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Women and Design Leadership: A New Era of Architects in the Public Sector

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Abstract

The gradual per-capita decline in the size of the public service in Australia since the orthodoxy of economic rationalism became entrenched in the 1990s has impacted on the design of the built environment most obviously in the shift away from the in-house design and delivery of public works by government-employed architects. Yet with rising interest in design-led cities, a new generation of architects in state and local government are taking leadership roles in design governance, where public sector actors exert influence predominantly through informal means such as through design advisory, review and advocacy processes. These roles represent an important point at which architects can participate in the complex multi-disciplinary and multi-stakeholder delivery of projects and positively influence the quality of built environment design outcomes, for the public good. Yet this form of architectural work tends to be invisible and not well understood by the profession. Women at present have high visibility in such design leadership roles in Australia, with all State and Territory Government Architect positions and many City Architect positions currently held by women. This paper investigates women's experience in public sector design leadership roles to better understand this work and how career paths involving the public sector have changed since earlier eras of government public works departments. Drawing on interviews, the paper explores aspects of women's career experience including the specific skills and expertise utilised in design advisory roles, and the extent to which this form of work is recognised within the profession. Contemporary career narratives are analysed in relation to an historical survey of women architects in the public service and changing ideas about professional expertise. The paper focuses on exploring two themes: the ways in which public sector work is incorporated into portfolio careers in architecture, and the expertise involved in design leadership.

Introduction

Speaking at the 2020 UNSW Engaging Women in the Built Environment event, Abby Galvin described her transition from Principal at BVN Architecture, a large-scale Australian practice with international offices, to the role of New South Wales State Government Architect in 2019: “I’ve gone from being in some ways an invisible architect doing very visible work, to being a very visible architect doing invisible work.”¹ This form of leadership in design governance is emerging as a key activity of architects working in government, but what does it involve? Galvin’s reflection on her new role hints at the potential for design leadership to have a significant impact on shaping the built environment beyond designing buildings. It also highlights the evolution of the role of architects working in government from being designers to advisors. The NSW Government Architect position is the longest running in Australia and was historically part of the NSW Public Works Department (PWD) which maintained in-house production capacity as other state public works departments were being dismantled. More recently, the office of the GANSW has followed other states in developing its advisory capacity as a key service.² Galvin’s reflection on the work of design advisors as being invisible thus also highlights the double remove of this work from the conventional understanding of the work of making buildings, to include a remove from the authorship of designs.

However, the issue of visibility of public sector architectural work also has a gendered dimension. If today, all State and Territory Government Architect positions in Australia are held by women – arguably the most visible of architects in government – what relationship does this have to the changing nature of the work and its value and status in the profession? The careers of women architects in the public sector have been gradually recovered and recognised. Historically, the public service was one of the only places for women architecture graduates to find work, and more recently, it is noted as a comparatively progressive workplace in terms of working conditions. Many women architects working in the public service in the first half of the twentieth century were pioneers of workplace change. We know much less about the career experience of women architects working in the public sector in the recent past and today. This is part of a broader gap in understanding of the changing role of architects working in government, as the expectations and operations of governments have themselves changed. There is no reliable data on the number of architects working in government or the gender breakdown.³ Architectural education and professional accreditation don’t explicitly distinguish public sector career pathways.

What can we learn from women architects working in the public sector as the architecture profession seeks more diverse ways to influence the quality of the built environment; as the public sector workforce seeks to engage design thinking in the processes of public administration; and as societies recognise the crucial role of governments in managing large-scale change of the built environment particularly in relation to climate adaptation?

The purpose of this paper is to analyse the career experiences of Australian women architects working in the public sector, historically and in the present, to identify key themes that describe public sector career paths and changes in the expertise of architects working in these positions. The research is part of a larger project investigating design governance and the architecture profession in Australia, and the public sector as a particular site of production of architecture that has been neglected in the contemporary conceptualisation of the profession. The research draws on anonymised interviews with women architects whose careers have included working in the public sector, with our participants having graduated between 1980 and 2005.⁴ The public sector encompasses what is traditionally referred to as the public service – the workforce that serves governments’ executive and judicial branches – but extends to include state-owned corporations, government agencies and government authorities. Participants in our research were employed at both state and local government levels. The historical survey in this paper focuses on women in the public service who worked in public works departments or similar state-run departments.

The paper focuses on presenting two themes identified in the histories of women architects working in the public service and our preliminary thematic findings from the anonymised interviews with women working in the public sector today. The first theme discusses features of portfolio careers involving the public sector and draws on literature on the career experience of women in the architecture profession, in particular the concept of a portfolio career used by Paula Whitman in her 2004 study of women in the architecture profession in Australia to describe non-traditional career trajectories that incorporated breaks and/or periods of part-time work, and employment across diverse roles and sectors.⁵ The second theme looks at the expertise associated with design leadership in the public sector, which highlights the skills required to fulfil advisory and advocacy functions in built environment governance as a distinct form of professional

leadership. It draws on design governance theory and feminist analysis of the concept of leadership.

The themes identified in this paper will be used in the larger research project to advance in-depth analysis of the interview data collected from women architects currently working in the public sector. This paper raises further research questions for the larger project around the value and nature of design leadership expertise in both the architecture profession and public administration.

Women Architects in the Public Service in Australia, ca 1900s-1990s

Australian women have worked in government departments of architecture, public works and town planning from the beginning of the twentieth century. Records of employment and archival material maintained by state and commonwealth government departments have made the working lives of these women somewhat more visible to historians. However, individual authorship of buildings and the contribution of women working in these departments has been consistently difficult to ascertain.⁶ Echoing Galvin's statement, the careers of women architects working for government departments may be visible but their contribution and the work they created in the form of drawings and documents often remains invisible. The invisibility of women's contribution to the architecture profession is a recurring theme in feminist historiography.⁷ However the lack of design authorship for public service architects has been an issue for both genders, and is not dissimilar to the situation in some large practices, highlighting the unresolved status of authorship and attribution in the architecture profession that emerges in a new way for architects working in an advisory capacity in government in the twenty-first century. This section of our paper compiles a brief historical survey of women working in the public service in Australia predominately across the twentieth century, drawing on the scholarship of Julie Willis, Bronwyn Hanna, Harriet Edquist, Judith McKay, Don Watson, Deborah van der Plaat, Kirsty Volz, Desley Luscome and Davina Jackson. It relies to a large extent on the scholarship of Julie Willis and Bronwyn Hanna, extracting relevant instances from their wide-ranging research published in *Women Architects in Australia 1900-1950* (2001), and seeks to add to this, by identifying examples of women working in the public service in the second half of the twentieth century drawn from a range of additional sources.

Queensland's Department of Public Works (DPW) was noted by Julie Willis and Bronwyn Hannah as a "sympathetic environment" for qualified women architects.⁸ Out

of the eight known women working in architecture in Queensland prior to the Second World War, six of them were working for the Queensland Public Service.⁹ The high rate of women working in the DPW has also been attributed to Government Architect Thomas Pye, who worked at the DPW from 1894 to 1921, and his daughter, Juanita, who wanted to pursue a career in architecture.¹⁰ As early as 1910, Dorothy Brennan started as a probationary draftsman along with Isabella Kerr who started as a tracer.¹¹ Kerr left in 1916 and this is when Juanita Pye commenced work in the architecture department of the DPW as an assistant draftsman.¹² Throughout the First World War these women filled positions made available by men undertaking wartime services. Along with her father, Juanita Pye left the DPW in 1921 and moved to Sydney to work for *Building* magazine with Florence and George Taylor. Brennan continued to work for the DPW throughout the interwar period, retiring in 1956.¹³

Alongside Brennan, three women were working in the State Advances Corporation for the Workers' Dwelling Branch (WDB) throughout the interwar period. They were Nell McCredie, Eunice Slaughter and Ursula Jones (later Koroloff). None of these four women were ever hired as architects, with Jones, Slaughter and McCredie only ever hired as draftswomen, and Brennan only ever promoted to the position of Assistant Architect, even after 46 years of working for the DPW.¹⁴ Architects working for the Queensland public service never signed drawings, making it difficult to attach these architects to specific projects. The lack of signed drawings and the attribution of buildings has been lamented, especially in the case of Brennan's long career. Authorship can be attributed to public service architects via records other than drawings, such as project correspondence and newspaper articles. However, as none of these women were ever promoted to the position of architect, they were never in the position to be included in such documentation. The high proportion of Queensland's early women architects working in the public service compounds the more pervasive issue of authorship for women in architecture, identified by Hanna and Willis.¹⁵

Most Australian states introduced a Workers Dwelling Scheme during the interwar period. Workers Dwellings were affordable housing provided to medium-low income residents via government-funded fixed rate loans.¹⁶ In Western Australia, the scheme was the Australian Workers Homes Board and local architect, Zoie Fryer commenced working with this department in 1938.¹⁷ In New South Wales, Jessie Ross worked for several government departments including the Commonwealth Department of Works and Railways and the NSW Education Department before commencing employment

with the NSW Department of Public Works (initially employed under the Government Architects' Branch) in 1933. Similarly to Brennan in Queensland, Ross enjoyed a significant career with Public Works, retiring in 1962, and yet little is known about her career and the buildings she worked on.¹⁸ During this period Enid Beeman was also working for the NSW DPW.¹⁹

The Second World War saw a significant surge of women in government departments. Brought about by the drying up of work in private practice, women were motivated to join the public service either to help with the war effort or to fill positions left vacant by men serving in the war.²⁰ These women included Rosette Edmunds in Sydney who joined the Commonwealth Department of the Interior on naval defences and reconstruction around Australia at the beginning of the war.²¹ Also in Sydney, Bronwyn Munro and Gwendolyn Wilson joined the Commonwealth Department of Works (CDW) at the beginning of the war.²² Cynthea Teague in Melbourne joined the CDW in 1941.²³ Teague was followed by Mary Turner Shaw, who joined the CDW in 1942. Also in Victoria, Edith Ingpen was the first woman to be employed in the Victorian Department of Public Works at the beginning of the Second World War. In Queensland, Elina Mottram, who had an established architectural career, which included running her own practice, joined the public service during and after the Second World War in the Railways Department.²⁴ Mottram's career could be described as an early portfolio career, where she worked for herself in private practice, taught architecture courses at the Central Technical College at night in the interwar period, before employment with the government during and after the Second World War.²⁵

Women continued to join the ranks of the CDW in the postwar era. Marjorie Simpson joined the CDW in Sydney in 1950 to work on housing for new immigrants, and later moved to South Australia, where she worked on a project in Woomera.²⁶ Many of the women who worked for government departments during the Second World War, continued their careers with the public service in the postwar era. Edmunds moved to a senior staff appointment in 1946 with Cumberland County Council. Teague continued with the CDW becoming the first woman to rise to Assistant Director General in 1964, and fought for equal pay for women in that department throughout her career.²⁷ By this time, women were not only working in the public service, they were occupying senior and leadership roles in departments, as noted by Hanna: "Women also rose to responsible positions in the various Public Works Departments (PWD) of the State and Commonwealth Governments."²⁸ Although more generally, as identified by Edquist, the

architecture profession remained “rigidly hierarchical and male” and there were few opportunities for women to take on leadership roles in the profession.²⁹

Except for Brennan and Ross, all the women mentioned in this brief survey worked in private practice prior to joining the public service. Some only worked briefly for private firms, and some had established careers, even running their own practices prior to joining the public service. A 1986 report commissioned by the Royal Australian Institute of Architects titled *Women in the Architectural Profession*, stated that working for a private firm before transitioning to the public service was a common career progression.³⁰ This report represents one of few instances where the RAIA or AIA has collected statistical data on architects related to the sector of their employment. The report is revealing for indicating the public service as a significant employer of architects, showing 18.2% employed in salaried positions in the public sector, with the comparative percentage for women being 14.1%.³¹ The report elaborated that architects typically worked for privately owned practices up until their late 20s or early 30s, then they transitioned most commonly into running their own practices, or working in the public sector. According to the report, once architects were in their 40s very few remained as salaried employees in private practice. Considering the tendency for women to have their careers interrupted at around this same point, it explains why the survey data presented in the report showed that there were comparatively fewer women architects in the public service than men.³² Although the picture is incomplete, there are notable examples of women thriving in the public sector as young architects, and then leaving to establish their own practices.

Beverley Garlick was the first women to be awarded an RAIA NSW Merit Award in the non-residential category for Petersham TAFE (1983), undertaken when she was working for the NSW Government Architects Office. In an interview with Abby Galvin, Garlick describes how she worked with the bricklayers on site to develop a specific language for the building during construction, but how she had to battle to maintain involvement during the contract administration phase of the project when this role was momentarily given to a “more suitable” male colleague. Garlick left the public service to establish her own practice in 1987, after failing to be promoted.³³ Suzanne Dance is another notable example, having worked after graduation in 1965 for the NSW Government Architects Office under Ted Farmer, before returning to Melbourne in the 1970s and combining private practice with heritage and community activism.³⁴

In Queensland, Robyn Hesse, Fiona Gardiner, Margaret Tonge and Margaret West, who graduated in architecture in the 1960s and 1970s, had portfolio careers that included working in the public sector. These women are identified in Deborah van der Plaat's study of women architects' careers from the post-war period based on oral history interviews.³⁵ Oral history methods have been an important way of capturing career experiences and contributions of women in more recent historical periods. Hesse undertook town planning study after graduating in architecture and working for Karl Langer and was then employed in government. Gardiner's pioneering career as a heritage expert in the Queensland government followed early experience working for several Brisbane-based architectural practices and further study in heritage conservation in the UK. Tonge moved to government to develop policy and legislation on housing and disability. West had a long career in government after moving to Queensland Project Services in the late 1970s.³⁶ The career paths of these women are described by van der Plaat as "sidestepp[ing] architecture into related professions, working for government in policy development, heritage and planning."³⁷ While recognising the additional skills and expertise gained by these women in their career trajectories, this statement is also revealing of the narrow definition of the architecture profession that saw these careers as outside the mainstream.

In a 1994 article in *Architecture Australia* titled "Invisible Women of Public Architecture," Desley Luscombe and Davina Jackson highlighted the hidden contribution to civic architecture by women working in public sector.³⁸ The article highlighted the careers of six architects working for the public service in South Australia and New South Wales, with profiles of Patricia Les (SACON South Australian Department of Housing and Construction, 1988-), Ingrid Kerkhoven (SACON, 1989-), Margaret Petrykowski (NSW Public Works, 1982-), Darlene van der Breggen (NSW Public Works, 1978-), Rebecca Heartly (NSW Public Works, 1984-) and Linda Gosling (NSW Public Works, 1971-).³⁹ Importantly, the article featured the women next to projects that they had completed; a rare record of authorship between public service architects and their buildings.

The invisibility of architects working in the public service is acknowledged as an ongoing issue. It described the women as "anonymous" while also highlighting the significant and sometimes award-winning projects they were designing and delivering. While Government Architects were acknowledged as figure heads, the work of many architects in departments was completed without any recognition. Women working in the NSW Public Works Department found that this lack of acknowledgment impacted

on their careers and that “their careers are restrained by Bureaucratic strategies to resist acknowledgement of authorship of buildings.”⁴⁰ Women were still attracted to public service architecture roles because of the potential job security and because “Government offices have a history of providing maternity leave and employment flexibility with the onset of children.”⁴¹ Additionally, there were opportunities to fast-track careers through a “high level of autonomy” and the capacity to lead the delivery of projects with the support of senior technical staff within the department or consultants and contractors on projects. While it was more common for women architects to hold management positions within the public service, there were still no women holding the title of Principal Architect.

Luscombe and Jackson’s article also acknowledges the low rate of registration for women architects in the public service. Professional recognition appears to be a persistent issue across the twentieth century, from Brennan whose career started in 1910, to the women featured in this article in the 1990s. It should also be noted that while Brennan did not hold a job title that reflected her skill level, in 1935, she was identified as the highest paid female in the Queensland Public Service.⁴² Some women were deterred from management pathways, seeing them as a predominately administrative role that would separate them from design work and any opportunity to achieve acknowledgement for project work. Consequently, promotion sometimes meant becoming even more invisible. The prestige of design work was also evident in the 1986 RAI A survey. Luscombe and Jackson’s article found that ultimately:

For women architects in government, visibility appears not to be a major motivation: more desirable is the opportunity to build medium to large projects long before they could in private practice. This is a significant satisfaction to weigh against the well-known irritations of working in bureaucracy.⁴³

The invisibility of women in government is the most persistent theme found in the career trajectories examined in this brief and incomplete historical survey. Hanna and Willis observed that the women architects who worked in the public service between 1900 and 1950 “rarely had prominent careers, as it was rare to acknowledge the work of individual architects within the organisation.”⁴⁴ While several notable examples of women architects in the public service rising to leadership roles within government are identified, it is also the case that women hit a glass ceiling in the public works offices

and pursued private practice as a solution. The survey also identifies several types of careers incorporating public sector work including instances of careers in the public sector after varied experience in the private sector, as well as departures from the public service due to lack of career progression.

Portfolio Careers and the Public Sector

In her 2005 report *Going Places*, Whitman used the term “portfolio career” to capture the creative way women handled “interrupted career patterns” and fashioned careers in a male-dominated sector while juggling caring responsibilities associated with having children.⁴⁵ Whitman’s usage of the term aimed to distinguish careers where individuals take on “various appointments and roles over a period of time, collating, in the manner of a portfolio, a range of skills and experience,” from a normative “climbing the ladder” career path.⁴⁶ A more pointed label for this kind of career path that has emerged from feminist scholarship is the “mummy-track” which problematises the gendered dimension of a portfolio career if it disadvantages women’s participation and progression.⁴⁷ In more recent decades the concept of a portfolio career has been co-opted under neo-liberalism, with the de-regulation of work and the value placed on individual entrepreneurship.⁴⁸ It has thus become a shorthand way to explain non-traditional career paths that value skills diversification and life-long learning, if at the same time being blind to the precarity of workers in the creative economy, and the ambition for greater protection of care work, volunteering work and well-being in an individual’s work life. As succinctly put by one participant in Whitman’s study: “if being a sole practitioner is the answer, then I think we need to have a good hard look at the question!”⁴⁹

For the purposes of our analysis, the concept of a portfolio career is nonetheless a useful way to identify and understand the varied career trajectories of women who have incorporated public sector work, both historically and in the present, while at the same time questioning the ways in which public sector work is held apart from the mainstream architecture profession. In our research interviews, we found that all participants combined private and public sector work in their careers. This section of our paper presents preliminary analysis of our interview data.

Although several interview participants have had long careers in the public service, it is more common to move into the public sector mid-career after gaining experience working in private practice, or to have moved between the public and private sectors throughout a career. “Honing your craft” in private practice, and gaining experience in

preparing development applications and contract administration, and working with diverse clients and stakeholders, particularly with developers, was seen as a valuable grounding for a career in the public sector and a way to understand the industry “from as many sides as you can.”⁵⁰ Sustained development of public sector experience was also recognised as valuable. As noted by one participant: “sometimes you need ten years’ worth of corporate knowledge to finally see a project outcome to fruition ... in the political realm it can take ten years.”⁵¹ These various examples of portfolio careers involving the public sector are not well understood or assimilated into the identity of the architecture profession.

Parental leave or a change of work pattern associated with caring responsibilities was a catalyst to move into the public sector for several participants, and many identified flexible work, leave entitlements, clear remuneration structures, reasonable work expectations and job security as attractors. As described by one participant, working in government “allows me to provide well for [my family] ... One choice was to go back to practice. ... I couldn’t see having flexibility in that ... For a lot of people you’re expected to work late hours and that would not have worked for me.”⁵² Joining the public sector was also a way to achieve better work satisfaction than what was on offer working part-time in private practice, without the risks associated with establishing a practice and operating as a sole practitioner, which was identified as a recurring strategy for women to advance their careers in architecture in historical studies.⁵³ As described by one participant: “there wasn’t much further career progression I could have in my current situation [in private practice] ... and the opportunity to have a bigger impact on the built environment at a much bigger scale was really exciting.”⁵⁴ Another described her motivation to move to government: “There was definitely a desire to get a better balance in terms of lifestyle and work. ... But I actually found the move to government has given me a much greater passion and a much greater feeling that I’m contributing to overall built environment outcomes that are better.”⁵⁵

Many participants engaged in teaching work in universities before and/or alongside their work in the public sector. The design evaluation and communication skills developed in teaching were identified as useful for public sector careers, particularly those involving development of assessment, design review and design advocacy. “It’s the best training ground for this sort of role,” as one participant put it.⁵⁶ They also engaged in professional advocacy work through the AIA and other professional organisations, and community volunteering work, which were recognised as avenues through which to develop

networks and transferable skills in communication, administration and management. One participant observed, “All that experience you get outside of architecture, running committees, setting up community [initiatives] ... that sort of leadership stuff ... It’s an amazing training ground for women that a lot of people don’t recognise where you have to stand up to power.”⁵⁷

The interviews also revealed diverse opportunities for design leadership in many arenas including across a range of government departments, public sector authorities, universities, company boards, property development companies and the legal sector.

Design Leadership Expertise

If in the historical survey of women’s public sector careers, the recognition of design contribution was complicated by bureaucratic processes that obscured authorship, new forms of design leadership in government present new challenges to the recognition of professional contribution. Interview participants recognised design expertise as fundamental to their employment in the public sector, and a point of continuity between private and public sector career experience. A focus on design provided “a really good base for understanding how to get better built outcomes and [communicating] what was good design [in government].”⁵⁸ However, many also developed additional expertise in relation to their public sector careers, and in their roles as design advisors. This included both additional or specialist technical expertise, for example in the areas of planning, urban design, heritage and environmental law, as well as what is described as “relational expertise” or “common knowledge built ... where the boundaries of practices intersect,” and needed to work effectively in inter-professional work settings involving complex tasks.⁵⁹ As described by one participant: “One of my roles is to be able to see things from all these perspectives and to try and find the middle ground ... to be encouraging but also quite direct on what isn’t going to work. ... I’m using design skills. ... [But I also need] to see it from consultant’s perspectives ... engineers, landscape architects. ... It is important to be able to negotiate well.”⁶⁰ This additional expertise was obtained through formal education as well as informally, or tacitly, through on the job experience and mentoring.

It is important to reflect on the changing role of architects in government here. Where there was once an emphasis on the technical expertise of design, documentation and contract administration in the delivery of public projects by public works departments, the work of architects in government in the twenty-first century is much more focused on

expert guidance informing policy, procurement and design review. Design governance theory provides a framework to understand the toolkit for design-led built environment governance where design intelligence is prioritised in strategic planning processes and good design outcomes are seen as a means to deliver social, environmental and economic benefit. The concept of design governance arises out of the “governance turn” in the late twentieth century. It conceptualises a mode of urban governance that involves distributed power and decision-making through networks rather than big government. However, design governance theory has not explicitly addressed the question of professional expertise or professional competence, or considered how leadership demonstrated through design advisory processes might expand understanding of the architecture profession.⁶¹ Recognising design governance as a specific expertise provides a framework in which different modes of professional leadership can be recognised and valued.

Design review panels are a good example to illustrate the technical and threshold expertise required in design governance processes. Chairing or participating as a design expert on a design review panel requires design expertise and the ability to analyse and understand technical aspects of a design proposal, as well as the skills to translate the benefits of design outcomes to non-designers, including public administrators, politicians and government and community stakeholders, as well as the ability to utilise the role of the review process to build project capacity, consensus and commitment. One interview participant described it bluntly: “it’s a different skill set. ... you get great practitioners who are not good reviewers.”⁶² Another described the importance of stakeholder engagement within government: “not only is it about making sure you glean some of that expertise from the different areas, but it is also [an opportunity] to make sure that everyone is on board and is supportive.”⁶³

Many interview participants developed specialist knowledge and skills through further formal study in cognate areas including heritage, planning, urban design and environmental law, and through training in public administration and executive leadership. Study was often undertaken concurrently with full-time or part-time work and functioned to credentialise and reinforce knowledge gained on the job as much as provide an opportunity to reflect on praxis. Accelerated paths to leadership were not explicitly mentioned by interviewees, however access to leadership and management training, and support to pursue these activities externally was mentioned multiple times.

The impressive diversification of expertise amongst interview participants sits in contrast to the persistent problem of professional registration in architecture being a barrier to women's career progression. Approximately one third of participants in our research were not registered, which is similar to the findings in the historical survey of women working in the public sector, and higher than for women in the profession in general.⁶⁴ The public sector has had varying capacity to support post-graduation registration pathways, and transition into the public sector sometimes came at the expense of getting registered.

Lack of registration did not necessarily inhibit meaningful contribution or public sector career progression but was still consequential, and for some participants led to a feeling of exclusion from the profession. While in some contexts and roles professional registration is required, for some participants working in roles with job titles not including the term "architect" there is no requirement or incentive to acquire or maintain registration. Although several participants felt that it was "important to maintain an identity as an architect" and this was seen as one way to do so, and to protect and advance the value of design expertise in government.⁶⁵ The National Standard for Competency in Architecture (NSCA), which prescribes the pathways to registration for architects in Australia, focuses on core technical expertise that can be evidenced through the creation of designs, and doesn't tend to accommodate modes of practice through which design expertise may be delivered or evidenced through a wider range of outcomes.

To what extent leadership theory is relevant in design governance is another question raised by this research. The emergence of design governance has paralleled the evolution of leadership theory in business and management. Feminist analysis of leadership theory recognises its origins in mid-twentieth-century American capitalism and critiques its attachment to individuals. Sinclair highlights that leadership is better understood as a process of influence and how it is deployed is "a result of power not truth uncovering,"⁶⁶ while Hutchinson, speaking particularly in relation to women's access to leadership positions in government, points out that "rather than being gender neutral, concepts and practices of leadership are embedded in a variety of social interactions which shape ideas of gender and leadership."⁶⁷ Nonetheless, recognition of what counts as design leadership in the public sector has the potential to change our understanding of professional leadership, and the contribution of women doing this work to the profession.

The question of what constitutes design leadership expertise also needs to be put into a larger contemporary context in which our understanding and valuing of expertise and the professions is under interrogation. This is a question for our larger research project that we hope our interview data will help address. Deamer argues that the failure of the profession to adequately value creative labour is an argument for de-professionalisation,⁶⁸ while post-professional paradigms are challenging the role of expertise in government.⁶⁹ At the same time, the value of expertise *per se* is being challenged, both in the context of post-truth paradigms and in relation to critiques of the dominance of Western epistemology.⁷⁰ There is a challenge for the profession in how to effectively navigate this larger context, to articulate its value in a changing world, while recognising the diversification of professional expertise evidenced in public sector work.

Conclusion

In this paper we have explored how analysis of the public sector careers of women opens a new understanding of design leadership that can inform the evolution of the architecture profession. A more precise understanding of the expertise and roles of design leadership alongside a more comprehensive recognition of the range of ways that architects make careers in the public sector, has the potential to overcome the problem of invisibility, and usefully inform the evolving identity of the profession.

Part of this research has involved uncovering the careers of the many, often invisible, architects, especially women, who have worked in the public sector. Our focus on women's career experience in this research has highlighted what counts as visible architectural work, and what this excludes, and how this is changing. This is relevant not only for women but also for men. While this paper has started to document the work of women in the public sector, there is still more work to be done in uncovering their careers – especially in the postwar era. Failing to understand the historical evolution of architects working in the public sector creates a blind spot for architects into the future.

Endnotes

¹ Abbie Galvin, "Engaging Women in the Built Environment," University of New South Wales, 2020, www.be.unsw.edu.au/event/2020-engaging-women-built-environment, accessed 20 June 2021. The UNSW Engaging Women in the Built Environment ran as an annual event from 2016 to 2020 under the leadership of Professor Helen Lockhead, Dean of UNSW School of Built Environment from 2015 to 2020.

² The New South Wales Government Architect position was established in 1816 (Francis Greenway). During Chris Johnson's tenure (1995-2005) the Office was commercialised. During

2015 the DPW was restructured and downsized to deliver primarily advisory and leadership services. The position of Government Architect was re-established in Queensland as an advisory role in 1999. Western Australia and the Northern Territory followed this model with appointments in 2004, Victoria in 2006, Tasmania in 2009, and the Australian Capital Territory and South Australia in 2010. Offices have been maintained in NSW, QLD, WA, VIC, ACT and SA.

³ The Australian Institute of Architects membership data doesn't include sector of employment. Architects Registration Boards collect information about place of employment, but this is not routinely aggregated at a national level. Neither of these sources gives a comprehensive picture of the architecture profession as many practitioners do not register or are not members of the AIA. Census data is imprecise on this question, collecting occupation data on architects alongside other built environment industries and professions. The difficulty of obtaining reliable data on the architecture profession, and particularly women in the profession, has been recognised by Matthewson and Hanna. Gillian Matthewson, , "Dimensions of Gender: Women's Careers in the Australian Architecture Profession," PhD thesis, University of Queensland, 2015. Bronwyn Hanna, "Absence and Presence: A Historiography of Early Women Architects in New South Wales," PhD thesis, University of New South Wales, 2000.

⁴ Ethics approval for the interview-based research was obtained (2021/HE000992). Participants working in an architectural capacity may be not registered.

⁵ Paula Whitman, *Going Places: The Career Progression of Women in the Architecture Profession* (Brisbane: QUT and RAlA, 2005).

⁶ Julie Willis and Bronwyn Hanna, *Women Architects in Australia, 1900-1950* (Canberra: Royal Australian Institute of Architects, 2001), 59.

⁷ Willis and Hanna, *Women Architects in Australia*; Hanna, "Absence and Presence"; Desley Luscombe and Davina Jackson, "Invisible Women of Public Architecture," *Architecture Australia* 83, no. 2 (March-April 1994): 56-62.

⁸ Willis and Hanna, *Women Architects in Australia*.

⁹ Kirsty Volz, "Claiming Domestic Space: Queensland's Interwar Women Architects and their Labour Saving Devices," *Lilith: A Feminist History Journal*, 23 (2017): 108.

¹⁰ Judith Mackay, "Designing Women: Pioneer Architects," *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland* 20, no. 5 (2008): 169.

¹¹ Donald Watson and Judith McKay, *A Directory of Queensland Architects to 1940* (Brisbane: University of Queensland, 1984), 160.

¹² Watson and McKay, *A Directory of Queensland Architects*, 119.

¹³ Bronwyn Hanna, "Australia's Early Women Architects: Milestones and Achievements," *Fabrications* 12, no. 1 (2002): 39.

¹⁴ Volz, "Claiming Domestic Space," 112.

¹⁵ Willis and Hanna, *Women Architects in Australia*, 59.

¹⁶ Judy Rechner, "The Queensland Workers' Dwelling 1910-1940," *Journal of the Royal Historical Society of Queensland* 15, no. 6 (1994): 266.

¹⁷ Willis and Hanna, *Women Architects in Australia*, 51.

¹⁸ Willis and Hanna, *Women Architects in Australia*, 28.

¹⁹ Willis and Hanna, *Women Architects in Australia*, 59.

²⁰ Hanna, "Australia's Early Women Architects," 48.

²¹ Willis and Hanna, *Women Architects in Australia*, 31.

²² Willis and Hanna, *Women Architects in Australia*, 50.

²³ Willis and Hanna, *Women Architects in Australia*, 47.

²⁴ Watson and McKay, "A Directory of Queensland Architects."

²⁵ Mackay, "Designing Women," 161.

²⁶ Hanna and Willis, *Women Architects in Australia*, 40, 84.

²⁷ Harriet Edquist, "Architecture and Design," *The Encyclopaedia of Women and Leadership in Twentieth-Century Australia*, The Australian Women's Archive Project, 2014.

www.womenaustralia.info/leaders/biogs/WLE0030b.htm, accessed 18 August 2022.

²⁸ Hanna, "Australia's Early Women Architects," 52.

²⁹ Edquist, "Architecture and Design."

³⁰ Russell Darroch and John Dean, *Women in the Architectural Profession* (Canberra: Royal Australian Institute of Architects, 1986), 25.

³¹ Darroch and Dean, *Women in the Architectural Profession*, 15.

³² The report also indicated that women were more highly represented in freelance/contract, academic and salaried non-architect employment categories. Darroch and Dean, *Women in the Architectural Profession*, 15.

³³ “Abby Galvin in Conversation with Beverley Garlick,” *Regional Bureaucracy: Works by the NSW Government Architects Office 1958-1988*, ed. Guillermo Fernandez-Abascal and Hamish McIntosh (Melbourne: Perimeter Editions, 2022), 111-15.

³⁴ Suzanne Dance, interview by Meg Lee and Hilary McPhee, Fitzroy History Society, 3 November 2016, <https://oralhistory.fitzroyhistorysociety.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2017/08/FHS-Suzanne-Dance-2016-.pdf>, accessed 18 August 2022.

³⁵ Deborah van der Plaats, “‘Shabby’ Careers?: Women Working in Architecture in Post-War Queensland,” *Hot Modernism: Queensland Architecture 1945-1975*, ed. John Macarthur, Janina Gosseye, Deborah van der Plaats and Andrew Wilson (London: Artifice Books on Architecture, 2015), 182-99.

³⁶ van der Plaats, “‘Shabby’ Careers?,” 197, 199.

³⁷ van der Plaats, “‘Shabby’ Careers?,” 197.

³⁸ Desley Luscombe and Davina Jackson, “Invisible Women of Public Architecture,” *Architecture Australia* 83, no. 2 (March-April 1994): 56-62.

³⁹ Luscombe and Jackson, “Invisible Women of Public Architecture.”

⁴⁰ Luscombe and Jackson, “Invisible Women of Public Architecture,” 58.

⁴¹ Luscombe and Jackson, “Invisible Women of Public Architecture,” 58.

⁴² “Female Hopes are Fired: Victories Scored in Public Service Appeals,” *Truth*, 17 February 1935, 20.

⁴³ Luscombe and Jackson, “Invisible Women of Public Architecture,” 58.

⁴⁴ Hanna and Willis, *Women Architects in Australia*, 59.

⁴⁵ Whitman, *Going Places*, 23.

⁴⁶ Whitman, *Going Places*, 23.

⁴⁷ Amanda Sinclair, “Not Just ‘Add Women In’: Women Remaking Leadership,” *Seizing the Initiative: Australian Women Leaders in Politics, Workplaces and Communities* (Melbourne: eScholarship Research Centre, University of Melbourne, 2012), 22.

⁴⁸ Peggy Deamer, *The Architect as Worker: Immaterial Labor, the Creative Class, and the Politics of Design* (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015); Andrew Templer and Tupper Cawsey, “Rethinking Career Development in an Era of Portfolio Careers,” *Career Development International* 4, no. 2 (1999): 70-76.

⁴⁹ Whitman, *Going Places*, 23.

⁵⁰ Interviews 05 and 04.

⁵¹ Interview 02.

⁵² Interview 03.

⁵³ Whitman, *Going Places*, 2005. Darroch and Dean, *Women in the Architectural Profession*, 1986.

⁵⁴ Interview 06

⁵⁵ Interview 04.

⁵⁶ Interview 01.

⁵⁷ Interview 01.

⁵⁸ Interview 04.

⁵⁹ Ann Edwards, “Building Common Knowledge at the Boundaries between Professional Practices: Relational Agency and Relational Expertise in Systems of Distributed Expertise,” *International Journal of Educational Research* 50 (2011): 33. Helga Nowotny, “Transgressive Competence: The Narrative of Expertise,” *European Journal of Social Theory* 3, no. 1 (2000): 5-21.

⁶⁰ Interview 03.

⁶¹ Matthew Carmona, Claudio de Magalhaes and Lucy Matarajan, *Design Governance: The CABE Experiment* (New York and London: Routledge, 2017), 11.

⁶² Interview 07.

⁶³ Interview 06.

⁶⁴ Gill Matthewson and Parlour, *The Numbers in a Nutshell: Women in Architecture, Australia* (18 June 2017), <https://parlour.org.au/research/statistics/the-numbers-in-a-nutshell/>. This report indicates that 22% of registered architects in Australia are women.

⁶⁵ Interview 03, 01 and 05.

⁶⁶ Sinclair, “Not Just ‘Adding Women In’,” 16-17.

⁶⁷ Jacquie Hutchinson and Elizabeth Walker, "Leadership in Local Government: 'No Girls Allowed'," *Australian Journal of Public Administration* 73, no. 2 (2014): 182.

⁶⁸ Peggy Deamer, "De-Professionalisation," in *Architects After Architecture: Alternative Pathways for Practice*, ed. Harriet Harries, Rory Hyde and Roberta Marcaccio (New York: Routledge, 2021).

⁶⁹ Terry Johnson, "Governmentality and the Institutionalization of Expertise," *Health Professions and the State in Europe* (London: Routledge, 1994), 7-24.

⁷⁰ Tom Nichols, *The Death of Expertise: The Campaign against Established Knowledge and Why it Matters* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2019); Daniele Hromek, Sara Lynn Rees and Françoise Lane, "Not an Expert," Asia Pacific Architecture Forum panel discussion. <https://parlour.org.au/indigenise/not-an-expert/>, accessed 18 August 2022.