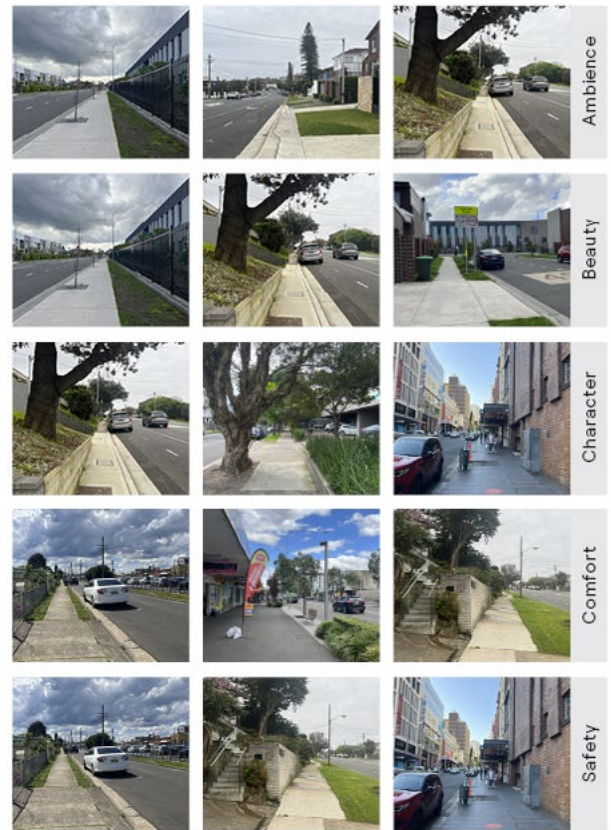
Invested in:

The research project provided a new methodology to quantify the business case for public investments. By using data-informed metrics that gather community insight and values, design options are measured against deliverables, ensuring informed decisions that respond to and benefit the communities they are designed to serve.

BEST IMAGES



WORST IMAGES





Outcomes and Impact

The implementation of the “Quantifying Quality” approach leads to the creation of highly equitable, economically sustainable, and enduring public spaces designed to cater to a broader demographic. Key outcomes for projects can include:

- Enhanced community engagement in the design process, transforming qualitative research into quantitative data, ensuring that public spaces are a true reflection of the diverse community’s needs.
- Improved safety, accessibility, and enjoyment of urban spaces, contributing to a higher quality of life for all city dwellers.
- Adaptability to various scales and scenarios, from designing safer plazas for gender-diverse populations to enhancing transport corridors for better amenity access. This flexibility ensures the methodology can be applied universally across different design challenges.



Lessons Learned

“Quantifying Quality” highlights the importance of incorporating a wide range of community voices in the urban design process, particularly those of women and gender-diverse individuals who are often underrepresented. Future recommendations focus on:

- Continuing to refine the data-driven approach to urban design to ensure it remains sensitive to the evolving needs of urban populations.
- Expanding the application of this innovative methodology to other cities and communities to promote equitable and sustainable urban development globally.
- Embed a more nuanced approach to place-making in planning controls that takes into account community feedback and is based on both quantitative and qualitative factors.



Looking Ahead

The project sets a precedent for future urban design initiatives worldwide, demonstrating that equitable design is not only about accommodating needs but about actively shaping urban spaces that celebrate diversity and foster community wellbeing. As cities continue to grow and diversify, “Quantifying Quality” will serve as a blueprint for creating more equitable and enjoyable urban environments.

Reference:

SJB and UTS (2024) *Quantifying Quality: the pursuit to define what makes a great public space*

TOOLS AND RESOURCES

Now that we've explored real-world examples through the case studies, this section includes specific practical strategies to bring Equity by Design to life.

Using "7 Switches" as a bias-checking tool, two spaces at the frontier of gender-equitable design are explored—safe, public urban spaces that challenge gendered roles in society—and the public bathroom, where inequity in building standards is highlighted, and safe, gender- and body-diverse facilities are advocated as the norm. Practical tools and references are also included in this section.

HOW THE DESIGN OF PUBLIC SPACES CAN PROMOTE GENDER EQUITY

Public spaces reflect a community's values and priorities. Often shaped by historical and persistent inequality, the design of these spaces plays a critical role in fostering a more equitable society. Gender-aware planning and transformative design have been shown to improve safety, accessibility, and overall wellbeing for communities.

For example, Vienna's Aspern Seestadt project integrates gender equality into its design by naming streets after notable women and prioritising caregivers and families with safety and accessibility in mind¹⁷. This creates spaces that support diverse roles and experiences, fostering greater inclusion and participation. Similarly, Arup's *Cities Alive* report demonstrates how accessible facilities, like childcare centres, can help share domestic responsibilities more equitably between men and women.¹⁸

Dr Nicole Kalms' research in *She City* explores how urban spaces often leave women and girls vulnerable to exclusion and violence. Studies show that better lighting, clear sightlines, and active community involvement can make public spaces safer for everyone. For example, XYX Lab found that lighting design needs to consider factors like brightness and uniformity to avoid making women feel more exposed or unsafe.¹⁹

By intentionally designing public spaces through these gender-aware lenses, we can foster environments that not only help create safe places but also actively invite women and girls to participate, contribute, and thrive. This proactive approach not only addresses past inequities but also creates new opportunities for all to connect, contribute and engage within their communities.



Newcastle East End, SJB, Durbach Block Jagers, Tonkin Zulaikha Greer and ASPECT Studios

17. New York Times. (2024). *Can Urban Design Have a Gender? In This Vienna District, the Answer Is Yes*. Available at: www.nytimes.com/2024/07/17/realestate/vienna-aspern-seestadt-gender.html

18. Arup (2022) *Cities Alive, designing cities that work for women* www.arup.com/perspectives/publications/research/section/cities-alive-designing-cities-that-work-for-women

19. Kalms, N. (2024). *She City: Designing Out Women's Inequity in Cities*, Bloomsbury

Using “7 Switches” to improve equity in the design of public spaces



Represented and engaged end to end

- Engage women and underrepresented groups in brief-making stages and throughout the design and planning process through community workshops and forums, providing a framework and governance for urban spaces to reflect diverse needs and perspectives.



Visible, understood, respected, and valued

- Highlight local histories and truth-telling by incorporating First Nations and women's contributions to the community. This can be done through the design of spaces, regenerative response to Country, public art, wayfinding and educational elements in city spaces.



Health and safety without compromise

- Design public spaces with safety front of mind. Consider features like quality lighting, emergency call stations, and accessible walkways that cater to people of all abilities and caregivers.
- Undertake further consultation to test designs with diverse stakeholders and crime-prevention experts.



Customised and accessible

- Place early learning centres near workplaces or in residential areas to support carers, reflecting a commitment to child and family-friendly urban environments.
- Plan urban elements such as parks, transportation, and public buildings to be accessible to people of all ages, abilities and cultural needs. Facilities like playgrounds and elderly care areas that are thoughtfully designed to include everyone reflect a community that values its members throughout all stages of life.
- Ensure public spaces respond to neurodiverse needs, including spaces for respite and sensory discovery.
- Shape public spaces to provide choice and ongoing adaptability with flex across the day, the year and special events.



Progressive and supported

- Implement smart city solutions that improve urban living and enhance public services through technology. This could include everything from traffic management systems that reduce congestion and pollution to public Wi-Fi networks that improve digital access for all citizens. For example, apps that provide real-time public transit updates and security features can help women feel safer while using city transportation.
- Implement emergency call buttons and good lighting in parks, parking lots, and transit stations.
- Focus on safe, well-lit green spaces and pedestrian-friendly pathways that encourage physical activity and social interaction in a secure environment.



Free and empowered

- Develop public transport systems that are accessible and user-friendly, with features like real-time updates and accessible vehicles, promoting independence for all users.
- Promote public transportation options that are safe for women at all hours, which is crucial for those who rely on these systems for commuting to work or accessing services outside of 9am-5pm.

7

Invested in

- Develop urban areas where essential amenities like supermarkets, healthcare, childcare and recreational facilities are within a short walk from residential areas, reducing travel time and promoting equitable access for all residents, particularly women and those with caregiving responsibilities. This setup supports a balanced sharing of domestic responsibilities between genders by facilitating easier access to daily needs.
- Implement progressive housing policies that provide affordable, quality housing options for all, including vulnerable populations such as single parents, the elderly, low-income families, and people with disabilities. This supports social stability and economic mobility.
- Create opportunities for local businesses and artisans to thrive by integrating market spaces and pop-up venues in urban plans. Supporting local economies not only helps in sustaining cultural heritage but also values the economic contributions of all community members.



Image source: AJC

HOW THE DESIGN OF THE PUBLIC BATHROOM CAN PROMOTE GENDER EQUITY

Bathrooms are essential spaces in discussions about equitable design. While they serve basic functions, their design can significantly influence accessibility, safety, and comfort for all users.

Unfortunately, current Australian building codes fall short on best practice guidelines to address specific gendered needs. This gap highlights the importance of creating bathrooms that are not only functional and safe, but also cater to the varied physiological needs, privacy concerns, patterns of use and equitable design requirements of all genders.

As awareness grows, architects and designers are championing a shift toward amenities that truly accommodate everyone. This movement goes beyond compliance; it involves a thoughtful integration of design features that consider a wide spectrum of human needs. By doing so, we can transform bathrooms from purely functional spaces into areas that promote safety, dignity, and comfort, enhancing the overall experience for every user.

This progressive approach meets fundamental needs and also respects and acknowledges the diversity of users. As we continue to push the boundaries of traditional design, the commitment to equitable design becomes a cornerstone in developing public spaces that respect the needs of all individuals.

Challenging inequity in building codes and standards

Current building codes are underperforming, making it essential to consider a wide range of factors in the design of public amenities. For example, all-gender amenities are only permitted if gendered facilities are provided. This limited approach to legislation contradicts a psychologically safe approach to gender-diverse amenities. Another example is that the net number of toilets provided for women under the National Construction Code is often less than that for men, yet women frequent the bathrooms 1.3 times more than men and use it for 1.6 times longer, with the probability of queuing for women 34 times higher than for men. A study by the Australian Building Codes Board suggests that the ratio of female to male facilities should be 1.8:1.0, rather than the current average ratio of 1.0:1.25.²⁰ To meet the diverse needs of all users, building codes must evolve to reflect these findings and ensure equitable access and comfort for everyone.

Jiaxing CIFI Plaza bathroom. Image source: Hassell



20. Australia Building Codes Board (2024), *Adequacy of Female Public Sanitary Facilities Impact Analysis*. Available at: www.abcb.gov.au/sites/default/files/resources/2024/Sanitary-Facility-Impact-analysis.pdf

Using "7 Switches" to improve equity in the design of the public bathroom

1

Represented and engaged end to end

- Involve diverse user groups in the design of shared amenities.
- Undertake research to be informed on best practice, visiting built examples where possible.
- Collaborate with experts on gender and accessibility.
- Tap into gender-disaggregated data related to current and predicted facilities usage.
- Be open to layering the bathroom precinct with additional support spaces such as feeding rooms, baby change facilities, end-of-trip facilities, and prayer rooms.

2

Visible, understood, respected, and valued

- Ensure privacy and dignity through thoughtful design that invites individual choice in a safe and equitable environment.
- Move beyond legislation to consider all-gender facilities with shared or enclosed washbasins.
- Consider gender-segregated bathrooms in response to safety concerns.
- Be open to separate urinal and toilet pan facilities.
- Provide different-sized bias bathrooms to suit a variety of body types.
- Provide specific child and adult shared bathrooms with space to store a pram and change a baby.
- Design accessible bathrooms beautifully, equal in quality to all bathroom types.
- Provide bathrooms with space for a carer and privacy for the user.
- Consider a variety of toilet types, such as squat toilets, smart toilets and bidets, preferred by many for cultural and health benefits.
- Provide wash facilities to enable the practise of wudu, ritual cleansing performed by Muslims before Salat (prayers).

3

Health and safety without compromise

- Equip bathrooms with free menstrual products.
- Provide space for sanitary and incontinence waste disposal units in all cubicles, including male bathrooms.
- Incorporate small handwashing basins within cubicles to facilitate the private and hygienic handling of menstrual cups, catheters, and other personal hygiene products.
- Enhance ventilation systems to improve air quality and manage odours.
- Ensure that entry and exit paths to restrooms are well-lit and visible to discourage unsafe conditions and ensure users feel secure, provide at least two entry and exit points in all gender toilet precincts.
- Ensure non-slip floors to bathrooms and wet areas meet the needs of the elderly or those with reduced mobility.
- Manage sight lines into bathroom areas to ensure safety and privacy, use mirrors for improved visibility around corners.
- Ensuring the upkeep and cleanliness of amenities is vital, mitigating unwelcome behaviours like drug use and vandalism, conducting regular cleaning and maintenance.

4

Customised and accessible

- Use language-neutral signage with universally recognised icons to guide users.
- Install adjustable sinks and counters to accommodate users of different heights and abilities.
- Consider automatic or touchless faucets, soap dispensers and dryers to assist those with limited hand mobility and to promote hygiene and ease of use.
- Ensure appropriate placement of grab bars and other fixtures.
- Provide adequate space for wheelchair users, mobility aid users, parents with strollers, and others with mobility needs.

5

Progressive and supported

- Provide gender-neutral child and carer restrooms, equipped with changing stations, safety seats, and child-sized facilities, with space to store prams and other equipment.
- Provide gender-neutral feeding and care rooms, ideally with access to natural light. Equip with locking doors, comfortable seating ideally with armrests, access to clean running water, hand washbasins, and sinks to clean breast pumps and feeding equipment. Additional amenities could include a small refrigerator for storing milk, microwave for heating milk or food, electrical outlets for breast pumps, and play equipment for children.

6

Free and empowered

- Install cubicles with doors and walls that extend to the floor to enhance privacy and comfort, crucial for women, transgender individuals, and cultural groups valuing modesty.
- Provide acoustic separation and background audio for additional privacy.

7

Invested in

- Invest in bathroom facilities that respond to gendered use patterns.
- Design layouts that reduce congestion and support easy access for all users, particularly during peak times.



Changing places accessible bathroom. Image source: COX

PLANNING FOR EQUITY BY DESIGN TEMPLATE

1

Project objectives and scope

Project goals: Briefly describe what the project aims to achieve, focusing on equitable design, sustainability and social impact goals.

- **Project scope:** Describe the project scope and key deliverables and timeframes.
- **Deliverables:** List all project deliverables, including specific design outputs that enhance equity.
- **Exclusions:** Clearly state what is outside the scope of the project to avoid scope creep.

2

Relevant Equity by Design principles

Select relevant design principles from the "7 Switches", for example

- **Co-design:** Design with, not for, by involving diverse individuals.
- **Gender-aware:** Proactively challenge gender norms and inequalities, creating inclusive spaces that address power dynamics, equitable access, safety, and opportunities for all genders.
- **Inviting spaces:** Design spaces that are welcoming and engaging for all, accommodating for cultural and religious diversity that embraces community interaction.
- **Funding prioritisation:** Allocate budgets specifically for gender-aware design across the end-to-end project lifecycle.

3

Stakeholder engagement

- **Team members:** ensure gender balance and diversity of cultures, disciplines, neurodiversity and skill sets.
- **Stakeholders:** Identify the community members or customers that will use the space and articulate the diversity of their needs.
- **Identification:** List key stakeholders, including community groups, gender diversity advocates, and potential users with diverse needs.
- **Engagement strategy:** Outline how stakeholders will be engaged throughout the project (e.g. surveys, workshops, focus groups).

4

Research and data gathering

- **Data needs:** Identify the types of data required, emphasising gender-disaggregated and diversity data.
- **Research methods:** Detail the methods for collecting data, ensuring they are diverse and reach underrepresented groups.
- **Analysis plans:** Describe how data will be analysed to inform the design process, highlighting diverse needs and potential barriers.

5

Design phase

- **Initial designs:** Develop initial design concepts that incorporate equitable design principles.
- **Feedback loops:** Establish processes for obtaining and incorporating feedback from a diverse range of users.
- **Revisions:** Plan for multiple revision phases, incorporating feedback to refine designs.

6

Implementation strategy

- **Pilot tests:** Outline plans for pilot-testing designs with diverse user groups to evaluate function and performance.
- **Implementation steps:** Detail the steps for full-scale implementation, including timelines and responsible parties.
- **Accessibility checks:** Ensure all elements are accessible and meet the defined design criteria.

7

Monitoring and evaluation

- **Success metrics:** Define what success looks like, articulating performance for equitable design.
- **Evaluation methods:** Describe how the impact of the design will be evaluated and measured.
- **Continuous improvement:** Plan for ongoing assessments and modifications based on user feedback and evolving needs.

8

Budget

- **Estimates:** Provide a detailed budget that accommodates funding allocated for equitable design features and stakeholder engagement.
- **Funding sources:** Identify potential funding sources, highlighting any dedicated to promoting diversity and equitable design.

9

Risk management

- **Risk identification:** List potential risks that could impact the implementation of equitable design in the project.
- **Mitigation strategies:** Outline strategies to mitigate identified risks, particularly those that could adversely affect underrepresented groups.

10

Documentation and reporting

- **Documentation standards:** Ensure documentation is accessible and transparent.
- **Reporting schedule:** Set a schedule for updating stakeholders on project progress, including updates on equitable design.



Image source: Hassell

EQUITY BY DESIGN

RESEARCH AND ADVOCACY



Community consultation. Image source: SJB

This section provides a deeper dive into the research and methodologies that have shaped Equity by Design.

Following the practical insights and case studies explored earlier, this literature review brings together leading frameworks and resources that offer detailed guidance on embedding gender-aware and equitable design principles into the built environment.

Australian research and methodologies

1. **XYX Lab at Monash University** is a standout in the field, focusing on gender-sensitive urban design. Its research explores the intersection of gender, identity, and urban space, actively bringing together planners, policymakers, and local governments to address the needs of underrepresented communities. ([Monash University](#)). Dr Nicole Kalms, a leading expert on the topic has also published *She City: Designing Out Women's Inequity in Cities* which questions how gender shapes the making of urban spaces and our experiences within them.
2. The **Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector, Victoria**, has a number of resources to facilitate the development of Gender Impact Statements for public sector organisations, local councils and universities, these include [Applying a Gender Impact Assessment to the Design of a Health Facility](#) and [Gender Impact Assessments in Shaping Future Cities](#).
3. In **New South Wales**, the government has launched the **Great Places Toolkit** as part of its **Safer Cities** program. This toolkit is designed to enable the creation of vibrant, inclusive public spaces that cater to a diverse population, including [Guidelines for Gender-Inclusive Placemaking](#). ([Transport for NSW](#))
4. The **Hopkin's Centre** in collaboration with **Cross River Rail Delivery Authority** published a **Toolkit for Embedding Accessibility Co-design** into the Delivery of Public Transport Infrastructure incorporating an accessibility co-design approach into the delivery of new public transport infrastructure. This approach was used by **Hassell**, outlining when and how co-design can be integrated into delivering public transport infrastructure. ([Hopkins Centre](#))
5. The **ACT government** in collaboration with **Oculus** has a series of resources including **Gender Sensitive Urban Design Guidelines, Framework and Implementation Toolkit** that provide practical guides for addressing public realm inequalities, challenges, and recommendations to resolve these. ([Oculus](#))
6. The **Victorian State Government for Sport and Recreation** has published a [Design for Everyone Guide for Sport and Recreation Settings](#) which has detailed application of Universal Design principles including for gender sensitivity and equitable access across all aspects of indoor and outdoor facility design.
7. The **City of Whittlesea's Gender Equity in Design Guidelines** provides an understanding of community facility settings and practical application of gender equity principles. It offers guidance on how to apply a gender equity lens during the feasibility, master planning, and design phases for new community facilities, as well as in the redevelopment and refurbishment of existing facilities. ([City of Whittlesea](#))

International

1. **Arup's *Cities Alive: Designing cities that work for women*** reflects on how urban design and lighting can make cities safer and more equitable for women and girls. ([Arup](#)).
2. **The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA)** has developed an ***Inclusive Design Overlay*** as part of the RIBA Plan of Work to guide the incorporation of equitable design principles throughout all stages of construction projects. ([Royal Institute of British Architects](#)).
3. **The World Bank's *Handbook for Gender-Inclusive Urban Design Planning*** aims to fill the gap between gender-equitable policy and practice, and respond to the historic exclusion of women, girls, and sexual and gender minorities from the processes of urban planning and design. [WB Handbook](#)
4. **Centre for Excellence in Universal Design** promotes Universal Design across various settings, including public buildings, homes, and early learning environments. Their work, such as the very comprehensive [Building for Everyone](#) guide produced in Ireland, provides extensive best practices for creating universally accessible environments. ([UniversalDesignExcellence](#)).
5. **American Society of Landscape Architects (ASLA)** advocates for Universal Design in public outdoor spaces, focusing on creating accessible, comfortable, and participatory landscapes. This approach not only accommodates people with disabilities but also addresses the needs of other underserved communities. ([ASLA](#)).
6. **High Line Network's *Embedding Equity in Public Space*** provides a toolkit for equitable design of infrastructure, specifically addressing racial, gender, age and other biases, in partnership with Harvard Graduate School of Design and Urban Institute. ([Highline Network](#))
7. **Stalled!** is an advocacy group for the design of all-gender bathrooms with shared washbasin facilities. Stalled! advocates for safety through surveillance and visibility to eliminate the trauma of many that gendered bathrooms can bring. www.stalled.online

Further resources are contained in the following section.

FURTHER READING AND RESOURCES

ACT Government (2023). *Gender Sensitive Urban Design Toolkit*. Available at: https://hdp-au-prod-app-act-yoursay-files.s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/4116/9017/9791/GSUD_Implementation_Toolkit-access-v2.pdf.

Arup (2022) *Cities Alive, designing cities that work for women* www.arup.com/perspectives/publications/research/section/cities-alive-designing-cities-that-work-for-women

Centre for Excellence in Universal Design (2024). *Building for Everyone: A universal design approach* https://universaldesign.ie/uploads/publications/Entire-Series-Books-1_10.pdf

City of Whittlesea (2017). *Gender Equity in Design Guidelines*. www.mav.asn.au/_data/assets/pdf_file/0016/7306/Whittlesea-City-Council-Gender-Equity-in-Design-Guidelines.pdf

Hopkin's Centre in Collaboration with Cross River Rail Delivery Authority (2023) *Cross River Rail Toolkit: Embedding Accessibility Co-design into the Delivery of Public Transport Infrastructure* https://cross-river-rail.s3.ap-southeast-2.amazonaws.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/12/21084522/231219-Hopkins-Co-Design-Toolkit-Accessible_v17.pdf

New South Wales Government (2024) *Great Places Toolkit*. Available at: www.transport.nsw.gov.au/system/files/media/documents/2024/Great-Places-Toolkit-Draft-Community-Survey-Tool.pdf

Royal Institute of British Architects (2023). *Inclusive Design Overlay for the RIBA Plan of Work*. Available at: www.architecture.com/knowledge-and-resources/resources-landing-page/inclusive-design-overlay-to-riba-plan-of-work

Terraza, H., Orlando, M.B., Lakovits, C., Lopes Janik, V. and Kalashyan, A. (2020). *Handbook for Gender-Inclusive Urban Planning and Design*. Washington, DC: World Bank. Available at: World Bank Open Knowledge Repository. <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/handle/10986/33197>

Transport New South Wales (2002). *Great Public Spaces Toolkit*. Available at: www.transport.nsw.gov.au/industry/cities-and-active-transport/cities-revitalisation-and-place/great-public-spaces-toolkit-1

University of Cambridge (2023). *Inclusive Design Toolkit*. Available at: www.inclusivedesigntoolkit.com/whatis/whatis.html.

Victorian State Government Department of Sport and Recreation (2024). *Design for Everyone Guide*. Available at: <https://sport.vic.gov.au/resources/design-for-everyone-guide>

Women and Girls in Built Environment Lifecycle (2023). Available at: www.ihrb.org/focus-areas/built-environment/women-and-girls-at-the-centre-of-transformation-in-the-built-environment.

XYX Lab, Monash University (2023). XYX Lab webpage. Available at: www.monash.edu/mada/research/labs/xyx.

GLOSSARY

Term	Definition
Equity	In the context of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion practice, equity involves recognising and addressing the unique needs of individuals, to promote fair access and opportunity. Equity acknowledges that individuals may start from different positions due to intersectional attributes such as gender, ability, social, economic, and cultural factors. To level the playing field, equity provides specific, tailored support and resources, ensuring that everyone, regardless of ability or background, can achieve comparable outcomes and fully participate in society. This approach goes beyond equal treatment, aiming to remove barriers to create equitable and inclusive environments.
Equitable design	A design approach that acknowledges the different starting points and specific needs of various people due to gender, social, economic, or cultural factors. It aims to level the playing field by offering tailored design solutions that provide additional support or resources to those disadvantaged, ensuring that everyone, regardless of gender, can access and benefit from spaces equally. This approach goes beyond treating everyone the same by focusing on fairness and addressing systemic inequalities in the built environment.
Gender-aware design	A design approach that proactively challenges gender norms and inequalities, by creating inclusive spaces that address power dynamics and support equitable access, safety, and opportunities for all genders.
Gender-diverse	Refers to people who do not conform to conventional gender distinctions but identify across a spectrum of gender identities and expressions. Gender diversity includes individuals whose gender identity differs from the sex they were assigned at birth, those who may identify as neither exclusively male nor female, and those who may express gender in non-traditional ways. This term captures a variety of identities under the transgender umbrella, as well as those who identify as genderqueer, non-binary, and more.
Gender equality	Gender equality ensures that all people, regardless of gender, have the same rights, opportunities, freedoms and access to resources in every area of life. Gender equality implies that the interests, needs and priorities of all genders are taken into consideration to ensure equality of outcomes for all genders. This approach, as defined under international human rights frameworks such as the United Nation's <i>Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)</i> , recognises that treating individuals equally may require different support measures to achieve equal outcomes and prevent discrimination.

Term	Definition
Gender-inclusive design	A design approach that intentionally creates spaces that welcome and accommodate people of all gender identities and expressions. It focuses on fostering an environment where everyone feels represented, respected, and able to fully participate, ensuring that no one is excluded or marginalised based on gender. This approach goes beyond neutrality, seeking to celebrate and affirm gender diversity within the built environment.
Gender-neutral design	Design strategies that avoid perpetuating traditional gender stereotypes. This approach promotes the creation of spaces and products that are not specifically designed for one gender, supporting the needs and identities of all individuals, regardless of gender.
Gender-sensitive design	A design approach that specifically acknowledges and addresses the different impacts of the built environment on various genders. It aims to mitigate risks and enhance safety, access, and comfort for all genders, particularly focusing on the needs and vulnerabilities that may not be addressed by traditional design practices.
Gender transformative	An approach in the built environment that actively challenges and reshapes societal norms, roles, and power dynamics that perpetuate gender inequality. It aims to create spaces that foster equitable access, redistribute caregiving responsibilities, and empower all genders by addressing historical and social imbalances, ensuring equality across diverse identities such as race, ability, and age.
Universal design	A design framework that advocates for creating products and environments to be usable by all people, to the greatest extent possible, without the need for adaptation or specialised design.

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2. World Bank, 2020. *Handbook for Gender-Inclusive Urban Planning and Design*. Open Knowledge Repository. Available at: <https://openknowledge.worldbank.org/bitstream/handle/10986/33197/145305ov.pdf>
3. UN Women, n.d. *Gender Equality Glossary*. [online] UN Women Training Centre. Available at: <https://trainingcentre.unwomen.org/mod/glossary/view.php?id=36&mode=letter&hook=G&sortkey=&sortorder=>
4. UNICEF, 2017. *Gender Equality: Glossary of Terms and Concepts*. [pdf] Available at: www.unicef.org/rosa/media/1761/file/Genderglossarytermsandconcepts.pdf
5. ACON, 2019. *Trans and Gender Diverse Inclusive Language Guide*. [pdf] Available at: www.acon.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/TGD-Language-Guide_2019_updated.pdf
6. United Nations, 1979. *Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination Against Women (CEDAW)*. [online] Available at: www.un.org/womenwatch/daw/cedaw/cedaw.htm

