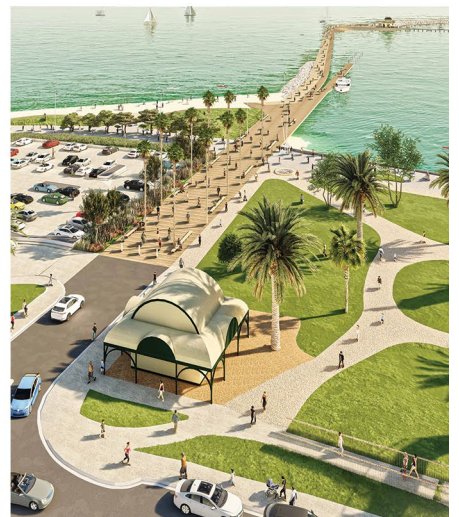


Good Design + Design Review



The Office of the Victorian Government Architect provides leadership and strategic advice to the government about architecture and urban design.

This publication is part of the Office of the Victorian Government Architect's (OVGA) 'Good Design' series which aims to raise the awareness of good design, its benefits and how to achieve it. This edition looks at the role that Design Review has in improving design outcomes.

Design review is an independent and impartial process that provides advice on the design of buildings, landscapes, public spaces and strategies. It draws on the experience of built environment professionals and specialists. Design review is a free and confidential service offered by the OVGA and is available to significant projects in Victoria. The format of design review is adapted depending on a project's type, stage and need.

Design Review is a tried and tested process that improves design outcomes.

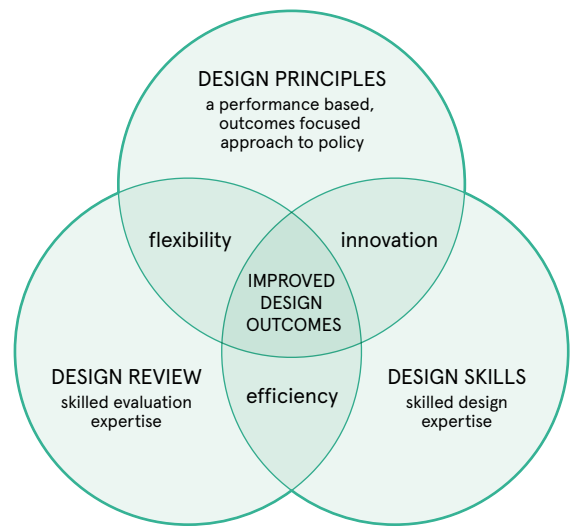
'Design review is a unique forum for a focused and well informed design discussion.'

Jill Garner

Victorian Government Architect

Design review and good design

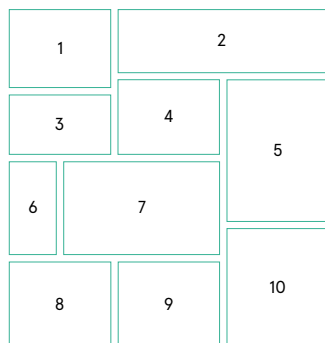
An important legacy for government is the quality and design of the public projects delivered. Well-designed buildings, infrastructure and public places work well and feel good, promoting community pride, identity and adding a valuable long-term asset to their locale. Design review is an internationally tried and tested process that improves the quality of design outcomes in the built environment. It helps to create better places through critical, impartial, expert peer review. Design review champions the pursuit of the best social, environmental, economic and cultural value in construction. It assists projects to realise their full potential, giving confidence to key decision makers.



EFFECTIVE DESIGN QUALITY MECHANISMS

An intersection of three critical commitments is needed to achieve good design outcomes: project-specific design principles, selection of a skilled designer supported by a process of expert peer review.

cover



1. *Site Visit* – City of Melbourne Bourke Street Precinct
2. Queencliff Hub, Borough of Queenscliffe, KTA
3. Latrobe Regional Hospital, Victorian Department of Health, Billard Leece Partnership
4. 3-5 Shiel Street Community Housing, Community Housing Australia, Clare Cousins Architects
5. *Site Visit* – Bendigo Creek Masterplan
6. 555 Collins Street Melbourne, Charter Hall, Cox Architecture
7. *Design Review* – Melbourne Business School, Wood Bagot
8. Bendigo Law Courts, Court Services Victoria, John Wardle Architect
9. Bendigo GovHub, Development Victoria, Lyons Architects
10. St Kilda Pier Redevelopment, Parks Victoria, JCB Architects

'I've been on both sides of the panel process, many times.

As a practitioner and applicant I've appreciated receiving insights from respected panel members especially at the early stages of the design process. They helped the design team to identify the critical issues and potential blind-spots.

From the other side, as panel member I hope I've been able to offer my peers useful, practical and clear commentary around how to optimise a project's opportunities and site responsiveness for the benefit of client and community and that is aware of the differing priorities of the various parties to a project.

Whichever side of the fence the impact of the Design Review Panel is a better built environment.'

Kerstin Thompson

Architect and Victorian Design Review Panel Member

Victorian Design Review Panel (VDRP)

The VDRP was established by the OVGA in 2012 as a service to Government. It provides expert independent peer review of built environment projects.

The VDRP consists of experienced professionals selected through a rigorous process. Architects, urban designers, landscape architects, planners, as well as specialists in sustainability, accessibility, health, place making, heritage, indigenous heritage and masterplanning allow for multidisciplinary input.

What we do

A thorough briefing and presentation of the design response allows the VDRP to provide constructive, well informed advice. Design evaluation of complex projects is multifaceted and multidisciplinary. Issues considered include the project history, site context, budget and timeline. Projects are assessed in terms of functionality, amenity, durability, sustainability, long-term value as well as the conceptual underpinning, aesthetics and materiality. The process is designed to provide advice that helps achieve high standards of design. The OVGA principles have been established to broadly define good design. They form the basis for design review.

In addition to providing guidance to designers, advice is provided to key decision makers and can include clients, delivery agents and statutory decision makers.

In Victoria, design review is not statutory and it is not measured against a particular policy. Instead, the advice offered relies on the breadth and depth of experience of the panellists.

The expertise of the panel is tailored to each project depending on type, need and stage. Technical specialists supplement the review process if required.



THE VICTORIAN DESIGN REVIEW PANEL

The VDRP currently consists of 78 highly experienced built environment professionals.

VDRP Projects

Types and Sectors

The VDRP provides design review of projects at key stages of the design and development process. A project does not need to be going badly to benefit from design review. Rather the process adds input and expertise that builds on the skills of the design team and advice provided by stakeholders.

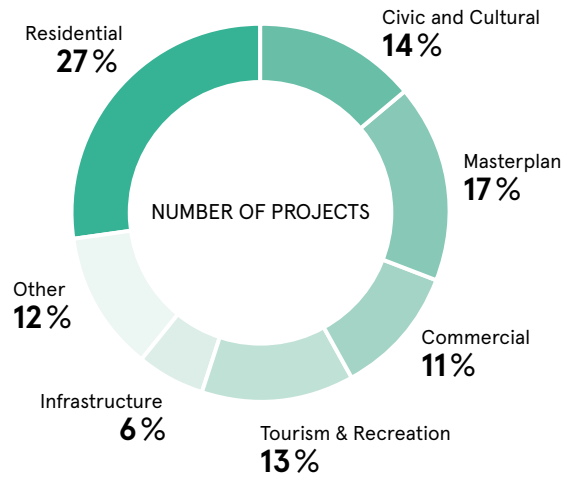
The VDRP is available for review of private and public projects that are of state significance due to their site, context, complexity, or because they establish a precedent for new development in a place. The project may be a civic or public facing building, have substantial government funding or be part of a departmental program, be innovative in its approach or addresses an emerging city issue.

The OVGA is committed to improved design outcomes for buildings and places used by all Victorians. This means that design review is offered for projects located throughout Victoria.

The VDRP reviews built environment projects of all types and scales including strategies, masterplans, buildings, major infrastructure, streets and public spaces.

PROJECT TYPES

Since its inception, the VDRP has reviewed a variety of projects from different sectors.



Stage and Influence

Design review is most effective early in the design process when ideas are fluid and there is openness and opportunity to take on the advice. Changes can be adapted easily and the value and quality of a design proposal increased, before the cost of changes outweighs the benefits gained. Projects are encouraged to come to review at an early stage, then at key stages or milestones in the design process. However, design review has value throughout the entire project life cycle.

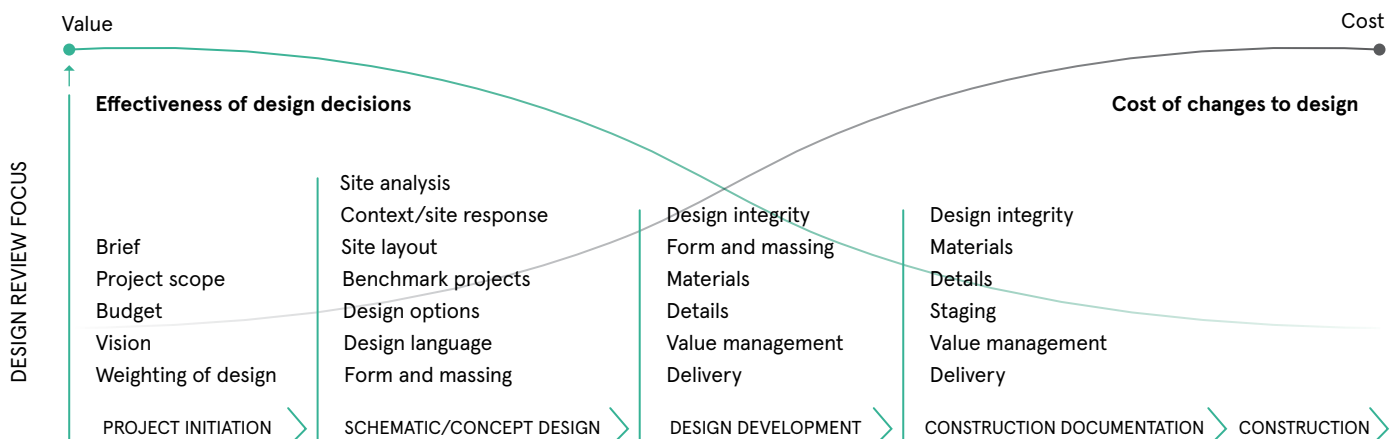
‘The VDRP is supported by members of the OVGA who bring a high level of professionalism in organising and conducting the review process with erudite precision and care. Our objectives were well understood from the initial briefing and the review proved to be a well tailored forum that addressed our key concerns.’

STAGE AND INFLUENCE

Design review has a different focus and impact depending on project stage.

City Design

Maribyrnong City Council



Types and process of review

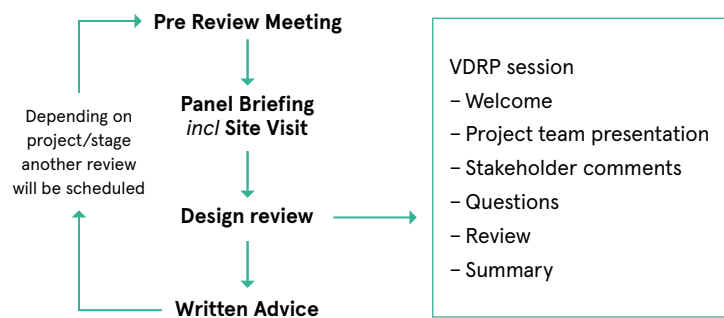
The VDRP can be used in a variety of ways to provide constructive input. The OVGA has adapted the process of design review to cater for the needs of different project types, scales and with various delivery methods. Regardless of the format of review, for it to be successful, it must be carried out using a robust and defensible process. Common features of design review processes include constructive independent advice informed by built environment experts, a deep understanding of projects, thorough briefing with regard for site, budget, planning controls and project scope in a structured discussion.

Design Review

Design review by the VDRP offers a process structured to provide effective advice. It involves thorough briefing, presentation by the client and designers, constructive review and summary written advice to the project team. Sessions are held regularly and a dedicated OVGA team works with the project team to guide them through the process. Projects are typically referred by state government or local government and selected based on significance and the ability of the advice to influence the design. Up to 5 panel members, with expertise tailored to the project, attend a VDRP design review session. The design team and client are in attendance to present the scheme and hear the panel's comments directly.

Desktop Review

Desktop reviews are a less structured, conversational form of review. The design team and panel discuss the proposal. It is particularly suited to projects which come to review at a very early stage, for follow-up reviews or at a very late point in the design process.



Typical design review process including preparation, review and formal advice.

Design Quality Team (DQT)

For large complex ongoing projects or during a competitive selection process, the OVGA can establish a DQT. A multidisciplinary panel of up to four experts chaired by an OVGA representative, provides consistent and timely feedback at key points in the project process. A DQT may have a review role from project inception to delivery and can support stakeholders in ongoing decision making about design, including input to value management processes.

Urban Design Advisory Panel

The Urban Design Advisory Panel (UDAP) process was set up to review major transport infrastructure projects including Melbourne Metro, Level Crossing Removals and North East Link. The UDAP facilitates workshops and design advisory processes throughout the project, before major decisions or at project milestones. The UDAP is established to include members with professional expertise in architecture, urban design, strategic planning alongside key project stakeholders and local government representatives. The key focus for the UDAP is to provide collaborative, multidisciplinary, iterative, and consistent advice.

PORT OF SALE COMMUNITY HUB, 2017

CLIENT: Wellington Shire Council
 ARCHITECT: FJMT
 LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: TCL

The OVGA supported Wellington Shire Council in pursuing a design led process to unlock the inherent qualities of the existing building and repurpose it as a new civic centre to celebrate Sale's status as a cultural centre. This was achieved on a modest budget demonstrating that a great idea does not need to be costly. Design review highlighted the need for a precinct masterplan in integrating the project with the broader cultural precinct. The Council was able to secure funding for landscape works to be delivered alongside the hub.
Photographer: John Gollings



Principles of design review

Design review processes offered by the OVGA have been refined and adapted from those documented by the UK Commission for Architecture and the Built Environment (CABE), a globally accepted benchmark. All processes are in line with the following principles of design review.

Independent

Design review is conducted by people who are unconnected with the scheme's promoters and decision makers, and it ensures the advice is unbiased.

Expert

It is carried out by suitably trained people who are experienced in design and know how to critique constructively. Review is most respected where it is carried out by professional peers of the project designers, because their standing and expertise will be acknowledged.

Multidisciplinary

Combines the different perspectives of architects, urban designers, planners, landscape architects, engineers and other specialist experts to provide a complete, rounded assessment.

Accountable

The Review Panel and its advice must be clearly seen to work for the benefit of the public. This is embedded within the panel's terms of reference.

Transparent

The panel's remit, membership, governance processes and funding is in the public domain.

Proportionate

It is used on projects that are significant to the State or communities.

Timely

It takes place as early as possible in the design process, because this can avoid a great deal of wasted time. It also costs less to make changes at an early stage.

Advisory

A design review panel does not make decisions, but it offers impartial advice for the people who do.

Objective

It appraises schemes according to reasoned, objective criteria rather than the stylistic.

Accessible

Its findings and advice are clearly expressed in terms that design teams, decision makers and clients can all understand and make use of.



CAULFIELD TO DANDENONG
LEVEL CROSSING REMOVAL, 2018

CLIENT: Level Crossing Removal Project (LXRP)
ARCHITECT: Cox Architecture
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: Aspect Studios

The Caulfield to Dandenong Level Crossing Removal project replaced nine dangerous rail level crossings with five elevated railway stations along one of Melbourne's busiest transport corridors. By elevating the line and stations, this project presented an opportunity to transform an extensive tract of land within Melbourne's metropolitan zone into a new linear park.

The OVGA provided expert design advice through the whole of project life-cycle, retaining consistent design expertise at all stages of the project including development, procurement and delivery through the LXRP Urban Design Advisory Panel (UDAP) using members of the VDRP.

Photographer: John Gollings

Benefits and outcomes

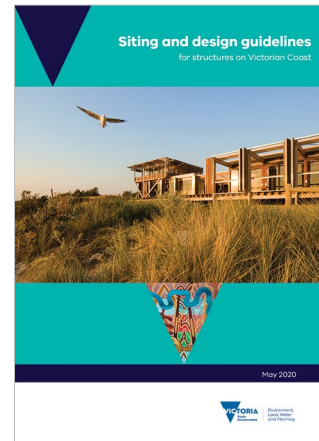
Design review offers breadth of vision as well as support. The strength of a design review panel's advice lies in its independence, objectivity and ability to analyse a scheme within the context of wider good practice and knowledge. Expert peer review will highlight design strengths, challenge weaknesses and can lead to quicker negotiation of processes that lead to project delivery. Design teams, stakeholders and decision-makers benefit from design review.

Common positive outcomes from design review are:

- Support for and an increase in confidence of decision-makers in delivering high quality, inspiring developments and public spaces that meet the needs of all stakeholders
- Potential saving of time, money and effort by identifying issues at an early stage of the design process
- Support and encouragement of good designs and innovative proposals
- An increase in commitment to improved public amenity
- Effective site analysis informing contextually appropriate design
- Encourage high sustainability ambition
- Support in the recognition of good design outcomes when exercising discretion
- Design quality supported as important in the procurement process.

— 80% of attendees reported significantly improved design outcomes by attending design review.

SGS Report, 2018



SITING AND DESIGN GUIDELINES, 2020

CLIENT: Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning
CONSULTANTS: REALM Studios

The Siting and Design Guidelines provide best practice advice on the siting and design of structures on the Victorian coast. The VDRP reviewed the document at draft stage providing confidence to stakeholders and recognising the need for buildings in coastal areas to respond to their place.



BENDIGO HOSPITAL, 2017

CLIENT: Victorian Department of Health
ARCHITECT: Bates Smart, Silver Thomas Hanley
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: Oculus

The Victorian Department of Health used the VDRP to form a Design Quality Team (DQT) to assist in the tender selection process for the \$600 million Bendigo Hospital contract.

The involvement of the DQT in the tender evaluation process through to construction resulted in architecture, civic response and health planning recommendations that were subsequently implemented, resulting in a higher quality design outcome. The planning approvals process was also accelerated.

Photographer: Peter Clarke

Good Design is:

Design Review is guided by principles which focus on how buildings and places can meet the needs of the people who use them. The OVGA has defined seven principles against which good design can be judged.

1. Inspiring

Good design embeds the very essence of a project into a narrative and vision.

2. Contextual

Good design is informed by its location and responds to its environmental, social and cultural contexts.

3. Functional

Good design develops synergies between the functional requirements and the project vision delivering value to the end users and broader community beyond primary technical needs.

4. Valuable

Good design enhances the quality of experience, creates stronger connections and supports a vibrant public realm which are all key to realising the full potential for value creation and capture.

5. Sustainable

Good design respects our environment and resources by promoting efficiency, enhancing local ecology and creating a sustainable long-term legacy. Local government should embed specific objectives and targets in every project.

6. Enjoyable

Good design delivers inclusive and enjoyable environments which contribute to broader positive social and economic outcomes.

7. Enduring

Through the synthesis of vision and function, good design embeds lasting value into our built environment.



SWAN STREET BRIDGE, 2018

CLIENT: VicRoads

ARCHITECT: BKK

LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT: McGregor Coxall

VicRoads identified the Swan Street Bridge Upgrade as a significant opportunity to improve the pedestrian and cycling infrastructure, and to enhance the urban design quality of the bridge and its immediate surrounds. The bridge links Melbourne's CBD with the sporting and recreation precincts.

The design was inspired by the movement of rowing oars along the Yarra River, the surrounding architectural language and the existing archways of the Bridge. Design review was used at key milestones using VDRP panel members experienced in design and delivery of public infrastructure. The objective advice helped ensure the design intent was realised through to construction. The advice ranged from strategic public space continuity through to detailed design resolution.

Photographer: John Gollings

Further information

Office of the Victorian Government Architect website provides resources and links that can assist stakeholders in achieving good design outcomes for their communities.

www.ovga.vic.gov.au/resources

Accessibility

Contact us if you need this information in an accessible format at ovga@ovga.vic.gov.au

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