



EDITOR'S NOTE

An interesting thing has happened to sustainability: It has morphed from the technical to the social. It has become a concept and reality that leans towards people and liveability, not just ratings and the latest environmentally friendly technology.

Arguably, sustainability has always been about community. When I spoke with property legend Lyn Shaddock (page 66), he made a salient point: The way homes were built decades ago (terraced houses, for example) connected residents.

The conversation is gradually shifting away from certification and scale. From the ground up, literally, we are more focused on social infrastructure—how do you create a place that people want to spend their time in?

Amid the growing number of precincts, thriving urban metropolises and residential landscapes converted from industrial wasteland, property players are moving towards the creation of communities that are sustainable.

From the office to the home, it can mean so much more than green credentials. There is little disagreement from the industry itself, as property leaders attest in our vox pop (page 56) in this issue.

And of course, no green edition would be complete without a close look at new sustainable buildings from around the world (page 31).

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## What the China–Australia Free Trade Agreement means for property

THE AGREEMENT WILL AFFECT HOW THE INDUSTRY OPERATES, BOTH DOMESTICALLY AND INTERNATIONALLY.

In late November 2014, negotiations for the China–Australia Free Trade Agreement (ChAFTA) concluded. The implementation of this agreement will affect operations in the property industry, both domestic and international.

Some of the key highlights of the agreement for Australian companies operating in China are as follows:

- Increasing the range of construction projects that Australian companies can participate in by exempting them from business scope restrictions. This applies to companies operating in Shanghai in joint construction projects with a Chinese company. China represents 12.5 per cent of Australia's services exports market, which in 2013 was worth \$6.9 billion. This change creates opportunities for the industry to take advantage of these new, less stringent covenants on doing business in China.

## Australia's trade and investment with China in 2013



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Source: ABS

- Widening the scope of business licences for Australian architecture and urban planning firms. By considering Australian experience when assessing applications for higher-level qualifications, these firms will now be allowed to undertake higher-value projects in China. This represents the best treatment for these services under any of China's free trade agreements.
- Committing to allowing Australian providers to operate services in building cleaning

and real estate in China, including services offered via wholly Australian-owned subsidiaries based in China. This commitment bolsters the business prospects of China-based services firms.

The agreement also provides for a dispute mechanism to enforce its obligations, which includes the safeguarding of governments' rights to regulate and protect public welfare.

My view



**SHAUN MUNDAY**  
Managing director,  
Place Design Group

**What is your vision for Place Design Group in 2015?**

In 2014, we launched a refresh of our brand and reviewed our company focus. After nearly 14 years of operation, it was time for reinvigoration of the group. In 2015, we are set to complete the final rollout of our new-look brand.

**What are the key drivers behind your Asian presence?**

Globalisation is the primary driver. Asia has an ever-increasing influence on Australia and its property market. Australians cannot afford to hold on to the belief that we operate in an independent market; it is increasingly intertwined with China and South-East Asia. The time zones across China, South-East Asia and Australia are also key for us in our operations. We are able to collaborate effectively and efficiently, not only with partners, but across our 10 offices on projects both in Australia and throughout Asia.

**How do your projects in Australia and Asia differ?**

One of the key differences, of course, is scale—a single project in China can be hundreds of hectares. This scale and the speed of development in China demands a significant design focus and higher level of capacity. In contrast, Australia requires a greater strength in strategic thinking and a more sophisticated approach to planning and stakeholder engagement for our clients to remain competitive.

**Describe your average work day.**

Every day is different but the three things that remain constant are people, projects and caffeine. If I am not talking with my team or clients—in person, via video conference or on the phone, I am in the trenches working on planning and design projects ... mostly with a coffee in hand.