

Your Levy At Work



Greenlife Industry Australia

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National Urban Green Infrastructure Handbook: Growing Opportunities for Plant Growers

In recent years, Urban Green Infrastructure (UGI) has become increasingly important for making our communities healthy, walkable, and better prepared for climate challenges.

Both government and private businesses have started to see that UGI can help strengthen micro-climates, mental and physical health, biodiversity, and climate resilience.

However, there isn't a standardised national framework, and different places are approaching it in different ways, with varying results.

That's where David Martin comes in. He is a registered landscape architect and sustainability strategist who designs outdoor spaces, cares about the environment, and played a big role in creating the National Urban Green Infrastructure Handbook. David believes that having a consistent framework for UGI across Australia is integral for the future of this field.

"UGI isn't just a 'nice to have' anymore. It helps save on energy costs, adds to property values and increases the longevity of buildings themselves," said David.

"This Handbook will help people understand the value and importance of UGI, how to include it in their plans, and what tools and practices they need to do it right.

"To best grasp the purpose of the UGI framework, we need to delve into the development of the Handbook, taking a closer look at the challenges, key themes, and intended audience," said David.

The Handbook promotes green infrastructure, stimulating demand and fostering collaboration among stakeholders, ensuring ongoing business opportunities for nurseries through legislation and incentives.

CHALLENGES

Before the introduction of the UGI framework, the absence of a cohesive approach led to significant challenges.

- Inconsistent approaches: without standardised guidelines, past UGI efforts resulted in widely divergent approaches and outcomes across different jurisdictions.
- Lack of incentives: there was no clear mechanism to incentivise or compensate landowners and developers for retaining UGI in their projects.
- Fragmented understanding: the UGI field lacked a shared understanding, hindering the momentum required for its widespread adoption.

DEVELOPMENT OF THE UGI FRAMEWORK

Process

Technical writing commenced in mid-2021, followed by nine peer reviews in late 2022. Standards Australia launched the Handbook in early 2023.

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Rationale

The introduction of the Handbook by Standards Australia aimed to address these challenges proactively.

The Handbook was designed to:

- provide tools: equip planners and developers with tools to integrate both existing and new UGI into their projects
- resolve conflicting guidelines: substitute conflicting guidelines with a harmonised, national standard
- foster an equitable environment: create a level playing field where government, industry, and landowners are encouraged to retain UGI through incentives or compensation mechanisms
- strengthen UGI's co-benefits: including micro-climates, mental and physical health, biodiversity, and climate resilience
- initiate legislation: offer a starting point for legislating mandatory UGI
- align with funding processes: match Treasury processes for state and federal infrastructure funding
- promote shared understanding: develop a shared understanding of UGI across stakeholders.

KEY COMPONENTS OF THE HANDBOOK

The Handbook includes the following key components:

- nationally consistent terminology: ensures a common language for UGI-related discussions and planning

- guidance: offers advice for incorporating both traditional and new UGI elements, from street trees to vertical gardens
- progress measurement: assists in setting and measuring progress against UGI targets
- integration with grey and blue infrastructure: outlines how green infrastructure integrates with traditional stormwater infrastructure (grey) and urban water infrastructure (blue)
- a practical framework: provides a practical national framework applicable to projects of different sizes, timescales, management and
- ownership; covering various elements like urban canopy, green roofs and walls, parks, reserves, and waterways, with potential integration into government planning instruments and building codes
- decision framework: guides high-quality UGI implementation for government, industry, community, and private projects, covering both existing and additional UGI in urban infill and greenfield development.

TARGET AUDIENCE

The Handbook is intended for industry and government professionals across all Australian jurisdictions, including:

- urban professionals: planning, engineering, design, research and construction professionals involved in urban greening, the built environment and horticultural sectors
- policy makers: those responsible for sustainable development and urban greening policies
- UGI Grant applicants: individuals or organisations applying for UGI grants

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- land and asset owners: owners and facility managers interested in UGI integration
- investors: stakeholders seeking investment opportunities in UGI projects.

HOW DOES THIS BENEFIT YOU?

The Handbook actively promotes the benefits of green infrastructure, such as energy savings and higher property values. This promotion encourages urban projects to integrate green elements, thus boosting the demand for greenlife and creating more opportunities for you.

Furthermore, the Handbook fosters a shared understanding of UGI among stakeholders, actively encouraging collaboration in the creation of green spaces.

Lastly, the Handbook actively advocates for potential legislation and incentives aimed at incorporating green infrastructure into urban projects. If these measures are put into effect, they could actively ensure a steady demand for your products and services.

WHAT'S NEXT?

"Momentum continues to grow for adopting a more consistent, national level and strategic approach to Australian UGI," David said.

"One example is a nationwide research project being led by Dr Paula Hooper from the Australian Urban Design Research Centre. This project's goal is to make the data for planning, designing, and managing Australian public spaces more consistent, especially because definitions of these spaces, land use, planning standards, and green cover classifications vary widely."

This project benefits the Australian horticulture sector by enhancing the planning and management of public open spaces. In addition, Standardisation will enhance the horticulture sector by improving urban green

infrastructure, streamlining processes, and driving higher demand for horticultural products and services.

"To seize the growing state-level interest, we require nationally accepted benefit/cost and rating tools. Additionally, formal recognition of UGI as an asset class is imperative," David said.

"This Handbook's purpose is to reshape the sector's perspective on UGI, rendering it a necessity rather than a luxury."

To preview the Handbook or download a copy of the Handbook, visit the [Standards Australia Online Store](#). For more information, contact success@standards.org.au

'Urban Green Infrastructure — Planning and decision framework' was developed by Standards Australia in consultation with a committee of representatives from nine organisations, spanning government, science, peak industry groups, and UGI professionals.

ENDS

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