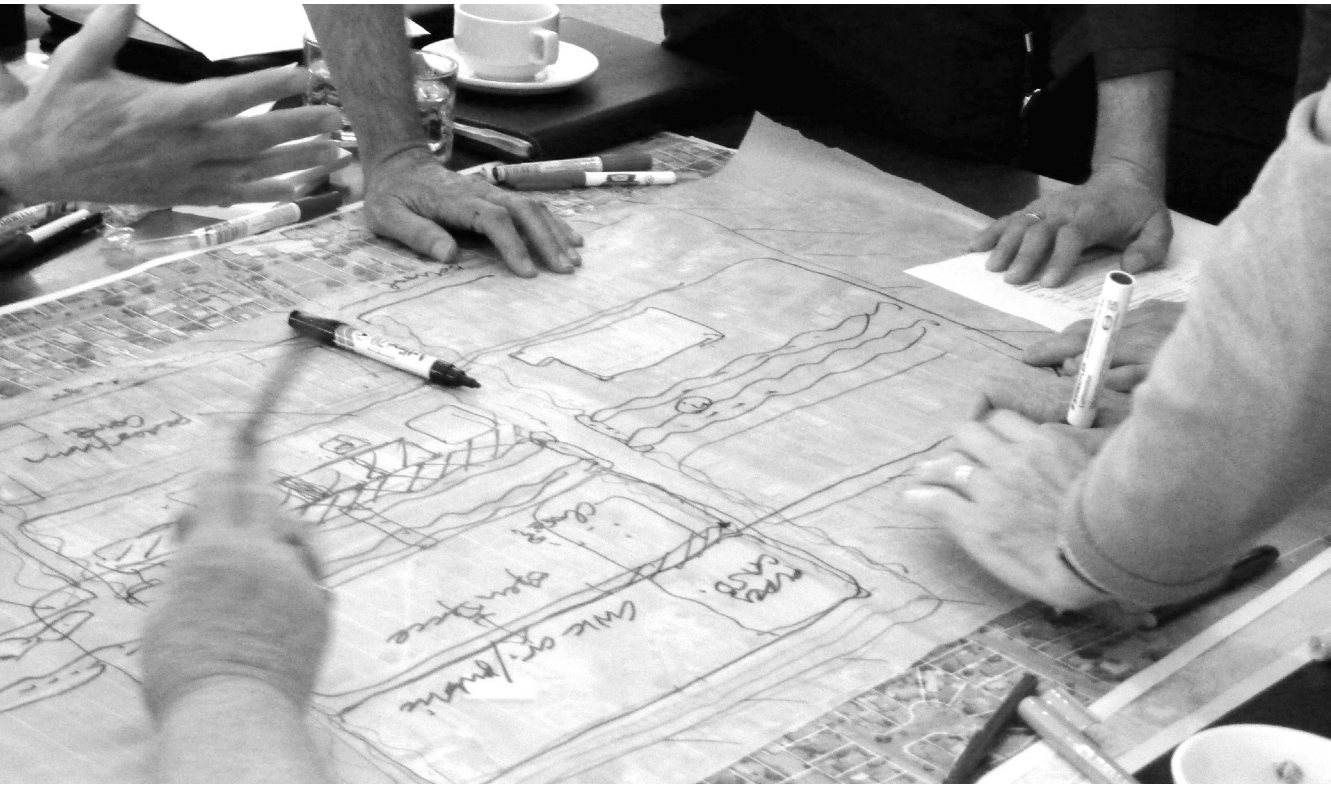




COVER IMAGE: VAULTS AND FEDERATION SQUARE  
PHOTOGRAPHY: PAUL ALLISTER FOR SIX DEGREES



## → A DECADE OF DESIGN LEADERSHIP

For a decade, the Office of the Victorian Government Architect (OVGA) has worked tirelessly with government to embed an understanding of the long term community value inherent in achieving better design outcomes across a diverse range of projects.

At times, the OVGA has operated invisibly within the constraints of confidential processes, and at other times has been both visible and vocal as advocates for design aspiration, vision and considered, intelligent change.

Government's design interventions include buildings and places that signify diverse commitments – extending to culture, sport, health, education, housing and transport. The OVGA's independent and iterative voice continues to remind government that 'design as legacy', across all project types, helps define Victoria as a place that is vibrant, economically thriving, healthy, sustainable, loved by its citizens, great to live in and visit. The OVGA's message highlights the significant responsibility to ensure change in our built environment is never dictated purely by economics, but is always overlaid by deep considerations about the quality and long term impact of the places we build, and concern for the community for whom we build.

The project stories that follow provide a snapshot of our impact. Over a decade of guidance, the OVGA has helped steer Victoria towards outcomes in our built environment that have, or will, become part of the heart and soul of our state.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Jill Garner', with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

**Jill Garner**  
Victorian Government Architect  
December 2016

## → THE FIRST DECADE

The Office of the Victorian Government Architect (OVGA) was established in 2006 within government to champion and enhance the quality of the built environment.

The legacy of the OVGA highlights, more than ever, that design in Victoria continues to play a vital role in the health and vitality of our communities.



**JOHN DENTON**  
2006–08

Renowned architect John Denton was appointed as the inaugural Victorian Government Architect (VGA) supported by Shelley Penn as the Associate (AVGA). Their first task was to establish a conversation about design's value at the state level and with local governments across Victoria. Denton promoted the value of design through a celebration of best practice and exemplary case studies. Critically, he initiated a shift in how the design for major Government projects is procured, improving transparency, and ensuring design was central to the decision-making process.

Appointment:  
John Denton –  
VGA

Publication:  
*Good Design*  
series

Appointment:  
Geoffrey London –  
VGA

OVGA supports  
the foundation of  
South Australia  
and Tasmania  
Government  
Architects based  
on Victoria's  
success

Appointment:  
Jill Garner –  
AVGA

Appointment:  
Emma Appleton –  
Director VDRP

Appointment:  
Shelley Penn –  
AVGA

Establishment:  
VDRP

Establishment:  
OVGA –  
Department of  
Premier and  
Cabinet





## GEOFFREY LONDON

2008–14

Geoffrey London followed Denton in 2008, bringing to the role his experience as the Western Australia Government Architect and a distinguished academic background. He focused particularly on critical emerging issues such as housing affordability, density and quality. London championed the role of government as a smart client and continued to advocate for improved procurement processes. He promoted the value of design review, establishing the Victorian Design Review Panel (VDRP) to provide advice for significant projects. London shared the office's learnings through a series of publications.



## JILL GARNER

2015–Present

Jill Garner took the helm in 2015 with a reputation for sensitive and finely crafted residential and civic architecture from her own successful practice. Garner brings a discerning sense of materiality and the need for attention to detail. In her role as Victorian Government Architect this translates into concern for the design of the places and spaces our community inhabits everyday.

Garner has overseen an increased role for the OVGA in major transport infrastructure. Garner continues to establish tailored collaborations with sectors of government that deliver significant projects.

Publication:  
*Momentum:  
New Victorian  
Architecture*

OVGA  
re-establishes  
Government  
Architects  
Network of  
Australia (GANA)

Publication:  
*Government  
as Smart Client:  
Procurement  
Guidelines*

100th VDRP  
review  
  
Publication:  
*Lessons Learned*  
series

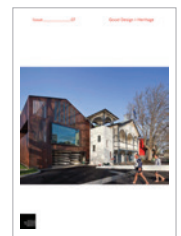
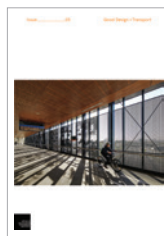
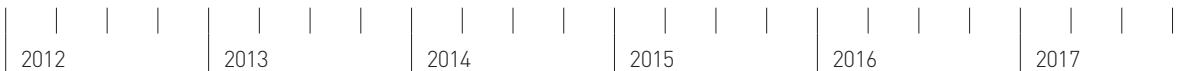
Appointment:  
Jill Garner –  
VGA

Appointment:  
Stefan Preuss –  
AVGA

200th VDRP  
review

2000 people  
attended  
design reviews

Appointment:  
Bronwen  
Hamilton –  
Manager VDRP



## → GOOD DESIGN

*“Good design is not just about the aesthetic improvement of our environment, it is as much about improved quality of life, equality of opportunity and economic growth.”*

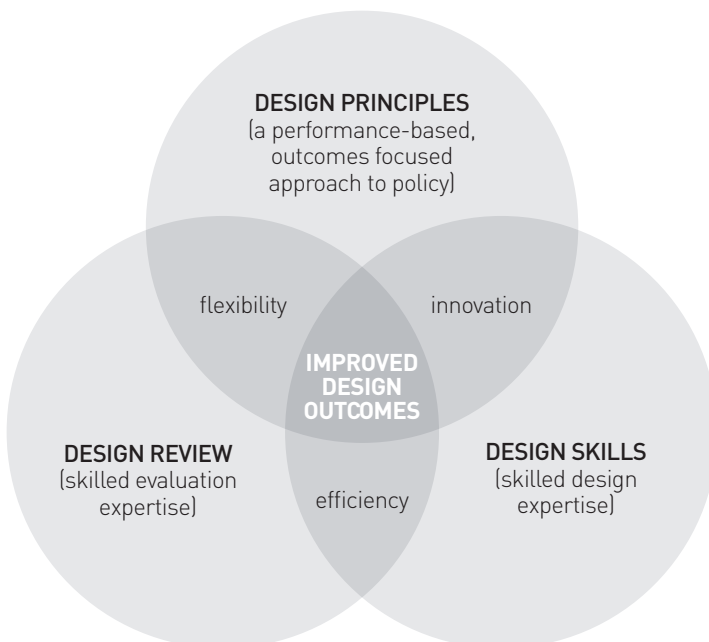
**‘The Value of Good Design’,  
Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), UK**

The qualities that make a neighbourhood safe, a building sustainable, a home delightful or a street accessible to all, is very much a matter of how it is experienced. Every building, infrastructure, urban design or landscape project is an opportunity to enhance the experience of the world around us, enriching a place and creating a sense of belonging.

Achieving good design outcomes in a fast changing world requires the application of a robust and proven set of design principles through independent review and bringing in the necessary skills to make informed decisions. While considerations, such as budget constraints or project deadlines are important, they should not compromise design quality, a life-time of operational costs or the interests of the public who may be impacted for decades to come.

The OVGA encourages high quality buildings and public spaces that:

- are engaging, diverse and inclusive;
- promote confidence, health and well-being in the community;
- are culturally rich and delightful;
- are environmentally, economically and socially sustainable; and
- are adaptable to a changing climate and championing the necessary path to zero emissions by 2050.





VERTICAL PRIMARY SCHOOL  
ARCHITECT AND ARTIST'S IMPRESSION: HAYBALL

*“With our focus sharpened by the OVGA’s expert design input, we’re creating an exceptionally high quality space that can be shared with the community so that the school is fully embedded in neighbourhood life.”*

**Richard Leonard**  
Director, Hayball

## CASE STUDY VERTICAL PRIMARY SCHOOL

With a growing population, Victoria urgently needs new schools. This poses a significant challenge when the greatest need is often in urban growth areas where available land is limited and costly. Faced with this problem in South Melbourne, the Department of Education and Training acquired a disused industrial building on a modest block, to create Victoria’s first contemporary *vertical* primary school.

The OVGA helped guide the project through a variety of design challenges, including a nearby high-pressure gas line and light rail, an unusually large community of 500 students and a priority for the school to also cater for broader community uses. This included an early learning centre and several multi-purpose sports courts.

The OVGA brokered a constructive and collaborative design discussion between the local council, architects and Department of Education and Training.

Maximising amenity, the project now features a fenceless ground-level as a shared public park, the vertical stacking of gymnasiums and the use of a mesh balustrade to provide maximum transparency within the building’s interior. To help lift both the ambition and understanding of all collaborating parties, the OVGA provided a range of internationally leading precedents.

Due for completion in 2018, the vertical primary school represents a rich and exciting learning environment, setting the example for similar schools on constrained sites.

## → ADVOCACY

As the largest procurer of buildings and infrastructure in Victoria, it is vital that government's investment in the built environment is well spent and ensures excellence in design and delivery. The OVGA has a responsibility to help government get good design outcomes for our cities, towns and neighbourhoods.

Promoting the value of good design and embedding design thinking and culture within government, the OVGA helps establish integrated and consistent design procurement and quality assurance processes that make government a *smart client*. Practically, this can take the form of workshops within government, lectures to the public, developing guidelines for design professionals or making a case for good design for specific sectors.

It can also take a more specific form when a particular project or urban initiative requires a more tailored approach such as understanding how design of a hospital can enable better patient care, how school environments can enhance student learning or how our streets can encourage more active lives. The OVGA also publishes '*good design*' guides for specific sectors such as health and education.

The OVGA provides support on the big issues impacting our built environment, from urban densities and climate change to regional growth. It also promotes the value of good design culture to a broad audience through the celebration of best practice and design achievements.

ROYAL CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL  
ARCHITECT: BATES SMART AND BILLARD LEECE  
PHOTOGRAPHY: JOHN GOLLINGS





*"I found OVGA's support of great value to help articulate the State's design aspirations, provide feedback to the design teams as the design was developed, and ensure that design integrity and quality was maintained through delivery."*

**Tony Lubofsky**  
Project Director, RCH project,  
Department of Health



ROYAL CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL  
ARCHITECT: BATES SMART AND BILLARD LEECE  
PHOTOGRAPHY: PETER BENNETTS



## CASE STUDY ROYAL CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL

When announced in 2005 the Royal Children's Hospital (RCH) was to be the largest hospital redevelopment ever undertaken in Victoria. The OVGA made an early commitment to advocate for the core values of good design; how it is experienced and embraced by patients, visitors and staff and how it connects with the surrounding landscape and neighbourhood.

The OVGA championed good design principles, including the need to optimise internal natural light and fresh air, establish a clear orientation throughout the building's large interior, and ensure that the building works well for people and building operators. The OVGA advocated for realising the clear link between patient recovery and a high-quality environment. The children's views to the nearby Royal Park were maximised, while all interiors promoted human values over technological ones.

The OVGA also advocated for the importance of the Royal Children's Hospital within its wider urban environment in Parkville's important medical, research and education precinct. The result is a building that contributes to the civic and urban context while its patients and staff benefit from generous visual and physical links to the parklands.

## → ADVICE

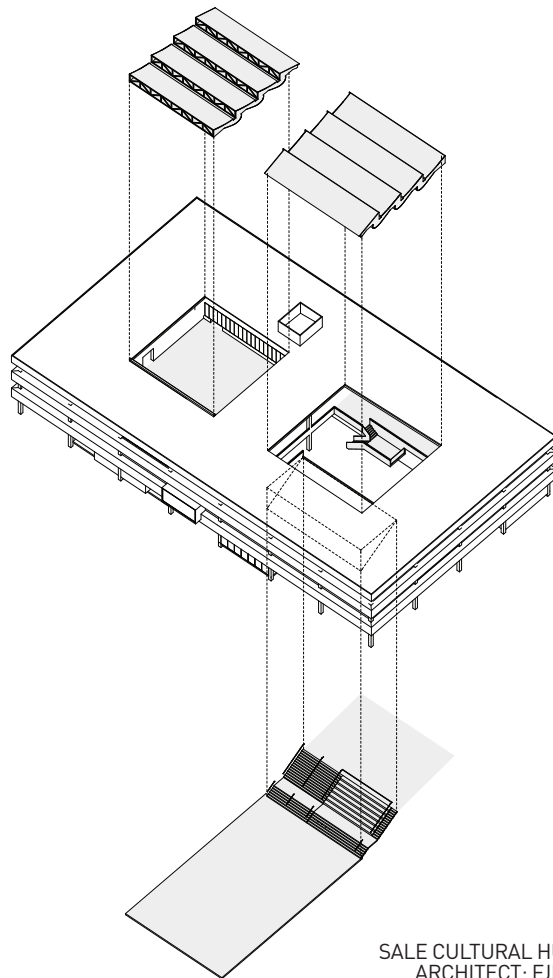
The OVGA offers a critical understanding of the processes and policies that affect the quality of outcomes in the built environment. The OVGA advises ministers, state government departments, agencies and local government on how to improve design outcomes for capital works programs, specific projects or broader planning initiatives. This is achieved by embedding design quality into every stage of a project's lifecycle from inception to realisation. The OVGA also offers advice on the development of business cases, feasibility work, project scope and budget development.

The value of OVGA's advice depends crucially on its timing. There are key stages in a project's development when precise but critical design recommendations can have a major impact on the overall project success. Typically, these stages are during drafting of the project brief, procurement of a design team, establishing of project delivery method, and finally, during sketch design and design development. As a guiding principle, the earlier advice is sought, the greater the positive impact this advice can have.

*"The OVGA assisted with the Sale Cultural Hub project by providing input to the architect tender evaluation; concept and detailed design review and impartial advice regarding suitability of pricing for consultant services.*

*We found the OVGA to be highly professional, collaborative and independent and we greatly valued its services."*

**Wellington Shire Council**



SALE CULTURAL HUB  
ARCHITECT: FJMT



## CASE STUDY SALE CULTURAL HUB

The Sale Cultural Hub will transform an under-utilised council building into a new art gallery, public library and Wellington Shire's Council Chambers. It is a complex design challenge, due to the heritage constraints involved in adapting an important, if somewhat inflexible, concrete modernist building.

The OVGA reviewed pre-existing concept plans, which limited the project's potential and recommended that Council redraft the brief and reissue the Expression of Interest with a stronger emphasis on design-based evaluation criteria. This resulted in the selection and contracting of an award-winning architectural practice with the capability to turn this significant regional project into a vibrant cultural hub.

The OVGA has continued to advise Council on the project, including supporting the successful case for additional funding to include the site's landscape, which significantly improves the hub's amenity. The OVGA also encouraged Council to use the cultural hub as a catalyst for rethinking the wider area. This is now underway through the development of a Port of Sale master plan.

Through targeted and strategic advice, the OVGA enabled and supported Council to be a smart client, broadening its understanding of the long-term value of good design.



## → DESIGN REVIEW

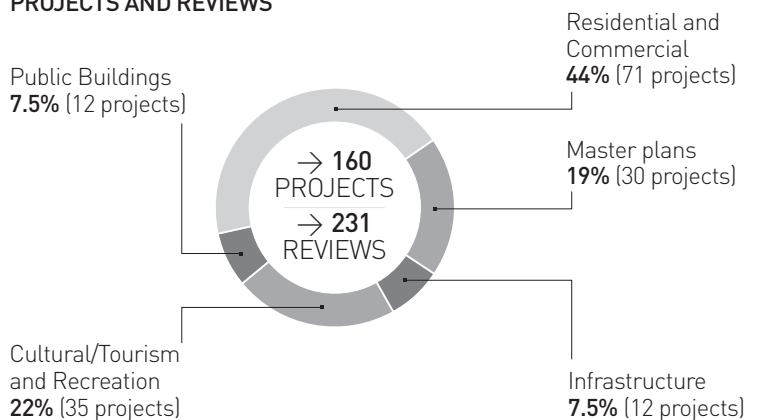
No matter how good a design team or client, projects benefit from a fresh pair of eyes and independent design advice: particularly when that advice comes from a dedicated panel of built environment experts. This is why design review is one of the key services offered by the OVGA, to ensure projects deliver maximum public benefit, best value and highest possible quality. Importantly, design review is provided under the conditions of independence and impartiality, being both accessible and accountable, and supporting projects through constructive and frank advice.

Depending on the size and complexity of the project, design review can be delivered in one of three different forms:

- For less complex projects, an agile desktop review can be undertaken by a small design review team, providing quick and considered design advice.
- The Victorian Design Review Panel (VDRP) provides a more formal framework for design review in an open constructive environment drawing on over 60 external experts.
- For projects that require a more thorough examination over time, the OVGA can establish a Design Quality Team, composed of particular specialists that advise and follow a project, often from inception to final design.



### VICTORIAN DESIGN REVIEW PANEL PROJECTS AND REVIEWS



TOTAL VALUE OF PROJECTS REVIEWED **\$18.7 BILLION**



ARCHITECT AND PHOTOGRAPHY: METIER 3

*“Working with the OVGA we developed an agreed strategy for the hotel...a proactive process that evolved into a harmonious relationship and enhanced the final outcome.”*

**Andrew Norbury, Metier 3**

#### CASE STUDY MARYSVILLE HOTEL AND CONFERENCE CENTRE

When bushfire ripped through Marysville in 2009 it left behind a devastated community. While rebuilding was an urgent necessity, it was also highly sensitive. Regional Development Victoria sought OVGA's assistance to define the aspiration for rebuilding the town's ruined conference centre and hotel. The OVGA assisted in an Expression of Interest process, and subsequently worked closely with the appointed design team, negotiating a range of complex and sensitive issues.

Located on a large and prominent site, it was important to balance the need for a confident civic gesture, while remaining respectful to the scale of the street. New stringent bushfire regulations challenged the design team to work with a sensitive approach to the use of materials. A simple yet elegant timber cladding gives the building a refined alpine design aesthetic. The hotel's immediate landscape was carefully designed and replanted to help rejuvenate the town's treescape.

Thanks to its careful redesign, the Centre is loved by the community. It is a thriving commercial enterprise, a significant local employer and testament to the power of architecture to help instill pride in a community.

## → COLLABORATION

We live in a world of increasing specialisation. With no single discipline or profession holding all the answers, the ability to work across disciplines in a collaborative way has become more important than ever. This is particularly true in the built environment, where the places we occupy are the product of multiple decisions made by planners and architects, politicians and community, urban designers and engineers.

The OVGA collaborates closely with many parts of Government on significant projects in Victoria and plays an important role in helping to build a common understanding of the inherent opportunities and impacts. Multiple parties have diverse priorities – a traffic engineer considers traffic flow, but the outcome may lead to an intersection hostile for pedestrians and detrimental to the liveability of a place. Removal of landscape may reduce maintenance, but is likely to have long term impact on the health and well being of the community.

In programs of strategic importance, the OVGA undertakes dedicated and customised collaborations. Input to complex regional and city-changing projects such as Ballarat Station and Precinct redevelopment, Melbourne and Olympic Parks and the Level Crossing Removals helps identify project aspirations, challenges and opportunities to realise high quality design from briefing through to built outcome. Projects of significant investment and impact benefit from OVGA design stewardship.

*“The innovative qualities associated with Margaret Court Arena's world class facilities would not have been possible without the direct engagement of the precinct stakeholders and the overview guidance offered by the OVGA.”*

**Hamish Lyon**  
Director Architecture and Design,  
NH Architects





TANDERRUM BRIDGE  
 ARCHITECT: JOHN WARDLE AND NADAAA  
 ARTIST'S IMPRESSION: JOHN WARDLE ARCHITECTS

*"Given the importance of the new Tanderrum Bridge within Melbourne's landscape, it is imperative that the design is enduring, fits in with the Melbourne context and becomes a legacy to its place. The OVGA played a pivotal role in helping the project team achieve this objective."*

**Lucy Carrigg**  
 Senior Project Manager,  
 Major Projects Victoria

## CASE STUDY MELBOURNE AND OLYMPIC PARKS

Melbourne and Olympic Parks is part of a globally unique sports and entertainment precinct. The park is home to several important venues, supports 1500 jobs, and hosts over 200 events a year, ranging from concerts to the internationally renowned Australian Open tennis tournament.

Alongside its commercially successful program, Melbourne and Olympic Parks must retain important civic qualities. Easy navigation, seamless universal design, links to Melbourne's pedestrian and cycling networks and a high quality landscape that caters for multiple modes of use, are all vital components of this significant place.

The OVGA provides advocacy, design review and advice on all the projects within Melbourne and Olympic Parks, extending from the landscape and practice courts of the Eastern Plaza, upgrade works on Margaret Court and Rod Laver Arenas, to changes in pedestrian paths and amenities. The OVGA works closely with each of the dedicated teams of designers across disciplines, offering feedback and advice at key moments in the process and ensures each project is understood as one component of a coherent, integrated and valuable precinct.

In collaboration with Major Projects Victoria, the OVGA coordinated a design competition collaborating with all the stakeholders to procure the design of a bridge connecting Birrarung Marr to the Melbourne and Olympic Parks precinct.

Home to the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin Nation, visitors would be granted safe passage and temporary use of the land through a ceremony called Tanderrum. The design competition resulted in the creation of Tanderrum Bridge; a wonderful and welcoming pedestrian experience from Birrarung Marr into the Melbourne and Olympic Parks precinct.

The OVGA's Design Quality Team judged the anonymous competition, responding to the filigree that wraps the bridge, offsetting its imposing concrete structure against an important existing landscape. The newly constructed bridge is a valuable sculptural addition to the landscape, and a functional delight to visitors, pedestrians and bicycle commuters.



The OVGA's Victorian Design Review Panel comprises experts in architecture, urban design, landscape architecture and planning, and specialists in sustainability, accessibility, health, place making, heritage and art.



### Accessibility

Contact us if you need this information in an accessible format: please telephone +61 3 9651 6583 or email [ovga@ovga.vic.gov.au](mailto:ovga@ovga.vic.gov.au)

This document is also available in PDF form on the internet at: [www.ovga.vic.gov.au](http://www.ovga.vic.gov.au)

Authorised and published by the Office of the Victorian Government Architect ©2016

### The Office of the Victorian Government Architect

The OVGA is an Administrative Office of the Victorian Department of Premier and Cabinet. It is staffed by a team of professionals from complementary design disciplines including architecture, planning and urban design.

Old Treasury Building  
Level 2, 20 Spring Street  
Melbourne VIC 3000

[www.ovga.vic.gov.au](http://www.ovga.vic.gov.au)

