

Citation – Robert John Adams AM

Professor Rob Adams is a multi-award winning architect and urban designer whose vision and drive over more than thirty years have helped to shape the city of Melbourne into one of the world's leading examples of best practice in urban design.

Rob Adams grew up in Southern Rhodesia (now Zimbabwe) and graduated in architecture from the University of Capetown in South Africa in the 1960s. He undertook graduate studies in England, graduating with a Masters in Urban Design from Oxford Brookes University, before returning to Zimbabwe to assist in establishing an urban design course in Harare from 1978-1980. In the early 1980s, Adams moved to Australia, where he soon gained a position working at the City of Melbourne.

As Director of City Design, Adams was instrumental in writing and implementing the first comprehensive urban design strategy for central Melbourne. This came about at a crucial time, as in 1985 the city centre was felt to be lagging behind its counterparts in Europe and elsewhere in Australia in terms of retail and cultural activities and was looking to invest in the built environment. The strategy's key aims were to create a vibrant and well-populated streetscape, profiting from the city's multi-mode transport system, and Adams guided its implementation on major projects such as Postcode 3000 (bringing redundant buildings back into use, particularly for apartments in the city centre), the redesign of Swanston Street into a more pedestrian-friendly street, the QV Development, the City Square, the riverfront park at Birrarung Marr, the Urban Forest Strategy, Sandridge Bridge, the Queensbridge Precinct, the Turning Basin, East Melbourne Library and Library at the Dock, and significantly, the City of Melbourne's own CH2 Building, the first commercial building in Australia to achieve a Six Green Star environmental rating.

Alongside these major public projects, Adams has also overseen many of the smaller details which make Melbourne such a livable city, such as opening up the laneways for retail use, installing bluestone paving, street furniture, new lighting, signage and extensive tree planting. He has also placed great importance on the cultural and artistic regeneration of the city, and has been active in elevating the profile of the arts through projects such as Blue Line, Travellers and Birrarung Wilam, and venues such as ArtPlay (a venue for children's art and teaching activities), MeatMarket, ArtHouse and the Town Hall Gallery. This comprehensive revitalisation program has seen Melbourne repeatedly recognised as one of the world's most liveable cities. Recognition of Adams's contribution and expertise saw his appointment to the Urbanization Council of the World Economic Forum.

Adams' insight and vision continue to be sought as the population of Melbourne expands. A passionate advocate of medium-density, five+ storey development for housing and commercial uses along major tram and bus corridors as a way of curbing urban sprawl, he is currently engaged in discussions on how to accommodate future population growth effectively within the existing metropolitan boundary. Adams has also had longstanding connections with education, sharing his knowledge regularly with students. He has lectured frequently at RMIT University, taught master classes at the Robin Boyd Foundation, and has been a frequent lecturer and guest critic at the University of Melbourne, where he has been a Professorial Fellow since 2004.

The impact that Adams has had on the social, experiential, aesthetic and sustainable development of Melbourne's city centre has been recognised by the MCC's City Design Division (under Adams's leadership) receiving more than 150 state and national awards for design excellence since the 1980s. In 2014, the City Design Division won the C40 Cities Climate Leadership Award for its Adaptation and Resilience Projects. In 2007, Adams won the Melbourne Achiever Award from the Committee for Melbourne. In 2008 he was named as the Prime Minister's Environmentalist of the Year and in 2009 was awarded the Sidney Luker Medal from the Planning Institute of Australia (NSW). In 2009, he won the Australia Award for Urban Design for the report, *Transforming Cities for a Sustainable Future*. His nationally significant contributions to urban design, town planning and architecture were officially recognised in 2007 when he was made a Member of the Order of Australia.