



BRAIN TRUST

AR ASKS A PANEL OF EXPERTS TO RESPOND TO THE FOLLOWING QUESTION:
WHAT DO YOU THINK WILL BE THE BIGGEST CHALLENGE FOR YOUR PRACTICE IN 2018?

SALLY MATTHEWS DIRECTOR, MATTHEWS AND SCAVALLI ARCHITECTS

I love Western Australia's stunning beaches, mysterious forests and human friendly climate. I was reminded of this while having a camping holiday with my girls in a very well named spot, Peaceful Bay. Time away from the 'big smoke' and work is essential for me to take a sense of 'peaceful' into practice for the 2018 work year.

While WA experiences the final whip in the tail of the economic downturn, our practice

approach is to have a lithe, agile business, ably multitasking across many areas of industry: residential, multi-residential, commercial and institutional to ride out this out.

We are hearing murmurings of once shelved large state projects coming back on line and hope that the economic cycle heads up the curve this year. With this glimmer of a change in fortune, in my role on the AIA chapter council, we continue to educate the government and public on the advantage of an architect to 'value add' with their design capability, professional standing, ability to lead a project team and manage complex contracts.

Architects possess an ability to 'think outside the box' and make it happen.

After a trying past few years, 2018 presents the challenge to ride out the lagging economic low, identify spurts of growth and quickly adjust to take these up while still hanging on to a snippet of 'peacefulness' among it all.

SIMON KNOTT FOUNDING DIRECTOR, BKK ARCHITECTS

In 2018 we will face a number of challenges as a profession. Some of these are particular to this time and some the result of underlying

issues in the profession that have been developing for years.

Procurement models and financial structures

We see a lot of issues with the way projects are being procured and the financial models driving those processes. As the industry, and particularly financial institutions, becomes more risk averse, architects are having less influence over projects due to novated contracts and poorly designed procurement processes. The design and build quality of projects inevitably suffers as a result and we are seeing this in the built outcomes. This has been an issue for some time that continues to impact the quality of our built environment and remains a challenge as architects are required to 'fight' harder for good design.

Work/life balance

A perennial problem facing all architects is finding time away from work. Increasingly, studies are showing that working more efficiently and for less time is more productive than long, never-ending hours at the computer. Having time to recharge and do other activities is not only good for health, but also mental health and creativity. At BKK we aim to work to a 40-hour week and we have also implemented two hours per week



of 'thrashing time' where staff are encouraged to do something non work-related. This could be visiting an exhibition, an outside project or just reading a book. I am personally embarking on nine-day fortnight, so that I can spend an extra day with my four-year-old son.

Adequate fee structures and design quality

Achieving good design quality is increasingly difficult with more complex compliance regimes and risk minimisation becoming barriers to innovation. More time spent on overcoming these barriers and an increasing need for design advocacy on projects results in less time actually designing. With increasing downward pressure on fees, the challenge to extend design time is forcing architects to seek more innovative delivery methods.



THEODORE KERLIDIS DIRECTOR, K20 ARCHITECTURE

Talking and thinking about this question, it's complex; however, the future is bright for the practice and for the profession. I remain eternally hopeful that architects remain essential and are at the centre of creating places that are extraordinary.

I look to each of us in k20 Architecture to continue producing outstanding architecture – architecture that



has meaning, that has place and purpose and architecture that puts the end user at the centre of our buildings. Our architecture lasts and resonates and there is an energy around every project we create.

Perhaps the biggest challenge for us will be to continue to believe in what we are doing, to believe in ourselves, stay fresh, young, mobile and flexible.

I also think it's wonderful to have clients around us who believe in us and engage with us and I want to see this continue. We believe in our clients and what they are doing and it's a great relationship and journey to have between people. It's particularly wonderful to see our projects being built in the malaise of the landscape and to see how they create context and an awareness of place. It's a privilege to be part of that.

So the biggest challenge for us in our practice in 2018, I think, will be to allow ourselves to continue to believe that we can be part of the change, to be challenged and to expect more of ourselves. We have a great team and a great client following and there are wonderful stories being told about our buildings. It is truly intoxicating to be part of all of that and we want to see that continue.

KOOS DE KEIJZER PRINCIPAL, DKO ARCHITECTURE

A consistent design ethos

As a practice with six offices in three countries, maintaining design excellence is certainly a challenge across time zones and languages. We are interested in humanity and how people live in our buildings and how people are living in our cities today.

Growing people

A real challenge for architecture in 2018 is understanding the needs of Millennial employees and understanding that their needs are different to Gen X and Gen Y. As employers, understanding their needs is critical, so we can best cater for their aspirations and their futures.

Constant communication both in the workplace and outside the workplace is key to understanding what our employees want and need. We are in the business of architecture but, importantly, we are in the business of growing people too.

Striving for the sublime

Then a challenge for 2018, as a third sub point, is understanding how Sydney and Melbourne are growing very quickly as urban cities. Architects need to get more involved in the place



making and the design of our cities and part of that challenge is re-establishing the importance of the architect in the actual city making process.

There is a really big difference between Sydney and Melbourne. Major parts of Sydney are controlled by three-dimensional envelope plans, which in many ways determine the nature and flavour of the overall form. These envelope plans together with passionate architects can create sublime architectural place-making. Melbourne on the other hand has much looser controls that can be abused, with the architect being marginalised and the built form outcome is less than optimum.

As urbanists and architects, I believe in striving for urban outcomes that are beautiful, design driven and create a strong sense of individuality and place-making. **ar**