



Rest Stops and Viewpoints

Towards a New Network of Small Public Architecture in Regional NSW

Jordan Silver





NSW
Architects
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The Byera Hadley Travelling Scholarship Journal Series is a library of research compiled by architects, students and graduates since 1951, and made possible by the generous gift of Sydney Architect and educator, Byera Hadley (1872-1937). Byera Hadley was a distinguished educator and NSW architect.

As Lecturer-in-Charge of the architecture course at Sydney Technical College, Hadley built “one of the finest schools of architecture in the Empire” and is credited with gaining Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA) recognition of the course, which gave post-1923 graduates exemption from the RIBA examinations.

As an architect in private practice, Hadley drew from a wide range of revival styles in his designs for significant urban and suburban commissions, which included two town halls, several multi-storey city warehouses, numerous suburban churches and Sydney University’s original Wesley College and chapel.

Hadley’s “greatest contribution to NSW architecture remains his insistence on the importance of travel in Australian architectural training.” In 1928 and 1929, Hadley sponsored two £25 scholarships through the Board of Architects of NSW. The success of these must have provided the catalyst for his 1937 bequest.

The Byera Hadley Travelling Scholarships have been awarded since 1951 as a result of the Trust established by the Byera Hadley estate. The list of scholarship recipients over the years includes many architects who have contributed enormously to the profession and the broader community.

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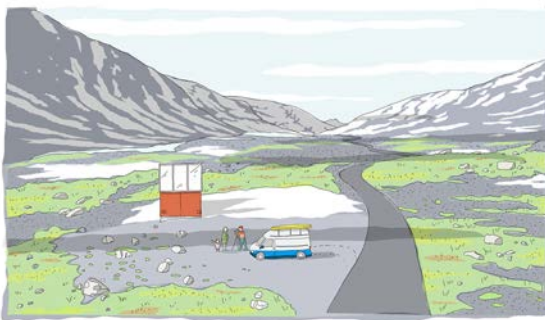
Front Cover:

Fictional rest stop in Coonabarabran near Warrumbungle National Park.

(Illustration by Jordan Silver, photo credit: Destination NSW)

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Towards a New Network of Small Public Architecture in Regional NSW



Above (top to bottom):

Norway Travel Map. My trip in Norway was organised into four distinct parts; a campervan trip in the south, attendance of a conference in Oslo, an EV road trip in the north and a final stop in the far north.

Imagining the trip. An early sketch from my purpose-built platform for my research, Towards Small Things (www.towardssmallthings.com).

(Illustrations by Jordan Silver, project by Manthey Kula).

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Foreword

Too often the road network is thought of only as a work horse supporting transport in all its industrious forms, but it can also be thought of as an incredible network of smooth surfaces spread across the landscape, connecting all our most valued, scenic and interesting places. Countries like Norway and Scotland are seeing the potential of this to great success (as well as some lessons) and in a similar way we have too through initiatives like the Remembrance Driveway between Sydney and Canberra and more recently the Aboriginal Art Trail on the Pacific Highway.

This research, with its first hand experiences, analysis, interviews, images and ideas, is a useful catalyst to continue this thinking on our more scenic and interesting routes. There is potential in working with our existing projects, road maintenance tasks, safety initiatives and within our own urban design policy 'Beyond the Pavement', to explore the benefits of the incremental creation of unique pieces of context sensitive, fine yet robust, design elements in select rest stops, viewing areas and laybys.

The beauty of creating small 'jewels' of public architecture, is that they are attractive and compelling and talked about. As such they can entice people to explore, to stop and rest, to reveal and support the economy of country towns and communities and as a result to build people's understanding of the wider state, its vital role and its natural and cultural heritage. These are all things that Transport wants to encourage.



Gareth Collins
Director
Centre for Urban Design
Transport for NSW

Right:
Fictional rest stop and lookout along
Alpine way near Thredbo in the Snowy
Mountains.
(Illustration by Jordan Silver, photo
credit: Destination NSW)





This page:
Fictional rest stop near Dorrigo National
Park, North Coast NSW.

(Illustration by Jordan Silver, photo
credit: Destination NSW)

Right:

An typical existing rest stop along the
Newell Highway, Gowang, NSW

(Photo credit: Jordan Silver)

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Scope & Purpose

Throughout my career as a practicing architect I have been interested in small ubiquitous structures; toilet blocks, shade shelters and viewing platforms.

I value these structures for the utility they provide, and for the way their modest scale invites ambitious design. But too many of our current structures – often situated in terrific natural beauty – are disappointingly tired and repetitive. Devoid of any meaningful connection to culture or community.

More thoughtful interventions do exist here and there, and increasingly so, but the majority are in urban environments not regional landscapes.

My purpose in this research is to address this issue and produce a valuable resource for the Architects Registration Board, government bodies and designers, towards a new network of small public architecture in regional NSW.

To that end, this report presents a detailed analysis of international examples in Norway and Scotland and a summary of a comprehensive engagement process with potential government stakeholders towards a future program, preliminarily titled NSW Scenic Routes.

A note on the primary international example:

The primary international example in this research is the Norwegian Scenic Routes, a structured program that has been delivering exemplary small public

architecture in Norway for three decades. I came across the program in 2020 while cataloguing small structures from around the world on a website called Towards Small Things.

With the support of the Byera Hadley Travelling Scholarship, I have since been able to explore how the program came about, its impact on communities and tourism, and how a similar project could be viable in regional NSW.

I have interviewed members of the program team, architects, government officials, academics and critics. I have visited many of the built projects and talked with members of the local communities. I attended a conference and exhibition to mark the program's 30 year anniversary, and visited other secondary examples of related initiatives in Scotland and elsewhere in Norway.

It has been a tremendous privilege to undertake this research, and I am indebted to many in having been able to do so.





This page:

Allmannajuvet Zinc Mine Museum by
Peter Zumthor.

(Photo credit: Jordan Silver)

Right:

A typical Norwegian Hytte in
Hamningberg, Norway.

(Photo credit: Jordan Silver)

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Primary Example: Norwegian Scenic Routes

In the 1970s and 1980s, following an economic windfall, Norway built a new network of tunnels and highways to better connect its regions. These new roads bypassed many older trade routes making them redundant for day-to-day travel, but ideal for recreation and tourism.

At the same time Norway was investigating strategies to boost domestic tourism, because many Norwegians were choosing warmer countries like Spain and France for holidays.

A New Kind of Small Structure

The idea for a new program of tourism infrastructure emerged. The Norwegian Scenic Routes would celebrate 18 of the most scenic driving routes in the country and attract national and international visitors. To distinguish itself from other scenic driving locations worldwide, the Norwegian government decided to update their tired and dated roadside infrastructure with exciting contemporary architectural installations.

Program founder, Jan Andresen, spent several years developing an approach with input from politicians, artists and academics. Together they invited a core group of Oslo-based architects and landscape architects to design the first few interventions along the Sognefjellet route. After the success of this pilot in 1993, the program received dedicated funding and has been running for the last three decades.

Note: The Norwegian Hytte

Norway has a long tradition of building small public structures in remote landscapes. Hyttes (small cabins) are scattered throughout the countryside. They are used for hiking, fishing, hunting and skiing. The Norwegian Trekking Association (DNT) manages over 600 such hyttes, which are available for public use for a small membership fee.



Scale & Impact

The Norwegian Scenic Routes is delivered by the Norwegian Public Roads Authority. The program celebrated its 30th anniversary this year, and to date has commissioned over 50 local architects, landscape architects and artists to deliver experimental interventions along 18 scenic driving routes.

The projects are numerous, with over 200 delivered as of January 2023 and many more currently under development. Regardless of the project scale (they vary from benches to visitor centres and museums), there is a consistent focus on site-specific design, material innovation and craftsmanship across the whole program.

From a tourism perspective, the Scenic Routes has had a significant impact, drawing tourists to specific areas and supporting local tourism operators and businesses.

The program has also platformed Norwegian architects and designers by providing keynote commissions in rich, landscape settings.

For some Norwegian practitioners, the Scenic Routes has been instrumental in helping build an international profile and securing ongoing work. Many attribute the formation of their practice to the opportunities provided by the program.

01.



02.



01. Havøysund Tourist Route by Reiulf Ramstad Architects.
(Photo credit: Reiulf Ramstad Architects)

02. Sohlbergplassen Viewpoint by Carl-Viggo Hølmekbakk.
(Photo credit: Carl-Viggo Hølmekbakk)

03. Steilneset Witch Memorial by Peter Zumthor.
(Photo credit: Ken Schluchtmann)

04. Reststop Akkarvikodden by Manthey Kula Architects.
(Photo credit: Paul Warchol)

05. Aurland Lookout by Saunders Architecture.
(Photo credit: Tommie Wilhelmsen, Saunders Architecture)

03.



04.



05.



Journal note: Børre Skodvin Interview

The following is an excerpt from a conversation between Jordan Silver and Børre Skodvin, founding partner of Jensen & Skodvin. Recording on July 09, 2023.

JS:

So many of your projects that I have visited have this incredible detail and complexity, this kind of beautiful complexity. In my practice, I find so much of my work has to be made systematic and efficient because it's all driven by cost. Exhaustively driven by cost. And when I see your work, it feels like the work of an architect who is able to be on site making minute decisions along the way. Which is beautiful to me but seems a very expensive way of doing things.

How do you manage these kind of complex projects without having to draw a million detail drawings?

BS:

Well, we draw a million detail drawings. But it's different for different types of projects. The Tourist Routes, obviously, was like an architectural laboratory. Because it was new. And in particular, it was different because there was a defined architectural ambition from the part of the client from the start. Which was, in essence, to create these types of sites with an architectural quality that was outstanding.

This is what they wanted. They wanted something that would be set apart as different. And more coherent and integral than what you would usually see.

JS:

Do you think that is what has driven the program? Because there seems to be one side of the motivation which is like, tourist economy, regional growth, all that kind of stuff. But then there is the program team, this team led by Jan Andresen, who seem to be more motivated by the quality of the architectural outcome.

BS:

Yeah, that's what they've managed to create.

JS:

Which, to me, is the genius of the whole thing.

BS:

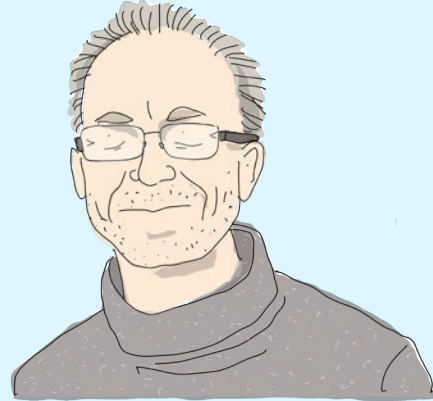
Yeah. And, in my opinion anyway, there is one key element which needs to be in place and which they established very early on. And which is shared by several Government initiated projects that were all started in the nineties. We had the Winter Olympics in ninety four, and then we had the new airport at Gardermoen in ninety eight, and then we had the Tourist Routes project which started around ninety five.

JS:

So you're saying there was a national architectural ambition?

BS:

It was a national architectural ambition. And it came, to a very large extent, out of one minister of Culture. A woman who was in government in the early nineties



and who did one of the first Government reports on architecture and design as a kind of key identifier internationally. So they had that ambition. They wanted to be identified internationally as a nation setting high standards for architecture and design.

JS:
And that's not economic, is it? That's national pride.

BS:
It's about national pride, but it's also about economy because it has, as it turns out, driven, or at least contributed to driving the tourism economy. And they used one major tool in order to achieve this. They established in all these projects with what they call an Architecture Committee. Which was set up as a kind of national organization, with one group doing the south, one doing the east, one doing the west, one doing middle Norway, and one doing the north.

But they gave it a significant influence. So this committee would always review the projects at several points during the planning. So you would present in front of the committee and discuss the project with them. And it would be a purely architectural discussion. And there were only architects, designers and artists present in the committee, and they would have the power to return the project, saying that 'this needs to be reworked', or 'we recommend looking again at this'. Being very particular in their critique. And the result was that the evaluation of the architectural quality was not driven by economic motivation.

JS:
I mean, that's kind of a dream situation, isn't it?

BS:
It is. But I think it's necessary for any government who wants to do this kind of thing to understand that it's impossible to combine very, very high architectural ambitions with a normal project structure. Because if you have to discuss architecture and economy in parallel at the same time, economy will always win.

JS:
So what do I do when I get back to Australia? And there are people within Government who are very supportive of this idea, who will be driven by this idea of architectural quality and will see its value. But inevitably there will come a point where this economic argument is brought up as a barrier.

BS:
Well somehow first you have to find some oil. Then you create a huge Government fund, from where you can just shovel out piles and piles of dollars.

JS:
Well we have similar natural resources. Only we've given all that money to offshore investors instead of a Government fund.

BS:
Well, we did that too. But we just made sure that they paid a hell of a lot of tax.

Key Findings

1. Infrastructure Budget

Public architecture in Norway is usually funded through arts and culture pathways. But the scenic routes differs in that projects are funded as part of infrastructure budgets. This funding strategy is a fundamental aspect of the program's ongoing feasibility and success. When a tunnel or bypass is planned, government policy requires the contractor to include the cost of a Scenic Routes project within their budget. The cost of an architectural rest stop or viewpoint becomes negligible relative to the cost of a highway or tunnel.

2. Scenic Routes

The primary attractions of the Norwegian program are the driving routes themselves. The roads are beautiful, often straddling high-altitude mountains with dramatic corners and awe-inspiring views. While the architecture along the routes is compelling, these structures offer a place to stop and take in the surroundings to people who are already enjoying the journey. With a few exceptions, they are rarely destinations in themselves.

3. Trail of Breadcrumbs

Many of the Scenic Routes projects are very modest when it comes to scale and footprint. A carefully planned path or a thoughtful bench; a small platform with cleverly hidden railings to preserve an outlook. By delivering many small projects the program creates an intriguing trail of breadcrumbs in the landscape. This allows travellers more choice of where and when to stop. It also means the projects have lower relative cost and complexity, making them ideal testing grounds for new architectural ideas and young architectural talent.



Reststop Akkarvikodden by Manthey Kula Architects.
(Photo credit: Jordan Silver)



The winding roads of the Sognefjellet National Scenic Route.
(Photo credit: Jordan Silver)



Vedahaugane & The Den by LJB Architecture.
(Photo credit: Jordan Silver)

4. Regeneration

In some cases the role of a project is to attract people to sites of regeneration. Snøhetta's reindeer pavilion (right) is an example where the selected site was formerly a military testing ground. The new pavilion is part of a renewal effort, providing visitors with extraordinary views of the national park in all weather. Aided by social media, projects like this become very popular with locals and tourists, helping to revitalise the surrounding region.



Norwegian Wild Reindeer Pavilion by Snøhetta.
(Photo credit: Jordan Silver)

5. Spectacle Effect

The lookout at Stegastein (right), by Saunders Architecture, was the first of the Scenic Routes projects to use a dramatic cantilever to gain extraordinary views. Many consider this a turning point for the focus of the program, which has since favoured projects that achieve this kind of 'spectacle effect'. Some more recent projects have pushed this agenda even further, drawing criticism for overdevelopment and causing a 'crowding effect' at some locations.



Aurland Lookout by Saunders Architecture.
(Photo credit: Jordan Silver)

6. Local Inspiration

Several local municipalities have followed the methodology of the national program. The floating Sauna at Soria Moria (right) is one such example, where the local community was engaged to define the project scope. In this case, they requested a public sauna. The resulting building draws tourists with evocative architecture, but its primary users are the local residents of the area. At the time of my visit, the facility was booked out by locals for months in advance.



Soria Moria Sauna by Feste Landscape / Architecture.
(Photo credit: Jordan Silver)

7. Cultural Artefacts

The Allmannajuvet Zinc Mine Museum (right) and the Steilneset Witch Memorial (over) are two projects with particular cultural relevance. Designed by Swiss architect Peter Zumthor, these structures have interpreted the rich cultural stories of the area and captured them in built form. In these examples, the capacity of a small roadside project is elevated beyond amenity to become a sophisticated artefact of its place and people.



Allmannajuvet Zinc Mine Museum by Peter Zumthor.
(Photo credit: Jordan Silver)

8. Local Custodianship

After delivery, each project becomes the responsibility of its local municipality. This means taking on the responsibility of maintenance and operations. The contracts for repair work are competitive and incentivise high quality craftsmanship from local contractors, who tend to gain repeat work with the program.



Viewpoint Tungeneset by Code, under repair.
(Photo credit: Jordan Silver)

9. Inspired Communications

The Public Roads Authority has consistently produced quality marketing materials for the Scenic Routes program. The government has released high quality publications about the program periodically and has created several international exhibitions. The latest, 'RAST', included self-reflective critiques of the program's limitations and long-form debates in an effort to improve the next round of projects. This standard of marketing extends to the signage and wayfinding for the project which is easily recognized along the routes.



An example of wayfinding along the Norwegian Scenic Routes.
(Photo credit: Jordan Silver)



Steilneset Witch Memorial by Peter Zumthor
(Photo credit: Jordan Silver)

Journal note: Joint Venture Projects

Elevating Private Tourism Architecture

In some instances, the Norwegian Scenic Routes has co-invested with a private tourism operator or landowner to develop commercial tourism infrastructure. These joint venture projects provide interesting case studies of the impact of the program beyond public rest stops and viewpoints.

I visited three key examples of these joint venture projects: the dining hall at Raubergstulen Lodge (01), the entrance building at Sognefjellshytta (02) and the Juvet Landscape Hotel (03). All three projects were designed by acclaimed Oslo-based architects, Jensen & Skodvin.

Jensen & Skodvin's Influence

Jensen & Skodvin have had a close involvement in the Norwegian Scenic Routes since its initial pilot, designing several of the program's most prominent works. Due to their close involvement they have been able to connect their private clients with the program team and help broker joint venture partnerships.

Jensen & Skodvin's work has a unique quality, characterized by rich material experimentation and highly sculptural buildings. The origins of their approach can be traced back to some of their early contributions to the Scenic Routes, which provided them with an ideal testing ground for architectural experimentation.

Like other participating designers, Jensen & Skodvin attribute the success of their practice to the opportunities provided by the Scenic Routes. It is my hope that a similar program in NSW could provide the same opportunities to emerging local designers.



The entrance building at Sognefjellshytta by Jensen & Skodvin
(Photo Credit: Jordan Silver)

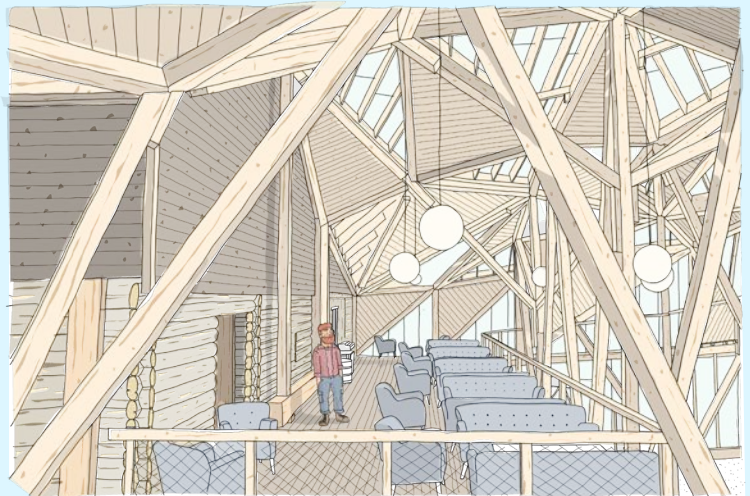
01. Raubergstulen Lodge

A contemporary glass house forms a large dining hall. Inside there are tables, chairs and several mature pine trees. The trees have been dried and stripped, revealing a smooth blonde tone. Fixed in place, each tree becomes a structural column. Hundreds of secondary supports are loosely fixed from the trees to the external glass walls, bracing the structure. The nest of branches and support beams is kept above head height, preserving panoramic views of the surrounding mountains.



02. Sognefjellshytta

The Sognefjellshytta is a favoured training camp for international ski teams. Lodgings are located in two linear buildings, recently connected by a new arrival hall made of timber and glass. Inside, the structure reaches out in multiple directions, bracing off the existing buildings to meet the new canopy like a spider's web. Access to the rooms and restaurant is via a perimeter ramp which permits views down into the hall and out through to the surrounding mountains.



03. Juvet Landscape Hotel

The first phase of the Juvet Landscape Hotel project comprised seven small 'pod-like' rooms in the forest, providing guests an immersive nature hotel experience. The hotel has since expanded to include a converted barn for dining, a bath house and a conference hall. The conference hall (left) includes a large roof light, open to the sky. Beneath it a series of clear-span timber beams are placed over and across one another in an intricate weave, filtering the light from above.





This page:
The Pyramid Viewpoint by BTE
Architecture.
(Photo credit: Andrew Lee)

Bottom right:
Mirrored Cabin by Angus Ritchie and
Daniel Tyler.
(Photo credit: Ross Campbell)

4

Secondary Example: Scottish Scenic Routes

In Scotland, a small group of architects and government officials adapted the Norwegian Scenic Routes model into a similar initiative called the Scottish Scenic Routes. The program commenced in 2013 with an initial pilot round of projects but did not continue past a second round of projects in 2016. For my research, this provided an interesting secondary example where the Norwegian model has been re-contextualized.

The Scottish Scenic Routes was instigated by Edinburgh-based architect Peter Wilson. He was inspired by the Norwegian Scenic Routes and its capacity to platform young and emerging architects.

With the help of government official Helena Huws, Wilson lobbied for a similar program of nature-based pavilions to support Scottish tourism. The project was well-timed, as Scottish government was looking for ways to re-position former transport networks like roads and canals for recreation and tourism.

Wilson pitched the Scottish Scenic Routes on three core principles; providing sustainable employment in regional areas, supporting local design talent and showcasing sustainable building methodologies.



Key Findings

1. Keep it Roadside

Whereas the Norwegian projects are typically sited along roads, Scotland's onerous traffic regulations made this approach unfeasible. Instead, the Scottish projects are away from the road, imbedded in their respective landscapes. This makes for immersive experiences, but it also removes a level of passive surveillance from each site. The result is that projects are prone to vandalism and require more effort to maintain. Many of the projects I visited were damaged or surrounded by litter.



The Pyramid Viewpoint by BTE Architecture in context, aerial view. (Photo credit: Alamy Images)

2. Local Custodianship

For the Scottish Scenic Routes, land ownership varies from project to project. In some cases projects are located on private land within national parks, where the responsibility for maintenance is ambiguous. In the case of the mirrored cabin at Loch Lomand (right), the landowners and local national park both claimed to have no responsibility for the project. Since its installation, the cabin has been vandalised beyond repair. Some travellers have even lit camping fires within the timber structure, using cladding as firewood.



Mirrored Cabin by Angus Ritchie and Daniel Tyler, current condition. (Photo credit: Jordan Silver)

3. Resilient materials

Like the Norwegian examples, the Scottish projects are in highly exposed sites with dramatic seasonal shifts and heavy rainfall. Where the Norwegian projects are mainly of steel and concrete, the Scottish Scenic Routes program focused on timber construction. This increases maintenance requirements and makes the installations vulnerable to vandalism. In cases like the Pyramid viewpoint in Loch Lomand (right), the timber cladding was already in need of repair at the time of my visit, only a few years after construction.



The Pyramid Viewpoint by BTE Architecture, current condition. (Photo credit: Jordan Silver)



Woven Sound Viewpoint at Falls of Falloch by John Kennedy.
(Photo credit: Ross Campbell)



This page:
Fictional rest stop near Gibraltar Range National Park, New England
North West.
(Illustration by Jordan Silver, photo credit: Destination NSW)

Bottom right:
Cobar Sound Chapel by Glenn Murcutt with Georges Lentz
(Photo credit: Anthony Browell)

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Preliminary Model: NSW Scenic Routes

Timing & Context

Long-distance travel is a quintessential part of regional life and tourism in Australia.

The Coronavirus pandemic put renewed emphasis on domestic tourism in Australia, with many Australians 're-discovering their backyard'. Post COVID, the lingering inflation of international airfares has made state-based travel an appealing alternative.

State government initiatives like the \$2 billion dollar 'Regional Growth Fund' (2017-2023) and the NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service's 'Visitor Infrastructure Program', demonstrate a commitment to improving the standard of regional tourism infrastructure at the government level.

Projects like the Cobar Sound Chapel, by acclaimed architect Glenn Murcutt, and the Warrumbungles Visitor Centre, by TKD Architects, show a growing recognition of the value of small public architecture in regional areas.

The NSW Scenic Routes

With this context in mind, the timing is ripe to renew dated roadside infrastructure on a large scale. This can be realised through a new State government program, 'The NSW Scenic Routes', which replaces tired, ageing or unsafe infrastructure along touring roads with thoughtful, architectural interventions. The core aims of the program would be as follows:

1. Renew and improve existing tourism infrastructure.
2. Platform local and emerging design talent.
3. Showcase a Designing with Country approach across multiple projects.

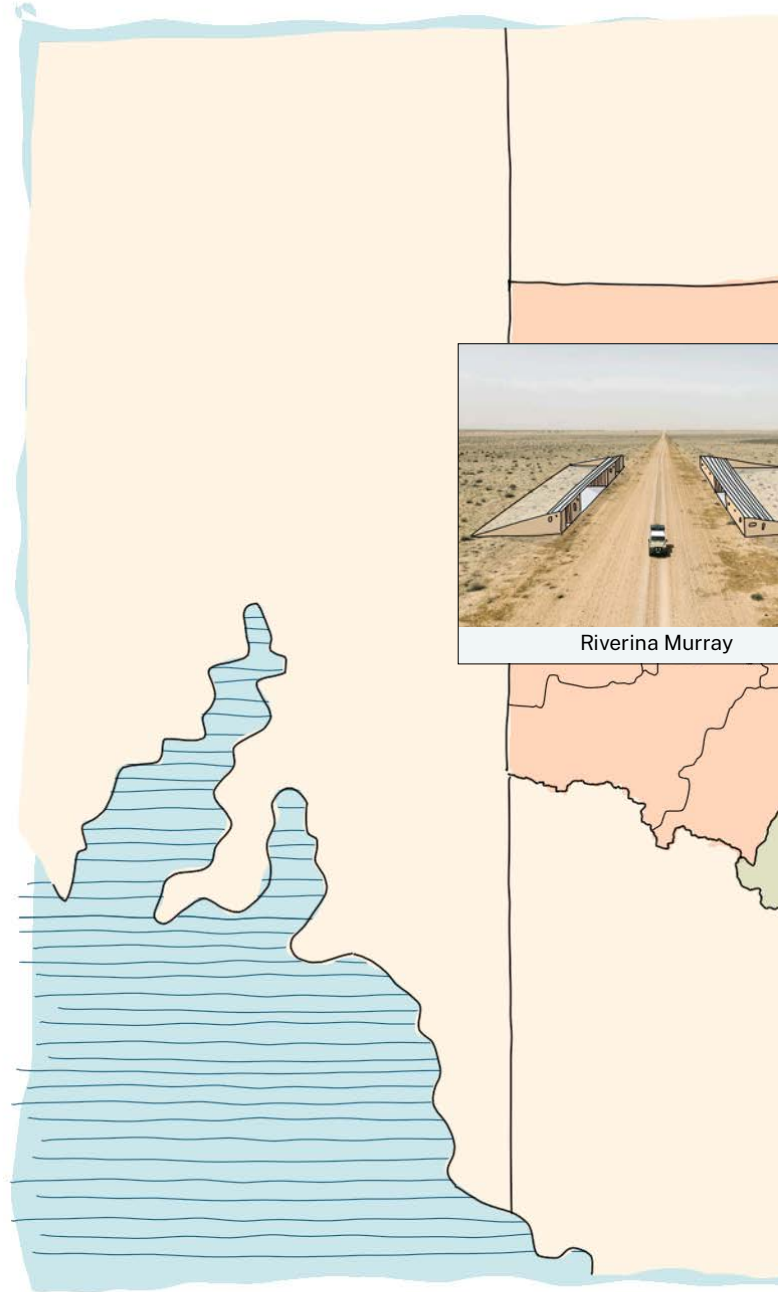


NSW Scenic Routes

By leveraging the design talent of emerging NSW architects, landscape architects and designers, utilitarian components of road infrastructure (toilet blocks, shade shelters, picnic tables, viewing platforms, railings etc.) can be elevated to thoughtful sites of interest and generosity.

Each intervention would demonstrate sensitivity to its environment, follow a Designing with Country approach, and connect visitors with its cultural relevance.

As a collective network, they would imbue road travel state-wide with a unique combination of utility and intrigue. Where the act of stopping off to rest might reveal something new, and enrich the experience of getting from A to B.



Fictional Map.

An early sketch of my proposed network of architectural rest stops and viewpoints throughout regional NSW. Each project is a unique response to its local climate, setting and cultural story. Viewed as a collective, they highlight the diversity of landscapes in regional NSW.

(Illustrations by Jordan Silver, Photo Credits: Destination NSW)



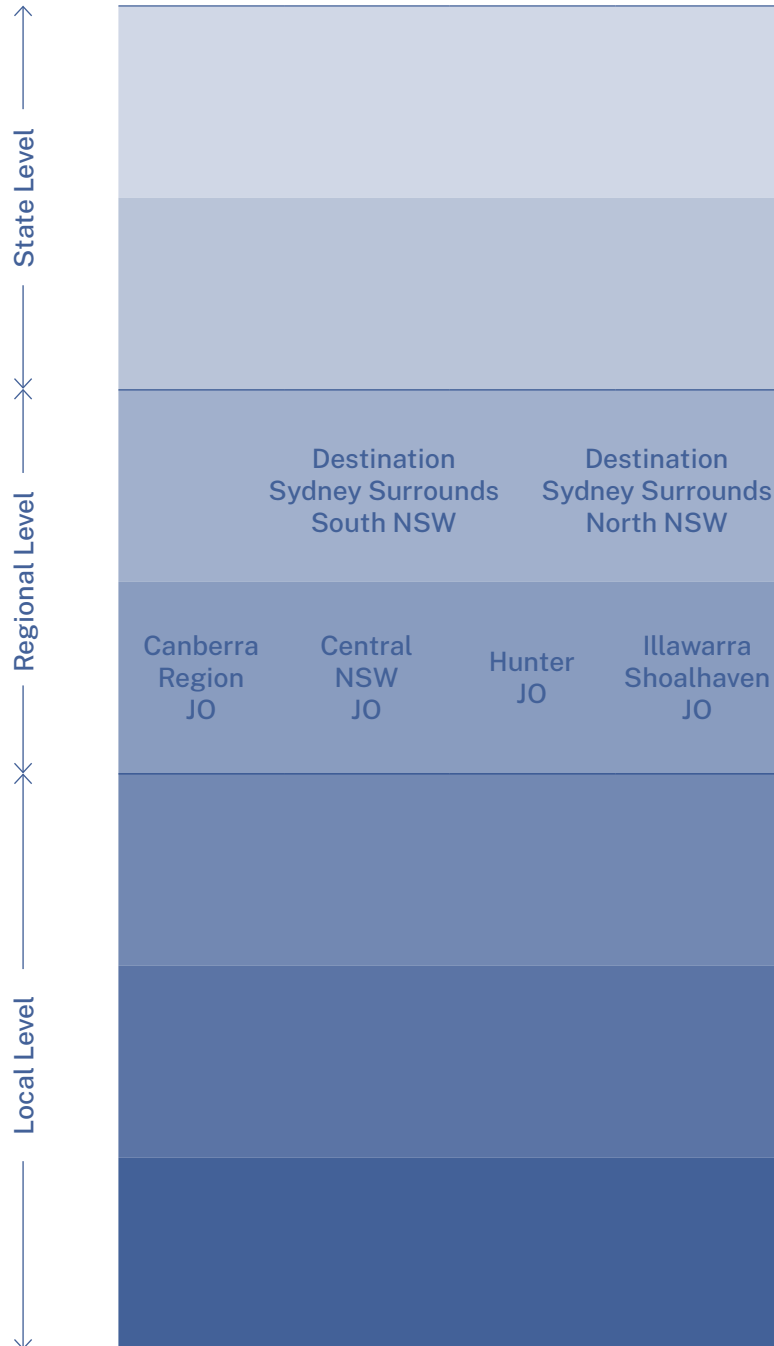
Mapping Key Stakeholders

Through my conversations with Government representatives, architects and regional organizations, I have identified the key stakeholders that would need to be engaged in the implementation of the NSW Scenic Routes.

At a state level, the three key stakeholders for such a program would be Transport for NSW (TfNSW), Destination NSW (DNSW) and the Government Architect of NSW (GANSW). These departments would be involved in the design of the program at a high level, ensuring it aligns with best practice in design excellence, supports the established tourism plans for each region and is delivered in a timely, cost-effective manner.

At a regional level, the seven Destination Networks would be essential stakeholders to help guide the selection of appropriate routes and project sites for the program. Their established relationships with each of the thirteen Joint Organisations would ensure the development of any project is coordinated with the needs of local Governments and their communities.

At a local level, National Parks, Local Councils and First Nations stakeholders including LALCs are critical participants in the program, ensuring the brief of each project is tailored to address the needs of local community and support the aims of local tourism operators.

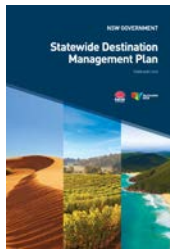


NSW Scenic Routes Key Stakeholder Map. Stakeholders are organised from a program to project level including key state, regional and local groups. (Credit: Jordan Silver)

Program

NSW State Government								
Transport for NSW		Destination NSW		Government Architect NSW				
Destination Central West NSW		Destination Country and Outback NSW		Destination North Coast NSW		Destination Southern NSW		Destination Riverina Murray NSW
Namoi JO	New England JO	Northern Rivers JO	Orana JO	Riverina Murray JO	Riverina JO	Mid North Coast JO	Far North West JO	Far South West JO
National Parks and Wildlife Service NSW								
Local Council			Local Aboriginal Land Council(s)					
Visitors / Local Community								

Project



Key Policy Frameworks (top to bottom):

Beyond the Pavement 2020, TfNSW

Better Placed, GANSW

Connecting with Country, GANSW

Greener Places, GANSW

Statewide Destination Management Plan, Destination NSW

Destination Network Destination Management Plans, Destination NSW

Understanding the Policy Framework

The NSW Scenic Routes program will be informed by a series of strategic policies and frameworks. Collectively, these frameworks articulate a vision for better design and tourism outcomes across the state. A summary of the key frameworks according to each of the three key Government Stakeholders is as follows:

Transport for NSW

The key policy framework from TfNSW is 'Beyond the Pavement' (2020), produced and implemented by the Centre for Urban Design. The framework articulates an urban design method to be followed by any works relating to roads or maritime infrastructure, including key objectives, requirements and responsibilities for projects.

The framework includes a set of nine principles that act as a guide for high-quality design outcomes. The NSW Scenic Routes program stands to develop principle 7 in particular, 'Designing and experience in movement', which calls for a 'progressive sequence of visual events on major road programs and projects'. Further, the principle advocates for 'a theme or rationale for major road corridors' to address its 'unique cultural qualities'.

Government Architect NSW

The three key frameworks from GANSW are 'Better Placed', 'Connecting with Country' (2023) and 'Greener Places'. Better Placed provides an integrated design policy for the built environment across NSW. Connecting with Country is a best practice guide on how to respond to Country in the planning, design and delivery of built environment projects in NSW. Greener Places articulates an integrated vision for green urban infrastructure.

Combined, these three frameworks articulate a standard of excellence for design in NSW. For the NSW Scenic Routes to achieve one of its core objectives, to extend design excellence into regional areas, each project will need to be reviewed against these guiding documents.

Destination NSW / Destination Networks NSW

The key frameworks from Destination NSW are the 'Statewide Destination Management Plan' and the individual Destination Management Plans for each of the six Destination Networks. Combined, these documents outline the strategic vision for tourism at a state, and regional level. They describe tourism trends in each region and identify key opportunities for growth.

Route and Site Selection

The task of selecting appropriate sites for each NSW Scenic Route project should be informed by:

1. The established mapping of tourist driving routes and key 'hero destinations' within Destination Network DMPs (04).
2. The location of existing laybys, rest areas and other roadside infrastructure on TfNSW owned land.
3. Opportunities to renew and improve existing infrastructure that may be unsafe, inaccessible or promoting anti-social behaviour.
4. Opportunities for a compelling landscape experience (01, 02, 03) including a view or vista, proximity to a natural feature, or connectivity to a nearby nature-based experience (ie local national parks, a bushwalking trail, natural swimming location etc).
5. Opportunities for cultural interpretation, storytelling and Connecting with Country.
6. Proximity to local tourism-related businesses including restaurants, cafes, accommodation facilities, camp sites, visitor centres, regional galleries, guided tourism activities etc.

01.



02.



03.



Building on Destination NSW tourist driving routes.

01. Scenic road in Mount Oxley, Bourke NSW.

(Photo credit: Destination NSW)

02. Scenic road in Barrington Tops National Park, Barrington Tops NSW.

(Photo credit: Destination NSW)

03. Scenic road at Angourie, NSW.

(Photo credit: Destination NSW)

04. An example of the established mapping of tourist routes by DNSW. (Credit: Destination Country and Outback NSW)

04.



Comparative Analysis

A comparative analysis has been undertaken between the Norwegian Scenic Routes and Scottish Scenic Routes to draw out key lessons for the NSW Scenic Routes program.

The eight criteria points for this analysis have been informed by initial conversations with the Byera Hadley Scholarship review panel and my ongoing conversations with key Government stakeholders in NSW, noting their key questions and concerns.

The comparative analysis table (right) highlights the strengths of the Norwegian Model as compared to the Scottish model. Generally, the Norwegian Scenic Routes has benefited from ongoing support from the top down, allowing for a consistent approach to funding, management, delivery, design quality and communications.

The NSW Scenic Routes will need to be developed in its context and a direct imitation of either international model is not the intention. However, the key lessons that can be drawn from this analysis are important for the feasibility of the NSW program.

Norwegian Scenic Routes	
1. Political Support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secured from Ministry at the outset, supported a pilot round of projects.
2. Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing funding from infrastructure budgets for tunnels, bypasses and highways.
3. Management / Delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Managed by dedicated team within Public Roads Authority.
4. Design Excellence	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Driven by National Architecture Policy. Dedicated Design Review Panel across all projects with approval authority.
5. Procurement	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open call-out for applicants followed by shortlisting and paid mini-competition (3 teams). Emphasis on local practices.
6. Route Selection	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> 18 Routes identified through analysis / national call-out. Focus on roads bypassed by tunnels and highways.
7. Site Locations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Utilize existing lay-bys / tourism flashpoints.
8. Communications / Marketing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ongoing production of sophisticated publications, exhibitions and a high-quality website for the program.

Comparative Analysis Table.

A high level comparative analysis between the Norwegian Scenic Routes and Scottish Scenic Routes including key lessons for the NSW Scenic Routes program.

(Credit: Jordan Silver)

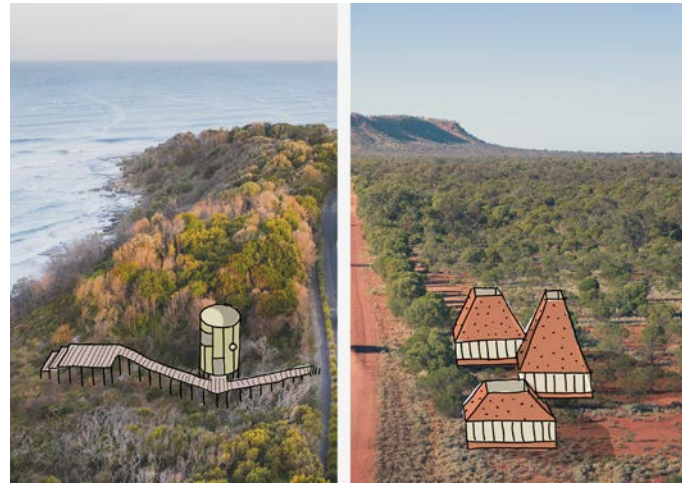
Scottish Scenic Routes	Key Lessons for NSW Scenic Routes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Secured from Ministry at the outset. Changes in leadership slowed momentum on the program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Ministerial support is crucial for the initial pilot and ongoing success of the program.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Dedicated funds for 2 stages of projects from Tourism budget. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Infrastructure budgets are the preferred funding pathway ongoing to increase the feasibility of the program long-term. Grants and programs should also be considered, especially those focused on Regional Development and First Nations groups.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Initiated by an independent architect (Peter Wilson) and delivered through Scottish Canals / executive architect. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> A dedicated subgroup that has delivery / project management resources will be most effective, likely within TfNSW.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Quality ensured through appointment of an experienced executive architect. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Design excellence needs to be controlled through policy and administered by a design review system.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Open call-out for applicants followed by shortlisting and paid mini-competition (3 teams). Emphasis on emerging practitioners. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> The competitive process drives strong design outcomes and creates excitement around the program. However, competitive tenders or small, invited competitions may be more suitable in the NSW context.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No clear routes, projects randomly distributed through NPs and along Scottish Canals. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Route selection should be informed by established mapping of touring routes by each Destination Network. For more detail on this point, see page 32 of this report.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> New locations in NPs and along Scottish Canals. Walking access only. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Roadside locations are preferable due to passive surveillance ease of access for maintenance. However, in some instances sites that include a short walk to access may be appropriate.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Exhibitions held after the first competition round. No website for the program. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Effective communications are essential for the success of the program. Projects should be published and exhibited effectively to Government, architects and universities to build awareness. A website is essential.

Key Principles

The principles that will guide the implementation of the NSW Scenic Routes are as follows:

1. Diversity & Resilience

One of the most interesting aspects of the Scenic Routes is the diversity of designs that make up the array. Each intervention is its own idea, conceptualised by its own team of collaborators, in a unique location. This diversity of concept is to be encouraged. At the same time, the works should be joined together by the principles of the program, and by a commitment to using only robust materials and building methods. That is, to create structures that withstand time, use and weather.



2. Connect with Country

Each NSW Scenic Routes project is an opportunity to engage directly with the cultural layers of its location. The inclusion of local First Nations representatives and knowledge holders is critical during the concept development of each site. Collectively, the NSW Scenic Routes projects are an opportunity to implement the GANSW Connecting with Country framework across multiple instances and showcase best practice in designing with Country.



3. Trail of breadcrumbs

To maximize the impact of the program, the NSW Scenic Routes should aim to generate as many projects as possible. To achieve this, it is best to keep each project small and simple. Passive structures like benches, shade shelters and railings are more feasible and require less maintenance than larger structures with complex services. The opportunity for each designer will be to reinterpret these everyday objects to create something thoughtful, interesting and generous.



4. Renew existing areas

The NSW Scenic Routes should not increase the footprint of development in landscape settings. Instead, the program should aim to utilize existing laybys, rest stops and cleared areas. The intention of the program is to revitalize and renew these ubiquitous and under-utilized locations, not to create new sites for development or clear undeveloped land. Where feasible, existing structures should be adapted and re-used to reduce the environmental impact of the project.



5. Keep structures roadside

Whilst some projects may include a walk to a destination away from the road, or a series of interventions imbedded in the landscape, the initial point of contact for each project should remain roadside. Roads provide passive surveillance for adjacent sites, helping to minimize vandalism and anti-social behaviour. Visual presence from the road (through signage or the building itself) will also encourage visitation and use.



6. Serve locals and visitors

In regional Australia, long-distance drives are part of everyday life for tourists and locals alike. The NSW Scenic Routes projects are an opportunity to service all road users and provide spaces of generous amenity to 'break up the drive'. By engaging with local councils, LALCs and community groups during the concept design of each site, the brief can be tailored to suit the needs of multiple stakeholder groups. The best projects will promote encounters between tourists and locals by creating a place that is appealing to people from nearby and those 'passing through'.



Summary

A new network of small public architecture projects for regional tourism is feasible within the current NSW government system and aligns well with the policy frameworks of key stakeholders, TfNSW, GANSW and Destination NSW.

Initial conversations with representatives in these government departments have been well-received, with each department confirming their interest to support the program.

It is my recommendation that the NSW government support the development of the NSW Scenic Routes program in accordance with the guiding principles in this report, and that an appropriate implementation model and departmental responsibility be collectively defined. Although small, I believe these projects stand to have a transformative impact on tourism in regional NSW. As a collective network, they will introduce a sophisticated layer of infrastructure and amenity to the experience of travelling by road throughout the state.

Next Steps

Following the completion of this report, I will continue to work with TfNSW, GANSW and Destination NSW to develop and implement the NSW Scenic Routes program.

A summary of the key next steps is as follows:

1. Conduct a benchmarking study of relevant initiatives and projects Nation-wide.
2. Identify and map the NSW Scenic Routes, building on the established mappings of tourist routes by each of the six Destination Networks.
3. Identify and map project sites and opportunities along each of the NSW Scenic Routes with input from TfNSW, Destination NSW, local Government, First Nation representatives and local communities.
4. Develop a masterplan and business case for a NSW Scenic Routes pilot program.
5. Obtain funding to deliver the NSW Scenic Routes pilot program.

Right:

Fictional rest stop along unsealed road in Mungo National Park, Mungo NSW. (Illustration by Jordan Silver, photo credit: Destination NSW)



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This report, and the years of work it represents, would not have been possible without the endless patience and support of my wife. Millie - thank you for being my travel companion, for listening (at all hours) and for keeping my feet on the ground.

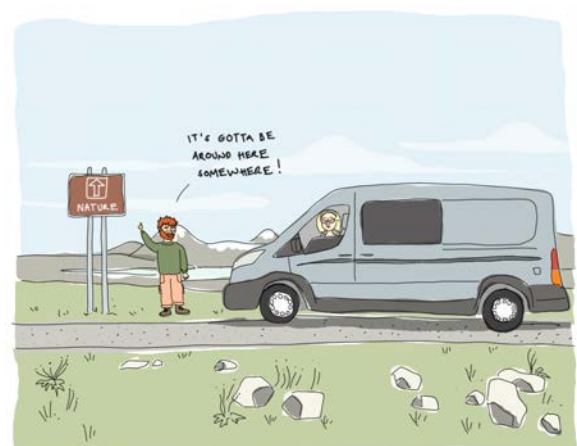
Thank you also to Daniel, my brother, my editor, and a consistent source of warmth and kindness throughout this journey.

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About the author

Jordan Silver is a registered architect with a focus on regional, nature-based and public projects. In his associate role at Architecture AND, Jordan has gained significant project architect experience, undertaking complex projects with multiple stakeholders. Jordan led the Light to Light Walk, the first hut-to-hut walking facility for NSW National Parks and Wildlife Service and Mayfield Gardens, a significant eco-tourism facility in Oberon, NSW. He is currently project lead on the new PCYC community facility in Redfern, Sydney.

Alongside his architecture practice, Jordan has held sessional academic roles at the University of Sydney, University of Technology and University of New South Wales. He has also held a guest spot on ABC radio and written for the ABC on a range of issues relating to the built environment.

Jordan is the founder of 'Towards Small Things', a research platform dedicated to small public architecture (www.towardssmallthings.com).



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