



# Hospitality

 Podcast Series eBook



# Talking Architecture & Design continues to lead the way

**In a recent article in The Conversation, according to 2023 data from The Infinite Dial – which tracks digital media use internationally – Australia has now surpassed the US to be a world leader in podcast listening, with 43% of the population aged 12 and over having listened to a podcast in the past month.**

Australia also has the third highest rate of news podcast listening, behind the US and Sweden, with 14% of news consumers listening to news podcasts in the past month.

Despite these trends, there's been limited research on news podcast listening in Australia. My recent research, published in June, found news podcast listeners in Australia tend to be politically left-leaning, wealthier, and more highly educated than average.

In fact, new data from Roy Morgan shows podcasts are increasingly popular in Australia with over 3.9 million Australians now downloading audio or video podcasts in an average four weeks, up by a massive 456,000 (+13.1%) from a year ago.

This equates to almost one-in-five Australians (18.3%), up by 1.9% points from a year ago. Mobile phones and tablets are clearly the leading way to download podcasts used by 3.2 million Australians

(15.2%) while around 1.1 million (5.2%) download podcasts via their computer – (2.1% use both).

An analysis by gender shows little difference with 1,983,000 men (18.8% of men) downloading podcasts compared to 1,952,000 women (17.9% of women) – both up more than 200,000 on a year ago.

All these growth figures have been reflected in Talking Architecture and Design (TAD), which now has completed a full 5th year (or Season 7) of podcasting, resulting to date 185 episodes and over 310,000 downloads – or on average just shy of 1700 downloads per episode.

A milestone worthy of both the content, and dedication shown by the TAD team.

So, sit back and enjoy the listen!

**Enjoy the listen and the read!**  
**Branko Miletic**



# On inclusivity, gender-sensing bathrooms and shabby chic, with Troy Creighton

Troy Creighton is the charismatic face of one of Australia’s leading drainage brands, Stormtech. Troy became the Managing Director of this family business in 2003, and has been one of the most prominent voices in bathroom design and innovation ever since. For the latest instalment of the Architecture & Design Hospitality & Retail podcast series, we asked Troy about some of the most exciting ideas, global trends and technologies that are transforming hospitality bathrooms.

“For the new-build spaces, I’m seeing two really distinct design styles driven by two regions. One is the North American hotel chains, and the other one is – interestingly – Southeast Asia, North Asia and Europe, who are following a very similar trend together,” he starts.

“If we look at the North American design style, it’s really back to the 70s,” Troy – who grew up in that era, explains. “We’re seeing a lot of beige and brown shades, which I think is quite indicative of the conservative character of North American society.” He adds that even hotel chains like Marriott, which back in the 60s were quite edgy, are reverting to the more traditional colour palettes and bathroom interiors.

When it comes to the European style, Troy points to the cool Nordic aesthetic which brings a bit of darkness into the bleached timbers, as well as favours neutral tones over the harsh, bright whites. The European trend also embraces cleaner, open spaces, which – Troy adds – ties in with the touchless technology, increasingly seen in bathrooms around the world after the pandemic. “This touchless trend will definitely keep expanding in the hospitality spaces,” he says. “And it’s suitable not just for new builds, but also for renovations because the touchless sensor systems can be retrofitted.”

The trend to create more open bathrooms that embrace the touchless sensor systems, results in an increase of bathrooms that are more inclusive. “I think that the touchless sensor system is really hand in glove with that access and mobility. Whether someone’s got advanced arthritis or some sort of physical disability, touchless technology definitely makes it easier to manipulate bathroom fittings.”

As an extreme example of touchless sensor systems, Troy mentions “robotic” toilets he’s encountered on his multiple trips to Japan. “These spaces often have Bluetooth integration, and if the user pairs up with the bathroom when entering, the space will play music from their mobile device,” he describes excitedly. “They will blow warm air on your feet, offer light therapy and even sense what your gender is so the toilet can automatically lift either just the lid, or both the lid and the seat.” Troy says that this is probably a very good glimpse of where we’re headed in the hospitality bathroom space.

However, while touchless technology is most certainly on the rise, Troy points out that it’s essential not to lose sight of the fact that bathrooms are, in fact, the most intimate spaces in our homes and in hospitality environments. As such, they shouldn’t be too clinical or impersonal. Enter shabby chic.

“We’re definitely seeing a resurgence of the shabby chic that was popular about 10 years ago. And this is particularly relevant in the boutique-style hotels,” Troy explains that the trend involves repurposing and redesigning bathrooms using eclectic features. Combined with the shift to revisit this notion of minimalist, open space, these trends can help create welcoming, comfortable and accessible bathroom space – which is something Troy thinks hotels and hospitality venues get more than just about anyone else.

“The bathroom is the most intimate room in the house, as well as your hotel room, and that hardcore, arctic white design doesn’t reflect this personal character. You need to be able to be a little bit messy, which is why – I think – this idea of an eclectic, yet open, clean and easy to access space is really emerging.”

**If you’d like to find out more about automation in hospitality bathrooms, or hear about what features Troy has taken particular liking to, listen to the full episode here. This podcast is brought to you in association with Stormtech proud sponsors of our 2023 Hospitality & Retail series of podcasts.**



Listen to episode here  
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Troy Creighton | Managing Director of Stormtech

# Hassell Principal Glenn Scott shares his insights into the future of design in Sydney

The future of design in Sydney is looking greener, according to Hassell Principal Glenn Scott. This can be seen in the shift from the city being dominated by cars to more space being dedicated to bike lanes and wider footpaths.



Glenn Scott | Hassell Principal.

“It’s shifting the urban experience from one dominated by vehicles, vehicle noises and pollution to one where the urban environment is more pleasant and habitable,” Glenn says.

“You want to walk, you do want to use the streets. I think it’s really creating opportunities for people to reclaim the streets: footpath dining, outdoor seating and spaces for trees”.

He says Sydney CBD has become much more habitable, especially with the recent removal of cars from George Street and the introduction of the light rail and trams.

Glenn also highlights the importance of incorporating water conservation into urban design by using the substantial runoff created by streets, car parks and public spaces. He says incorporating swales and rain gardens into car parks should be the bare minimum.

“We should be trying to utilise this as directly as we can to irrigate the planning in these spaces. The old school of just collect, pipe and send into our waterways, that shouldn’t be the default.”

Putting these steps into place removes the need for artificial irrigation, and means more street trees which in turn creates shade in the street and reduces heat island effects.

“So for me, it’s a win-win situation because it all becomes a lot more self-sustaining without having to build a lot of expensive infrastructure to make it work.”

He says Sydney’s future will also include smaller-scale local experiences with travellers seeking more personally tailored experiences outside the ‘tourist bubble’. Further afield, Glenn is loving the trend of revamping old motels and the unique hospitality experiences built into them, commenting that repurposing buildings is the most sustainable thing we can do.

Another passion of his is designing stadiums and convention centres in such a way that they can be enjoyed beyond major events.

“They’re really big buildings and they’re awesome when they’re full of people. But if you rock up and

there’s no major event it’s very vast...it takes away from the event with the disparity of scale”.

Some ways to encourage more usage outside major events include incorporating large playgrounds and F&B retail to make it a destination.

When it comes to developments in major cities, Glenn comments that there are “no simple or easy sites left”.

His current project ‘The Ribbon’ at Sydney’s Darling Harbour which will be the home of the new Imax and a W Hotel is one of the most challenging sites he’s ever seen. The building itself is wedged between two major elevated expressways with multiple ramps and the site at ground level is much smaller than the developer’s air rights - all of which makes access to the site for construction quite limited.

Looking forward, Glenn has plans to design a prefabricated mass timber modular hotel, something he has seen done in Asia and Europe but not yet in Australia.



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# Cox Director Joe Agius shares his insights on designing zoos and airports

**Director of Cox Architecture Joe Agius sets and guides the design direction for many well-known projects in Sydney.**

One of his latest major projects was designing the terminal at Western Sydney International Airport. With the airport situated in a flood-prone area, Joe said management of the stormwater was an essential consideration. The terminal's large roof falls in a singular direction so all the water off the roof can be captured and reused.

"Certainly, consideration of water and its reuse was one of the guiding principles of the design of the terminal building," he said.

Another major project Joe led was designing the award-winning wildlife retreat at Sydney's Taronga Zoo.

"An accommodation project within the context of a zoo is pretty special and unusual," he said.

Joe said the site itself had a great deal of sensitivity in terms of the bushland context, the hillside topography and the heritage aspects.

"A key consideration at the beginning was how we allow the visitors within this accommodation to engage with the animals in a powerful, direct and emotive way and at the same time ensure there's no negative impact on the animals as well," he said.

"And beyond that, there's the whole engagement with Sydney and with the harbour and the surrounding landscape".

Rather than thinking of the accommodation as a singular building, Cox created five environmentally sensitive, sustainably designed lodges.

Joe said a key consideration during the project was minimising embodied energy in the new build. "We carefully went through existing structures and what we could retain, refurbish and upgrade".

Cross-laminated timber was selected for the accommodation interior and the exterior is clad in hardwood timber which speaks to the nature of the bushland setting.

Joe commented that the roles of zoos in our society have changed immensely.

"I think zoos today aspire to show the animals as close as possible to their natural habitat and to reveal their natural behaviour and clearly are more respectful to the animals and how we engage with them".

When asked about the awards the retreat has since received Joe commented that more important than receiving awards was "being true to our principals and true to our clients' ambitions for the project".

"And wherever possible try to make some form of contribution to the betterment of our public life in our cities," he said.

As well as discussing these flagship projects, Joe touched on his drive to create more inclusive and diverse workplace for architects and designers.

Cox are founding members of Champions of Change which sees a group of architectural practices band together to advocate for change and the betterment of women in architecture.

"Our profession is quite challenging for a person balancing home and work commitments," he said.

"One of the touchstones for me is that we should not attempt to change the women but change the system".



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Joe Agius | Cox Director.



# Doug Southwell and Tina Fox from Scott Carver Architects on redesigning Sydney's Theatre Royal

When Scott Carver Architects were restoring the iconic Theatre Royal in Sydney CBD, they worked to balance the theatre's rich architectural past with the expectations of modern theatregoers.



The project, completed at the end of 2021, was headed up by architect and director of Scott Carver, Doug Southwell and head of interior design, Tina Fox.

Fox said the building had been left "in a pretty shabby state by the previous operators".

"It was a bit of a two-fold refurbishment of the theatre. The landlord Dexus & Woods Bagot did some work themselves. The whole of the front entry was opened up and had a whole new glass facade so you could now really see inside," she explained.

"They assisted with some new lifts and really helped elevate the connections between 25 Martin Place, the retail spaces and the theatre itself".

Scott Carver's scope included an upgrade to the auditorium, theatrical production equipment and back-of-house areas as well as a new fitouts for the front-of-house facilities. They designed new bars and VIP lounges which can be used during theatre performances but equally can be leased out for events at other times as well.

"The most challenging aspect of what we had to do was within the auditorium itself," Fox said.

"The operators really wanted to increase the seating as much as we could, so we ended up adding a new balcony to the front of the circle and now we've got seating for just over 1200".

When it came to the balcony extension, they really had to make sure it didn't affect sightlines and the original intent of the auditorium.

"We had full respect for the original intent of the design...most Theatre Royals around the world are actually red and gold...we were really happy to run with that original design direction and take that on".

Southwell said a key component of the design work was considering how the theatre melded with the surrounding venues.

"In reality, the magic of going to the theatre starts at home. It's the journey you take to get there, the art of arrival, it's where you drink and eat beforehand or after.... It's really intimately linked," he said.

When it comes to refurbishing heritage buildings, he said it's all about understanding the resilience of what the original built form can offer.

Another theatre refurbishment Southwell is working on is the 140-year-old Victoria Theatre in Newcastle.

"It hasn't been used as a theatre for 60 years. There's a ridiculous number of layers in that building so rather than stripping it all out and recladding it's really about paring it back to the original distressed nature of what was there and really celebrating that."

As well as celebrating the original form, Southwell said there are key areas where upgrades add value such as equitable access, new amenities, bars and foyers.

"People love visiting historically relevant buildings. They're actually quite forgiving that it may not necessarily perform as well as a new building...not just the patrons but the performers as well," he said.



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# Why good design is intrinsically linked to place with Esther Dickins

When asked about the importance of biophilia in design Esther Dickins from Architectus says “The right question might be how can it not be important to any responsible designer?”

“We as humans have an innate biological and genetic connection with nature and that has an impact on our health and wellbeing” she explains.

“Something as simple as a window looking out onto green space can in fact improve human health in all sorts of ways. It reduces anxiety, tension and confusion, improves our mood and improves concentration and productivity”.

Esther, who has a passion for designing in response to the local environment, is a highly respected landscape architect and urban designer with over 25 years of experience in the industry. Her latest role is heading up Architectus’ new landscape architecture offering.

“Architectus see landscape not as a want in today’s design culture, but really as a need, as something we can’t put to the side, do without or add on at the end. It has to be integral to how we see and develop our design,” she says.

Esther believes the need for good urban landscaping and biophilic design became more apparent during the pandemic when people relied so much more on their local areas and tuned into the importance of quality outdoor spaces. On top of this, she says urban heat and the effects of global warming are added impetus for better urban design.

Esther says good, sustainable designs are intrinsically linked to place and tap into the local weather conditions and landscape.

When reflecting on her time working in the Middle East, she says she witnessed a desire to have bright green lawns, tropical plants and lush environments which was incredibly difficult within a desert environment.

She says, thankfully, there has now been a shift, and not long before she left the Middle East in 2007, she was beginning to look at designs that

reduced water use and incorporated more local and endemic plants.

Some of Esther’s standout projects in Australia include The Canopy in Lane Cove and Burwood Brickworks in Melbourne. Both projects embrace biophilic design while giving back public space.

A project Esther is excited about bringing to fruition is the Blacktown International Centre of Training Excellence in Western Sydney. She says the space will invite the community into an underutilised area and will encourage health and activity, including a physical literacy park linked with part of the Great West Walk.

“Successful public space is space that people really use and want to get out into, that everyone in the community feels comfortable using,” she says.

Esther believes the greatest loss in design in Australia is that those who came on the first fleet didn’t have any understanding or appreciation of what they could have learned from the people who had been living here for 60,000 years and doing so sustainably.

“I think if we had even taken on a portion of that knowledge to understand how to work with country here with the harsh environment, we would be in so much of a better position now. It’s excellent to see that we are now starting that journey but it’s really over 200 years too late and we’ve got a lot of making up to do,” she says.



Esther Dickins | Architectus



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