



## Global model revealed in Coogee

DAB ARCHITECTURE GRADUATES REVEAL THE SIGNIFICANCE OF AN URBAN GRID



SHAHE SIMONIAN AND BETH HUGHES  
PHOTO BY DAVID SCHAMA

Coogee for many Australians is an ideal place for a day by the beach but for three recent Architecture graduates it is a successful example of an urban grid – a model used for town planning – with significance for future urban development.

Peta Hewett, Beth Hughes and Shahe Simonian first realised the significance of Coogee's urban grid while studying urban design in the Bachelor of Architecture program. They have spent several years researching the suburb's history and original plans, and photographing and re-drawing new plans of the suburb to see how it has developed. "The grid is the stable base, the layer underneath that everything grows from," Hewett says. "Although it is such a rigid element, it is also quite flexible, which is why it has developed so well. For example, it has lent itself to the development of the high-rises of the 1960s and single houses have been extended to become blocks of flats."

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According to Simonian, the urban grid's significance as a model of the 'typical' town was so robust that it has sustained years of development. "This strength in the original design is a potential canvas for modern development of urban centres and an exploration of the origins beyond Australian shores," he says. Coogee, commissioned by Governor Darling and based on European models of urban planning, was developed as an outpost, a seaside town away from Sydney. "Coogee is an excellent example of Darling's legacy, a town changing over time and responding to the developments in infrastructure and social behaviours," Simonian says. "Throughout these changes, the architecture and the way of living has also changed, and this 'little village' can illustrate the outcomes of many urban planning principles established early last century."

The result was a planning model that has adapted well to changes in population and technology over the last century.

As part of the recent Architecture Public Lecture Series at UTS, the three alumni lectured on 'Governor Darling's Planning Legacy – Coogee a Global Model'. They also plan to present the findings of their groundbreaking research to the

National Trust and the wider architectural community.

Director of Program for Architecture, Professor Xing Ruan suggested their research topic for the Lecture series because of its significance for the future of Australian architecture.

"Australia is a relatively young country in terms of architecture and planning which has resulted in us borrowing models from other countries. Hopefully, this sort of research will help us to reinvent a new model specifically for the Australian topography and culture," he said.

The Autumn 2003 Architecture Public Lecture Series featured several high-profile UTS graduates, including Graham Jahn, Ian Moore, Kim Crestani, Belinda Koopman, and Peter Davidson, who recently designed Federation Square in Melbourne. For details of future lectures, contact Architecture Lecturer Jim Doefler on (+612) 9514 8047.



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## Building community relations

DAB STUDENTS AND STAFF LEND A HAND

Students and staff from DAB are making a real contribution to the Marrickville Addison Road Community Centre, home to more than 35 community, cultural and environmental organisations.

The Centre provides diverse facilities for non-profit community-oriented groups, and thrives through community contributions of time, energy and resources. Since 1998, the DAB Construction program has worked co-operatively to help create buildings and spaces for the Centre.

DAB's current project, an office building for the Ethnic Child Care, Family and Community Services Cooperative, is by far the biggest and most complex of the projects completed so far. Senior Lecturer in Construction Shane West, who project manages and designs the buildings, has applied innovative sustainable development principles that were tried and tested in earlier developments.

All projects contain renewable plantation pine timber and where possible materials considered for their sustainability properties, and ingenious natural lighting and ventilation features ensure the building will be energy efficient. Inside it is cool and light and the carefully planned insulation blocks out the noise from the adjacent child-care centre and the roar of planes overhead.

Through this project, full-time students gain hands-on experience of a major building project, starting with client briefing, conceptual planning, design/feasibility and scheduling of the project and following through with project management and construction.



The experience increases full-time students' employability and two participating graduates, Duncan O'bourne and Mark Van Miltenberg, have already scored top jobs with Bovis Lend Lease. Students use their knowledge and develop their practical skills, providing what West describes as "an important educational reality check". Second-year student Alicia Sahib, who plans to work as a site manager when she graduates, says she found working as tradespersons gave her new respect for what she now calls "the most important people in the business". She also gained confidence and understanding of the building process.

Sahib now makes more sense of her studies and adds that seeing the happiness on the faces of the community centre staff was a real bonus. "By helping these worthwhile organisations we are helping an entire community."

Teams of DAB students and staff have completed four projects so far, including premises for Greening Australia, the Community Child Care Centre office and the Art Gallery.

The assistance of the UTS teams has reduced effectively the potential costs involved in building and renovation, says the Cooperative's Executive Director Vivi Germnos-Koutsounadis. "The Ethnic Child Care Centre cost \$450,000, which represents a saving of more than \$1million."

"The students provide services that meet professional standards and all four projects were completed within schedule and below budget, an enviable record for any construction company."

Given past achievements, the partnership between DAB and the Centre has strengthened, leading to two additional current projects; Visual Communication students are designing a Web site for Addison Road Community Centre, and Engineering students are designing a computing system to manage the hire of the Centre's facilities.

The Centre's former General Manager Assad Abdi sees the co-operative relationship with UTS as a demonstration of the Centre's philosophy of mutual exchange with the community. "It's a win-win situation," he says.



PHOTOS BY SHANE WEST

