

CHAPTER 8

Creating open space

As we have discussed, in Australia and New Zealand there is an increasing demand on open space and the remaining areas of vegetated landscape due to moves towards higher density to cater for an increasing population. For instance, Australia is the 18th most urbanised of the world's 204 countries, and, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics, 69% of Australia's population live in big cities. These cities are growing through the drift movement into the city at a rate of 2.3% in 2008–09 compared with the rest of the country, so Australia is becoming even more urbanised each year. Adding to the issue of denser cities, caused by both natural birth rate and immigration, is the ageing population, which further increases this movement towards the city.

Governments at national and state level are encouraging the 'compact city' to tackle climate change issues. This new urban form features higher densities, reduced private vehicle travel distances, promotion of public transport and reduction of the 'suburban sprawl'. This means that cities are becoming denser and the space between the built form is coming under pressure from competing activities, resulting in less open and green space in the public realm. One of the tools available to the urban designer or landscape architect for creating more open space and natural environment, as well as accommodating the other competing pressures for space, is to use the surfaces of the built form – the walls and rooftops of the buildings – to create a new open space using living walls and green roofs.

Richard Weller's book *Boomtown 2050* (2009) documents an exhaustive 2-year research project he and his team from the University of Western Australia Landscape Architecture program conducted, creating and analysing different scenarios for the city of Perth's future urban form. The methodology and processes developed in this project have wide application to all cities experiencing rapid growth. Weller says, 'High-rise or high-density housing is uncommon in Perth and generally not the favoured form of housing in Australia. For most Australians it is inconceivable that someone should live under them or above them and that they should not have large homes and gardens. A free-standing home and garden is considered a birthright and tending one's lot is a national pastime. As Australian cities come under increasing population pressures and are thought to have already sprawled too far, this mindset is changing'.

The demographics of Australia and New Zealand are changing, with the population ageing due to the 'baby boomers' bulge in the population statistics. These 'baby boomers' are creating planning