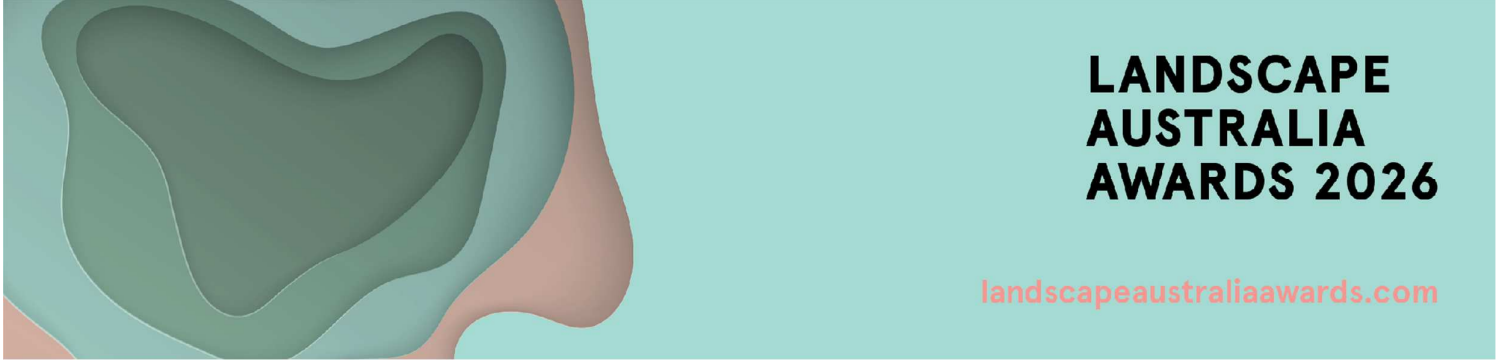


Rebellious Front Yards and Reclaimed Tennis Courts

Australia's Most Exceptional Landscapes Unveiled
Landscape Australia Award Winners 2026

The winners of the first-ever Landscape Australia Awards have been revealed, showcasing the very best landscape projects and ideas shaping the country. The Awards celebrate excellence in landscape architecture and design, recognising the innovative and sustainable projects that foster better environments for communities and the planet.

The awarded projects (winners and jury citations from pg. 4) include everything from a tennis court reimagined as an experimental garden, rehabilitated woodlands on a former water treatment plant site and a modest Bondi plot that rebels against the typical conventions of the Australian front yard.

The Landscape Australia Awards program spans eight categories that reflect the diverse practice of landscape architecture and design. There are ten winners and one commendation across eight categories in this year's Awards:

- **Public Design** - Archerfield Wetlands Parkland by Brisbane Sustainability Agency
- **Urban Design** - St Kilda Pier Redevelopment by Site Office Landscape Architecture, Jackson Clements Burrows Architects and AW Maritime
- **Residential Design - Large** - The Winter Garden Tennis Court by Timothy Mitchell Landscape Architecture
- **Residential Design - Small** - Big Little Bondi Garden by Bushy Landscapes
- **Small Project Design (joint winner)** - Wurundjeri Biik Garden by Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria, SKL Gardens and Petrichor Collaborative
- **Small Project Design (joint winner)** - Birrarung Trial Floating Wetlands by City of Melbourne
- **Analysis and Planning (joint winner)** - Green Pathways Gold Places: The Green Grid by Australian Institute of Landscape Architects Queensland Chapter in collaboration with Australian Institute of Architects, Planning Institute of Australia and Design Institute of Australia
- **Analysis and Planning (joint winner)** - Central Park, Bradfield City by Bradfield Development Authority
- **Research Policy and Communications (joint winner**) - The Woody Meadow Guidelines by The University of Melbourne – The Woody Meadow Project
- **Research Policy and Communications (joint winner)** - Nature Based Cities Design Guidelines and Scorecards by Tract

Jury Chair and editor of *Landscape Australia,* Emily Wong, explained the importance of this new Awards program and common themes among the winners: *"The way we design landscapes is becoming more and more important. Looking after ecosystem health is vital, and increasingly research is showing how*

crucial nature is for human wellbeing and health, so we need to be progressing landscape architecture and design as a discipline and celebrating what is being done well."

"The winning projects are both innovative and practical. They show how anyone can turn a space into a thriving garden, apply urban rewilding research, and drive real change in their local communities."

"Rather than focusing solely on aesthetics, the winners involve the public in learning about ecology, place, biodiversity and the changing climate. We see how the public can engage with the gardens of private residences and participate in the creation of green spaces – the projects foster understanding of why embedding nature in our cities is of the utmost importance."

"These award winners show us that landscape design is not just about creating connections between people and the environment, but also about connecting with each other."

Public Design winner, **Archerfield Wetlands Parkland by Brisbane Sustainability Agency** transforms the site of an abattoir and wastewater treatment plant into an immersive wetland that creatively references its past. It is a brilliant example of how biodiversity can be brought back into urban environments and polluted sites rehabilitated and rewilded.

St Kilda Pier Redevelopment by Site Office Landscape Architecture, Jackson Clements Burrows Architects and AW Maritime is the winner of the **Urban Design** category. The project is a reimagining of a much-loved St Kilda pier into a delightful and climate change-resilient civic space.

The Winter Garden Tennis Court by Timothy Mitchell Landscape Architecture transforms a former tennis court into an experimental garden through adaptive reuse. The **Residential Design - Large** winner shows how static spaces can be transformed into immersive, atmospheric and dynamic gardens.

Big Little Bondi Garden by Bushy Landscapes rebels against the conventions of the typical Australian front yard. Compact yet generous, the garden uses the pre-European vegetation condition as a reference ecosystem for planting, dissolves fence boundaries and shows how much can be done with a tiny plot. A worthy winner of the **Residential Design - Small** category.

Joint winner of **Small Project Design**, **Wurundjeri biik Garden by Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria, SKL Gardens and Petrichor Collaborative,** presents First Nations cultural knowledge in an immersive garden. Co-winner and celebrated Yarra River project, **Birrarung Trial Floating Wetlands by City of Melbourne** can be used as a model for river restoration projects across Australia, bringing biodiversity and river health back to our cities.

Analysis and Planning (joint winner), **Green Pathways Gold Places: The Green Grid by Australian Institute of Landscape Architects Queensland Chapter in collaboration with Australian Institute of Architects, Planning Institute of Australia and Design Institute of Australia** - is a shared advocacy agenda showing what the legacy of the Brisbane Olympics could be, if considered through a connected urban landscape, rather than simply through the buildings. Joint winner **Central Park,**

Bradfield City by Bradfield Development Authority is a model for future civic planning projects that is Country-centric, embedding Traditional Custodian authority and knowledge, right from the very beginning of a planning process.

The Woody Meadow Guidelines by The University of Melbourne – The Woody Meadow Project distils ten years of research on how to create beautiful, diverse, rich plantings in an urban context that don't require much maintenance and are low cost. It was the joint winner in the **Research Policy and Communications** category alongside **Nature Based Cities Design Guidelines and Scorecards by Tract** - a framework for how decision-makers can embed nature into buildings and precincts in medium to high density areas.

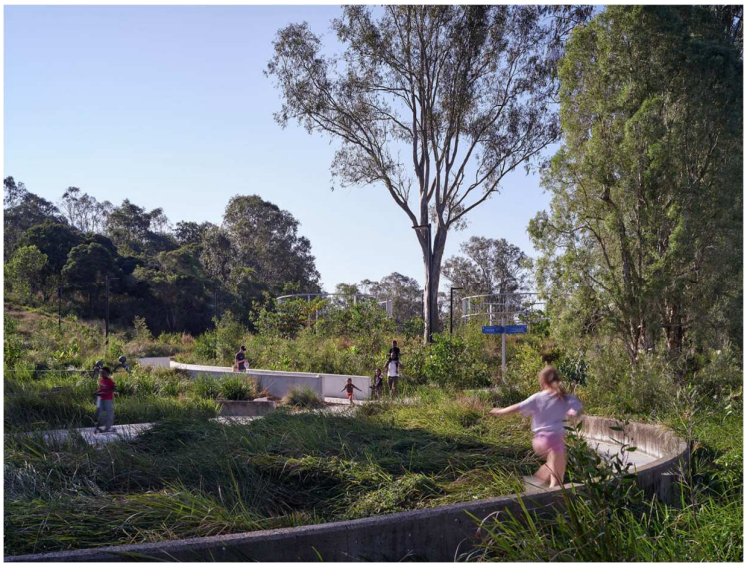
A comprehensive judging process by a jury of industry experts determined the winners of the Awards:

- Catherin Bull, Professor Emeritus, University of Melbourne
- Robert Champion, Founder, TARN
- Jefa Greenaway, Founding Director, Greenaway Architects
- Claire Martin, Associate Director, Oculus
- Emily Wong (Jury Chair), Editor, Landscape Australia

The awards and commendations were announced Wednesday 21 October at a ceremony at Robin Boyd House, with the winners published on Landscape Australia and ArchitectureAU.

For further media information, please contact Landscape Australia Awards publicist, Adam Valentine: hello@adamvalentine.com.au | 0411 302 769

Public Design - Archerfield Wetlands Parkland by Brisbane Sustainability Agency



Grounded in an established program of strategic planning for the open space of Oxley Creek catchment, the design, delivery and ongoing management of Archerfield Wetlands Parkland has transformed a severely degraded floodplain that was previously home to a wastewater treatment plant and polluted from nearby industrial areas into a resilient urban wetland and much needed district park. Here, rehabilitated woodlands and grasslands act as living infrastructure, slowing and treating runoff, accommodating flood events, stabilising and reconnecting fragmented habitats and providing the setting for a network of walking and cycle trails that engage users with the area's broader ecosystems and landscape. Park infrastructure, including the play areas, picnic sites, gathering and event spaces, car parking and the community centre creatively re-use remnants of the industrial infrastructure, reducing waste and creating strong experiential connections to the site's history.

The jury commends the design team for the comprehensive, strategic approach demonstrated in the project that includes ongoing monitoring of ecological performance, volunteer activities, and further restoration programs. The parkland is an exhilarating example of how design can transform neglected land into a resilient and inclusive space that improves ecological health and enhances everyday life.

Commendations:

- Rio Tinto Naturescape by Plan E
- Sunbury Community Arts and Cultural Precinct by Openwork and Architecture Associates
- Regatta Park by McGregor Coxall with Penrith City Council
- Yitpi Yartapuultiku – The Soul of Port Adelaide by Wax Design together with the Yitpi Yartapuultiku Aboriginal Working Group and Ashley Halliday Architects

Urban Design - St Kilda Pier Redevelopment by Site Office Landscape Architecture, Jackson Clements Burrows Architects and AW Maritime



The clarity, simplicity and legibility of the St Kilda Pier Redevelopment belies the project's storied history and the long, careful and detailed process of testing and design development that has led to this outcome. The beloved yet ageing pier has been given a new life through a series of subtle yet considered urban moves. The design shifts the orientation of the original pier, creating an intuitive flow and a new civic space for people-watching, sun-catching and viewing both the bay and the cityscape beyond. The insertion of a new community pavilion generates a dialogue with the existing historic St Kilda Pier Kiosk, while bringing a fresh material language that evokes the project's context and past.

The reuse of salvaged timbers, the interplay of steel and concrete across the length of the project and the attention to detail in concealing services has created an elegant and highly functional community asset that both respects the site's history and anticipates the future impacts of climate change. The highly collaborative nature of the project is evident in the built outcome which has rejuvenated a much-loved community landmark into a public space that protects habitat for penguins, provides recreational opportunities for the local community, and fosters experiential connections with the changing dynamics of the coast.

Commendations:

- Sydney Harbour Bridge Cycleway Ramp by Aspect Studios with Collins and Turner, Eckersley O'Callaghan, Design 5 Architects, Madwings, Yerrabingin, Electrolight and Stantec with client Transport for NSW
- Metro Tunnel, Melbourne by Hassell

Residential Design - Large - The Winter Garden Tennis Court by Timothy Mitchell Landscape Architecture



The Winter Garden Tennis Court shows how principles of adaptive reuse can be applied thoughtfully, playfully and resourcefully within the context of a private garden. It demonstrates the power of a minimalist approach to resource use and a maximalist approach to planting. An underutilised tennis court has been reimagined as an expansive garden for gathering, experimentation, food production and everyday life through careful subtraction, addition and reconfiguration.

Environmental responsibility is central to the project. Existing, commonplace materials such as concrete, steel and slate have been recomposed into garden beds, terraces, arbours, planters and paths, with cut and fill balanced and a minimum of new material inputs. Here, native and exotic plants intermingle in a subtle manner, while the history and spatial arrangement of the former court can still be read within the site's new life.

The technical resolution of this project is impressive. The project addresses the challenges of crevice planting between impermeable hardstand through close observation of site conditions, careful soil design and responsive drainage strategies. Developed through an unusually collaborative relationship between designer and clients, the garden reflects patience, experimentation and a profound love of plants.

The Winter Garden Tennis Court is a model of low-material-resource landscape transformation. It brings together environmental thrift, artistic vision and horticultural knowledge to create a resilient, honest and beautiful garden.

Commendations:

- Greybox by Emily Simpson Landscape Architecture
- Thora Property by Bede Brennan and Garden Juju
- Hubbe Court by Landskap
- Kauri Lane by Aspect Studios and RPS

Residential Design - Small - Big Little Bondi Garden by Bushy Landscapes



Big Little Bondi Garden is a modest landscape of richness, determination and a peculiar generosity. The project transforms 35 square metres of suburban front yard into a layered place of habitat, community encounter, personal memory and daily family life, demonstrating how even small landscape interventions can generate tangible ecological, social and aesthetic outcomes.

The project is unusually rigorous in its commitment to local ecology. It draws on the National Standards for the Practice of Ecological Restoration in Australia, using the pre-European vegetation condition as a reference ecosystem that drove the plant selection. The result is a planting design that is true to place and environmental history, while also being beautiful and functional. In the project, equal consideration has been given to material selection and use, with careful consideration of provenance, environmental impact and the potential for future repair and/or disassembly.

Big Little Bondi Garden eschews the norms of the street, and the conventions of the Australian front yard. Front fences, property boundaries, as well as order and plant legibility have been abandoned to create a space that is deeply lovable for its embrace of passers-by, conversation and an appealing unruliness.

This is a small garden with large implications – it shows how residential landscapes can speak to ecological memory, support biodiversity and strengthen everyday human connection. It illustrates the power of residential projects when values take precedence. More of this, please.

Commendation:

- Bondi Beach Semi by EBLA Studio

Small Project Design (joint winner) - Wurundjeri Biik Garden by Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Cultural Heritage Aboriginal Corporation, Royal Botanic Gardens Victoria, SKL Gardens and Petrichor Collaborative



The project is an ongoing initiative that presents a Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung-focused garden installation for the annual Melbourne International Flower and Garden Show (MIFGS). The prospect of achieving authentic collaboration between the design practices and Traditional Custodians to explore the many dimensions of a mature cultural landscape in a heritage-listed precinct and deliver transformative garden settings for consecutive events is an exciting and challenging one. The process employed to achieve the various garden editions has, however, been exemplary.

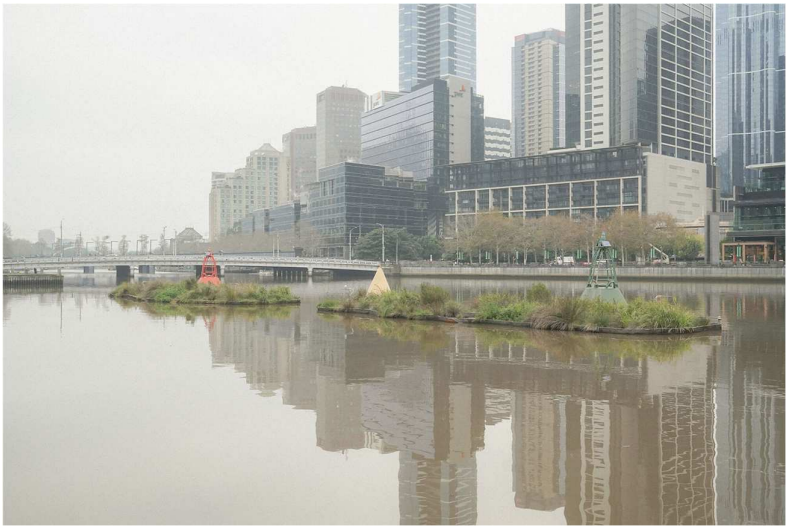
Set beneath mature Moreton Bay figs, the garden installations create a richly immersive setting for a range of curated experiences that enable cultural exchange and foster knowledge-sharing around Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung culture. The process for designing each garden was based on a cultural framework that combined detailed knowledge of heritage protocols, Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung cultural practice, lore and ecological knowledge, and the installations focus on rich spatial engagement with the site, rather than simply visual display.

Since the project's inception in 2024, the project team have created a 300-square-metre fully accessible space that grounds visitors in the major plant communities of Wurundjeri Woi-wurrung Country (2024), the concepts of water Country and eel habitat (2025), and the significance of Bolin Bolin Billabong for Kulin Nation people.

Commendations:

- The Test Garden by Hassell, Super Bloom, James Hitchmough and Nigel Dunnett
- Negative / Positive by Monash Architecture in collaboration with These Are The Projects We Do Together and Gilby Brewin Architecture
- Royal Park Matchstick Grasshopper Designed Experiment by Urban Ecology and Design Lab in the Faculty of Architecture Building and Planning and the School of Biosciences, University of Melbourne with City of Melbourne

Small Project Design (joint winner) - Birrarung Trial Floating Wetlands by City of Melbourne



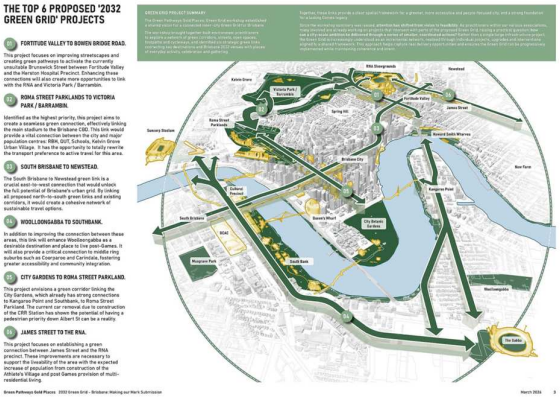
This project involved the establishment of a series of floating wetlands along the Birrarung that create new wetland habitat and strengthen connections to the river. The jury commends the design team for their innovative approach to working with the tight constraints of the project in developing the floating habitats that integrate Indigenous vegetation with habitat features to improve biodiversity, both above and below the water's surface.

A key strength of the project is its collaborative delivery model that brought Traditional Custodians, landscape architects, ecologists, researchers, government agencies and specialist contractors together to share cultural knowledge, ecological expertise and technical skill.

The project's strategic design, construction, maintenance and monitoring approach is equally significant. An ongoing monitoring program assesses ecological performance and provides the evidence for ongoing adaptive management of the wetlands. Public engagement is embedded within the project, with guided walks, citizen science activities and other opportunities enabling the broader community to engage with the river and better understand its social, ecological and cultural significance within Melbourne.

The project establishes a model for future restoration of the Birrarung and other urban waterways. The jury commends the project for demonstrating how interdisciplinary collaboration, applied environmental research and thoughtful landscape design can work together to deliver meaningful ecological outcomes and foster environmental stewardship.

Analysis and Planning (joint winner) - Green Pathways Gold Places: The Green Grid by Australian Institute of Landscape Architects Queensland Chapter in collaboration with Australian Institute of Architects, Planning Institute of Australia and Design Institute of Australia



The Green Grid proposes the creation of a grid of shaded open spaces connecting communities and urban venues across South East Queensland. It demonstrates landscape architecture's capacity to inform city-making through the alignment of policy, advocacy, evidence, engagement and collective vision. Developed through the Green Pathways, Gold Places initiative, this design-led framework reimagines Brisbane's Olympic legacy through connected places, rather than venues. It recognises that for Brisbane 2032, the city itself is the venue, and that the success of the Olympic and Paralympic Games will be measured by the quality, accessibility, and resilience of its urban landscapes.

A defining strength of the project is its collaborative process. More than 80 practitioners from across more than 10 disciplines worked with government, industry and community stakeholders to develop an evidence-based framework for implementation. The work identifies six priority green corridors, develops adaptable delivery typologies, and proposes a staged investment approach. Providing a practical pathway from vision to action, it creates a scalable model for city-wide blue and green infrastructure planning.

The jury notes, in particular, the project's demonstration of iterative design advocacy as a valuable form of landscape architecture practice. By building public support, engaging decision-makers and positioning landscape as essential infrastructure for climate resilience, active transport, biodiversity and public health, the Green Grid elevates the role of landscape architecture in city planning and governance. It offers a blueprint for leveraging major events to deliver lasting economic, environmental, cultural and social benefits while fostering more resilient, equitable and liveable cities.

Commendations:

- Sunshine Coast Council Dog Exercise Area Regional Plan and Network Blueprint 2025-2045 by LatStudios, Alliance Planning and TAP Consulting for and in collaboration with Sunshine Coast Council
- Safer Cities Program by Transport for NSW
- Doomadgee Future Planning Project by Circ Design, Meridian Urban, Doomadgee Aboriginal Shire Council, Department of Women, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Partnerships and Multiculturalism, Peak Services and Langtree Consulting

Analysis and Planning (joint winner) - Central Park, Bradfield City by Bradfield Development Authority



The Central Park, Bradfield City strategy supports a new 114-hectare city centre, adjacent to the Western Sydney Aerotropolis. The development of the strategy responds to the issues with many existing CBDs which are, too often, generic and lacking in a sense of place.

The methodology embedded within this thorough document complements the Bradfield City Centre Master Plan and is anchored in a relationality with Country – at scale. This Country-centric approach gives the strategy structure and depth, and a means of moving beyond the mere referencing of Country.

A series of guiding principles have acted as organisational moves in the development of the design ethos that privileges recreational space, existing native vegetation, and the health of the riparian corridors that trace through this landscape. Importantly, the design approach was supported by meaningful co-design processes that prioritised the voice and agency of Indigenous knowledge holders, Elders and community.

The resulting document articulates a sequence of moves that support social wellbeing and environmental performance as a reciprocal duty of stewardship. These will provide tangible benefits for a future Bradfield City. The document offers clear guidance for design professionals that considers how the design may evolve in the long-term while giving a strong voice to Country.

Research Policy and Communications (joint winner) - The Woody Meadow Guidelines by The University of Melbourne – The Woody Meadow Project



The Woody Meadow Guidelines is a transformative approach to urban greening that demonstrates how we can create landscapes that are more diverse, resilient, affordable and sustainable.

Developed through research and real sites, Woody Meadows are resilient, novel and diverse plantings of Australian trees and shrubs managed through coppicing that can be used to create low-water-use, low-maintenance and highly adaptable landscapes that have strong visual appeal. The approach responds directly to the challenges of climate change, biodiversity loss and inequitable access to quality green space.

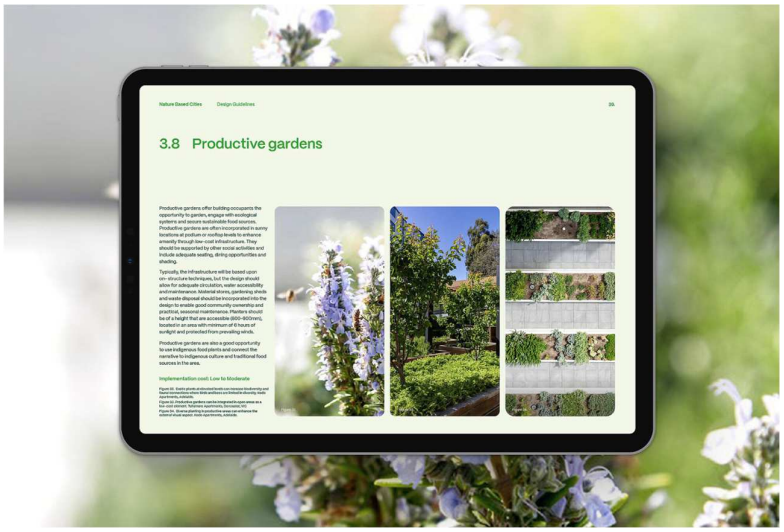
The guidelines offer a practical and replicable landscape approach. They provide evidence-based guidance for planning, design, installation and long-term maintenance that can be used by a wide range of stakeholders to create visually striking and functional green spaces in derelict urban and suburban sites where conventional plantings may struggle.

By overcoming barriers to planting in hostile sites, the Woody Meadow Guidelines expand the potential for equitable, high-quality urban greening while shifting expectations towards landscapes designed for biodiversity, climate resilience, affordability and long-term performance. The work is a significant contribution to the future of Australian urban landscape practice, by offering a practical way to connect people to their environment and further the ambition for greener, more biodiverse and climate-resilient Australian cities.

Commendations:

- The Schoolyard Greenprint by The University of Canberra
- Sydney's Food Landscapes: Agriculture, Planning, Sustainability by Joshua Zeunert and Alys Daroy

Research Policy and Communications (joint winner) - Nature Based Cities Design Guidelines and Scorecards by Tract



The Nature Based Cities Design Guidelines and Scorecards make a significant contribution to Australian research by translating environmental ambition into practical, nature-positive development outcomes. Providing a comprehensive framework for new communities and medium to high-density residential projects, they bridge the gap between ecological theory, planning policy and project delivery. Through evidence-based guidance, measurable benchmarks and accessible tools, the framework provides developers, consultants and decision-makers with planning and design considerations for embedding nature into buildings and precincts.

What distinguishes this research is its focus on design application from project inception through to implementation and post-occupancy. The guidelines synthesise current knowledge across biodiversity, climate resilience, urban forestry, water-sensitive design and wellbeing into a clear, scalable methodology. The accompanying scorecards establish measurable, place-based targets for retaining and enhancing natural systems, canopy cover, biodiversity, ecological management, walkability and access to green space, demonstrating how research can positively influence development outcomes.

The jury commends the project's clear communication and interdisciplinary approach which fosters collaboration between disciplines, Traditional Custodians, and developers to create industry-wide impact. By providing an accessible, accredited framework that shapes outcomes at building and precinct scales, the work advances landscape architecture and design's role in addressing biodiversity loss, climate adaptation, and human and ecosystem health.

Commendation:

Climate Action (commendation) - Sandhills Wetlands by Australian Wetlands Consulting

About the Awards: The Landscape Australia Awards are presented by Landscape Australia – the nation's leading voice for landscape design. The awards build on the legacy of the print magazine Landscape Architecture Australia (1979–2026), which fostered critical discussion and promoted excellence in the design of Australia's urban and regional landscapes.