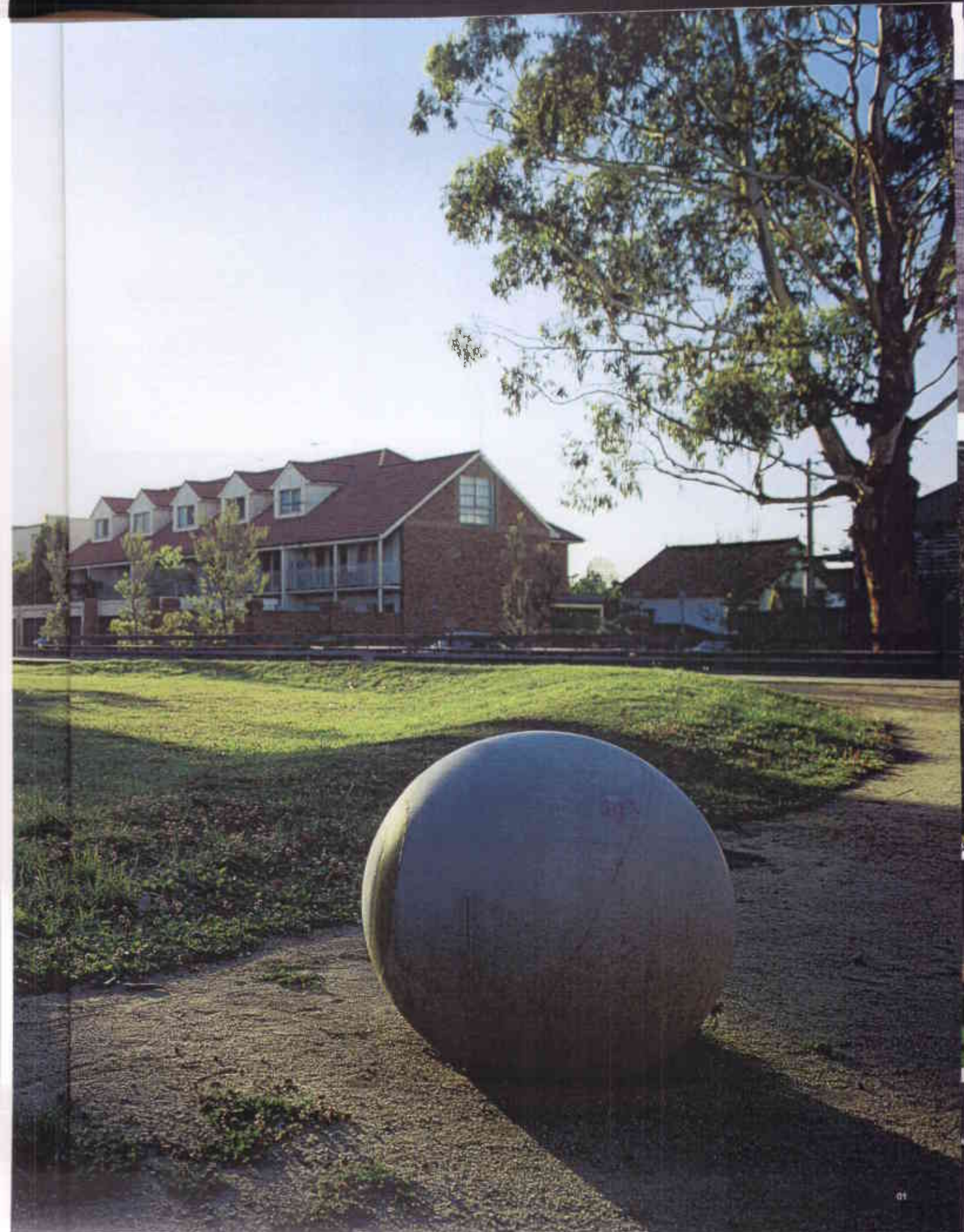




## ECO-COSMOPOLITANISM

Two new landscape projects for Victoria's City of Moreland explore an intriguing fusion of indigenous and multicultural community qualities imbued with the romantic sensibilities of the collaborative design team.

*Headed by Jillian Fitzcortney, Photography: Trevor Mein*



explicit forms, which investigate key aspects of landscape, often in an ephemeral or experiential way. In many respects, their work has a romantic sensibility, suggesting the presence of the poetic in the everyday, rather than a brutal municipal treatment. Interestingly, after three main projects executed over a three-year period in Moreland City: Victoria Mill (Sydney Road, 2001), Randazzo Park (2003) and Bain Reserve (2003), their romantic, European sensibility remains intact. It cannily engages with the contradictory vision of an indigenous, multicultural City of Moreland.

Randazzo Park is a relatively small suburban park in Brunswick East, adjacent to a medium- to high-density development near the start of Sydney Road. Despite its size, the project manages to deploy a plethora of design elements, even if it stretches the typology of the banal reserve to the extreme – a strategy that is both innovative and indulgent.

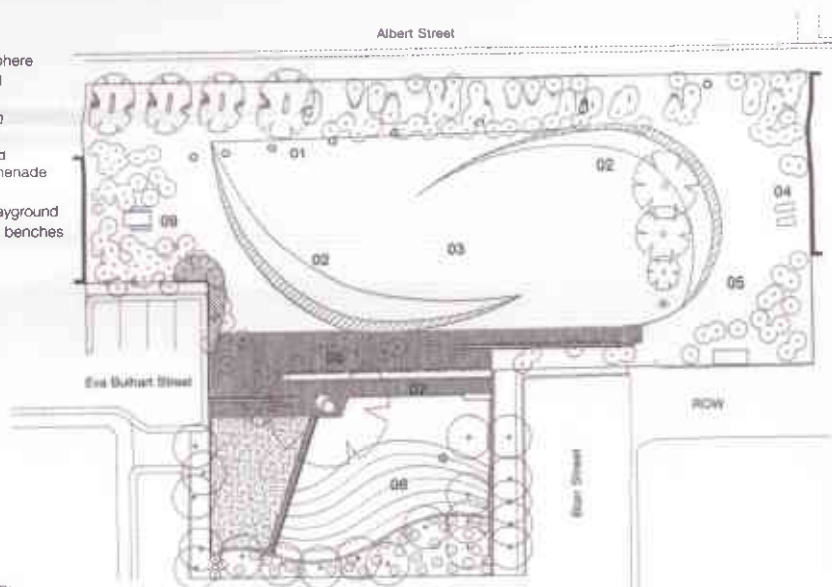
The project comprises two spaces, a playground and the reserve proper, bifurcated (separated and joined) by a multifunctional concrete and timber element, which is variously a seat, ramp and retaining wall. This element negotiates changes in grade and function and its form is largely drawn from the existing topography, which also provides the main figure for the reserve parti. While this is a mainstay of the design, this element seems monumental

and over-articulated in relation to its modest program, which is not to say it is badly detailed. Throughout all of O'Shea and Franklyn's projects, detail resolution and elegance drives much of the generative process, lending sophistication to some basic design moves. The main body of the reserve comprises a mound that edges and curves around a relatively large grassed area, bounded by a granite sand surface. Stands of eucalypts puncture this surface, with more elaborate areas at each end, which provide literal relief to the surface and space. In plan, the mound lends whimsy, which is sadly absent in the built outcome, where the mound either seems not clearly formed or slightly ridiculous for its ineffective exaggeration. This topographic figure, or rather reverberations of it, appears in the playground area, on the other side of the bench, where it becomes a series of exaggerated turf ripples. Like the larger mound, frequent use has made the mounds a little ragged, however, the use of the topography to organise the design is a strong idea that is always difficult to realise.

Two detailed areas to the east and west combine trees, granite sand surfaces, seating, and wall treatments in quirky yet functional combinations. These include a couple of timber banana loungers between some mature eucalypts, which seem to suggest goalposts, and text on the walls of adjacent buildings. Added to the ball-shaped bollard lights, >>



- 01 Concrete sphere
- 02 Earthmound
- 03 Swarded lawn
- 04 Sun lounges
- 05 Granitic sand
- 06 Timber promenade
- 07 Bench
- 08 Children's playground
- 09 Picnic table, benches



Randazzo Park Plan

**Project Name** Randazzo Park  
**Company** Moreland City Council,  
**City Projects Branch**  
**Design Team** Leanne O'Shea Senior  
 Landscape Architect Moreland City Council  
 in collaboration with Patrick Franklyn  
 Landscape Architect consultant and Taylor  
 Cullity Lethlean (play corner), Patrick Beale  
 - collaboration park furniture design  
**Lighting Engineers** Barry Webb & Associates  
**Structural Engineers** Perret Simpson Pty Ltd  
**Contract Administration** Urban Initiatives  
 Pty Ltd - Landscape Architects and Urban  
 design Consultants  
**Artists** Astrid Huwald, Rodney Payne,  
 Andrew Otto  
**Contractor** Pearce Brothers Pty Ltd  
**External Materials** Granitic gravel, recycled  
 timber, steel, concrete, stainless-steel mesh,  
 Alto Country Colours Impasto finish (Taverna  
 and Pheoncia)  
**Fixtures and Fittings** Custom-made  
 furniture, neon lighting, timber deck,  
 concrete spheres with fibreglass letters,  
 playground equipment - Kompan

IN AUSTRALIA, A 'council' is a way to organise the local geography and its attendant idiosyncratic communities into an institutional form. This act sets the stage for the formal manifestation of local identity in civic architecture and landscape, which in turn, become identifiable symbols of a particular area.

This simplified definition of a municipality may seem far-removed from the pragmatic realities of rates, rubbish collection and dog registration. Yet, the re-articulation of Victorian municipal boundaries in the early '90s, by then Premier Jeff Kennett, created a crisis of operation and identity for places and organisations that had their territory reorganised. An analogy can be made to the de-localisation of AFL teams that happened simultaneously. Now, after 10 years of operating within an economic rationalist frame, little of the remaining municipal fabric is intangible: trees can be priced for developer's bonds.

In the 1990s, Alistair Phillips, then manager of a team of consultants named Open Space, developed the Moreland Open Space Strategy (MOSS) for the City of Moreland that has now become a model for other municipalities. Notably, this team's strategy insisted on the inclusion of indigenous plants of the region to provide for municipal statements

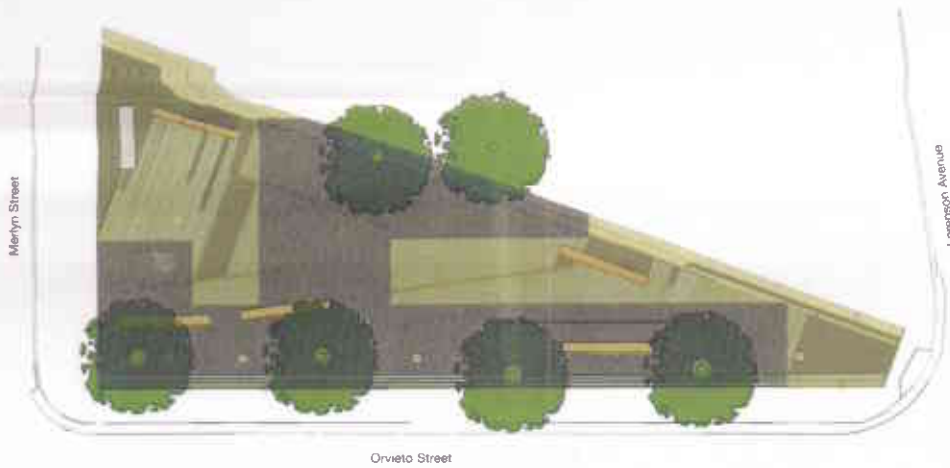
about sustainability (particularly in terms of maintenance practices) as well as municipal identity.

However, while in the process of seeking Turkish pizza along Sydney Road - a main thoroughfare in the suburban Moreland zone - the attendant cluttered infrastructure, baking heat and mean pavements, can render the imagined native landscape as contrived and surreal to the driver. Instead, Moreland appears more like a multicultural suburb of blistering concrete and brick-veneer houses, similar to Sydney's suburbs of Newton or Auburn. In fact, Moreland is both these visions, a multicultural and an indigenous vision, and it is this myth and reality that perplexes designers who are practising there.

Leanne O'Shea, senior landscape architect for the City of Moreland, has developed a small body of projects that manage to balance the indigenous and multicultural character of Moreland, while operating creatively within the tight framework of the council's policies. Her work, combined with that of her Moreland City collaborator, consultant landscape architect Patrick Franklyn, carries a sensibility that is honed by their exposure to the arts and the theory; from a liberal life lived prior to study. In formal terms, their work is about engaging sensibilities and executing gracefully

- 01 Spherical bollard lighting
- 02 Trees protrude through deck
- 03 Timber banana lounges
- 04 Fibreglass lighting
- 05 Bain Reserve deck





**Project Name** Bain Reserve  
**Company** Moreland City Council,  
 City Projects Branch  
**Design Team** Leanne O'Shea, Senior  
 Landscape Architect, Moreland City  
 Council, in collaboration with Patrick  
 Franklyn, Landscape Architect Consultant  
 and Urban Initiatives Pty Ltd - Landscape  
 Architects and Urban Design Consultants  
**Lighting Engineers** Barry Webb & Associates  
**Structural Engineers** Perret Simpson Pty Ltd  
**Contract Administration** Urban Initiatives  
 Pty Ltd - Landscape Architects and Urban  
 Design Consultants  
**Contractor** Collards Construction  
**External Materials** Red Iron Bark timber deck  
**Fixtures and Fittings** Steel sub frame, light  
 - Bega 8200, custom-made furniture

Bain Reserve Plan

>> these detail configurations seem a bit busy for such a small place. The backlit word 'randazzo' is spelt out across the bollards, which are set among a stand of indigenous eucalypts. This gesture is reminiscent of Barcelona's extensive urban landscaping – a precedent that is relevant throughout the project, both in detailed and strategic terms.

Where Randazzo Park is quite exuberant and frenetic, the more recently completed Bain Reserve is much more restrained and sophisticatedly municipal. The reserve is a fully turfed wedge along a railway line, with a beautiful avenue of mature exotic trees running through it. A playground sits on one side, and terminates with O'Shea and Franklyn's proposition: a simple, elevated timber deck.

Like the multi-use element in Randazzo Park, the deck organises the design. However, where Randazzo Park was very much based on a self-referential dynamic, Bain Reserve seems much more site-specific, recasting existing dynamics in the landscape. The deck rises up two steps from the adjacent grass – on one side, with wide treads, and steeply on the opposite street edge. Located at the nexus between the railway and shops, the deck seems to suggest a surface for community use that is activated by its diverse edges. These are marked by different face treatments to the deck edge: bright-yellow on the park side, and an exaggerated chevron graphic on the traffic side. Though the registration of different sides is a strong gesture, to this writer, the chevron seems obvious and not entirely relevant to the rest

of the design; the pattern an add-on, rather than an integral part of the design logic of the project. A number of mature trees protrude through the deck, as does simple timber and steel seating, similar to the Randazzo Park element, which makes it seem light, though the deck is substantial. Careful organisation and grading of the decking timber emphasises its length. In relation to Randazzo Park, Bain Reserve seems successfully more ambiguous programmatically, locking into existing programs rather than offering intense possibilities for (apparent) later use. If Randazzo Park references Barcelona, Bain Reserve is reminiscent of the work of French landscape architects, Michel Desvigne and Christine Dalnoky.

The strict Moreland Open Space Strategy seems well-intentioned but abstract, and can be difficult for designers to work with. O'Shea and Franklyn's landscapes in the City of Moreland suggest an intelligent and earnest engagement with the values that underlie policies, rather than literally dedicating designs to the policies. Though the Moreland Council's preoccupation with community and indigenous landscape values might be read as artificial and unsubtle, O'Shea and Franklyn's work engages people with places. As a result, they characterise those places in a very cultural way. Perhaps, this suggests that 'indigenous' is not necessarily simply an issue of plant material but an innate understanding of Moreland as a cosmopolitan realm with certain spatial and environmental conditions. [m]

- 06 Simple timber and steel furniture
- 07 Chevron graphic to traffic face
- 08 Yellow treatment to park face

