

# 2006 Subtropical Cities Conference

## Welcome from the Conference Chair

Welcome everyone to this important conference.

When cities around the world are increasingly looking the same and similarly adding to current environmental crises, I am sure this conference on subtropical cities will be seen as a *pivotal moment* when subtropical design with its commitment to local distinctiveness provided a more *nuanced approach* to designing for sustainable cities. This approach is not the latest buzz for urban design, namely Creative Cities of commodified places, but rather a creative place because of free-flowing ideas, where there is concern for inclusiveness of all people and stewardship of local distinctness instead of seeing it as yet another commodity.

So for the next three days we will be in a *warm scented garden of ideas*.

It used to be said that innovative ideas only came from cold climate cities like New York or Melbourne because people sat in warm coffee shops actively discussing current problems and what to do about them. But in today's cities – no matter what the climate- everyone is inside. They are drifting in the bland anonymity of over-designed, controlled places for shopping where intense discussions are rare and ideas are thin in the ground.

Despite this, in subtropical Brisbane something else is happening. People are sitting outside, gathering in venues such as the Powerhouse, the art gallery, the grassy banks of the river or in shady outdoor cafes to discuss ideas. It seems as if the city has gone beyond the image of merely a playground and there is keen enthusiasm to look at how subtropical environments can produce other ways of addressing the problems of the contemporary city.

For this inaugural conference, the Centre for Subtropical Design, QUT has brought together a group of *significant planners and designers from subtropical cities around the world*, including challenging contributions from cities in the Southern Hemisphere.

Many of the presentations focus on the importance of a relaxed public realm and permeable housing developments which address urban consolidation in innovative ways while maintaining a closeness to nature; a far cry from the private gated communities of McMansions spreading over the terrain.

So I welcome you to Subtropical Cities 06 which promises to re-awaken in us a sense of enchantment with subtropicality, particularly in Australia, and a sense of excitement about how we can plan and design appropriate urbanism that is enriched by social, cultural and environmental care.

Dr Helen Armstrong,  
Professor-Emeritus in Landscape Architecture, QUT.