

## Citation – Professor David Yencken AO

For more than 50 years, Professor David Yencken has been a champion for the Australian environment, the nation's heritage and excellence in design. Working in industry, politics and academia, especially through his association with the University of Melbourne, he has been a staunch advocate and activist, promoting better outcomes for strategic policy, innovation in implementation, design and practice across our cities and landscapes.

David George Druce Yencken was born in Berlin to Australian parents in 1931 and undertook his schooling in England and Australia, receiving a Bachelor of Arts degree from the University of Cambridge. From early in his career he strove to break new ground, opening one of the earliest art galleries in Melbourne devoted to Australian painting in 1956-57 and building and running one of the first motels in Australia, the Mitchell Valley Motel in Bairnsdale (1957-60). He also commissioned noted architect Robin Boyd to design the architecturally significant Black Dolphin Motel in Merimbula, NSW (1960-65).

In 1965 he co-founded Merchant Builders Pty Ltd where, as Chairman and Joint Managing Director, he led the way in pioneering new project housing developments in Victoria that combined progressive architectural design with native landscaping. Yencken's firm won a number of architectural awards including three Victorian Architectural Medals and the inaugural Robin Boyd Environmental Award (1972) for "changing the face of residential Melbourne". During this period he also founded Tract Consultants, a firm of town and regional planners, resource analysts and landscape architects, in which he held the position of Chairman and Managing Director from 1971-79.

One of Yencken's most influential roles was as Secretary (Chief Executive) of the Ministry for Planning and Environment for the Victorian Government, a position he held from 1982-87. During this time he was involved in a number of important strategic projects, including the preparation and release of a new Metropolitan Policy and State Conservation Strategy; the preparation of a comprehensive plan for the redevelopment of central Melbourne; and the consolidation and re-writing of seven different Acts, as well as a number of smaller local community projects. His work with the Ministry was recognised with several Royal Australian Institute of Architecture awards, a special Australian Institute of Landscape Architecture award for the greening of Swanston Street, and a Royal Australian Planning Institute award for its work on central Melbourne pedestrian and street planning and Yarra River bank works.

David Yencken has been active throughout his career on a significant number of international organisations, serving as the inaugural Chairman of the Australian Committee of the International Council on Monuments and Sites (ICOMOS) and representing Australia twice as a joint leader of the Australian Delegation to the UNESCO World Heritage Committee in 1980 and 81. He has also participated in numerous government bodies, including as Chairman of the Interim Committee on the National Estate (Commonwealth Government) in 1974-75. He was an author of the seminal *Report on the National Estate* (1974), which led to the establishment of the Australian Heritage Commission, and which he then chaired from 1975-81. In these roles, Yencken helped to realise some significant achievements including stimulating national planning, research, professional standards, training and public education across Australia, and developing a Register of 6,600 natural, Aboriginal and historic places, published in an 800 page catalogue, *The Heritage of Australia*, in 1981. He was a member of the Prime Minister's Urban Design Taskforce from 1994-95, chaired the Design Committee of the Australia Council for the Arts and was President of the Australian Conservation Foundation. He is currently Patron of the Foundation.

At the same time, Yencken was also engaged with the University of Melbourne. Appointed as Elisabeth Murdoch Chair of Landscape Architecture and Environmental Planning in 1988, he served in this role until 1997. As Head of the School of Environmental Planning, he was able to contribute his considerable knowledge and skills to the University community and maintain an active interest in research, successfully securing several significant Australian Research Council

grants during the 1990s. The University's Quality of Teaching Surveys consistently revealed him as the most highly regarded of the lecturers in the Faculty of Architecture, Building and Planning. He is currently Professor Emeritus at the University of Melbourne.

Following his retirement from the University, David Yencken brought together seven of Australia's leading national community organisations to create the Australian Collaboration to act as a forum for the exchange of information and ideas and to publish educational and other material on matters of significance to Australian society. He chaired the Collaboration from its formation until 2011.

In addition to Professor Yencken's outstanding contributions to government, industry and education, he has also found time to write or edit a total of seven books and many more essays and articles for books, journals and conference proceedings. He has been recognised through a number of major prizes and awards, including the Queen's Silver Jubilee Medal, the Planning Institute of Australia Lifetime achievement award, and the Lord Mayor's Prize 2001. He is an Honorary Fellow of the Planning Institute of Australia and the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects, and in 1982, he was made an Officer of the Order of Australia for services to conservation and history.