

AGIN – the (not so) new kid on the block

G'day from Australia!

I am Sebastian Pfautsch, President of the Australasian Green Infrastructure Network (AGIN). You may not have heard about us, and hence, I'd like to take this opportunity to tell you a little bit about myself, the work of AGIN, and what's happening in the green infrastructure (GI) space in Australia and Aotearoa/New Zealand.

I'm a forest researcher and did a PhD in tree physiology some time ago in Freiburg, Germany and Melbourne, Australia. Nearly 20 years ago, I migrated to Australia because of love and to pursue a career as a scientist. Fate steered me toward the urban realm about eight or nine years ago, and I started to apply my knowledge to all things blue and green in cities.



Today, my work as a university professor is centred around keeping cities cool. I work at Western Sydney University, and Western Sydney as a growing region can get very hot – as part of my work, I have recorded measurements of 52°C air temperature in 'the angry

summer' of 2019/20. Cooling is critical, especially now that our summers are becoming hotter as a consequence of climate change. I often describe Western Sydney as a testbed for many other places around the world, a region where we can study the effects of heat on green infrastructure today, under conditions that other cities and regions may experience in 10, 20, or 30 years' time. With its bustling industries and communities, the region offers great opportunities for collaboration and trying new things. I was able to use plants to cool carparks, plazas, tram tracks and even turned an entire park into a natural air conditioner using AI and smart sensing (check out www.simpact-australia.com). We develop science-informed and nature-based solutions that demonstrate how cooler neighbourhoods can be created using blue-green infrastructure.

But enough about me. AGIN is a relatively young organisation. We started as a community of practice in 2021. In 2024, we became a registered charity, with a constitution, strategic plan, and all the kit and kaboodle needed to ensure our place as a serious player in the GI market. We support and promote those who grow, design, build, and manage GI in our cities. We currently have around 80 members, doubling in the last year. This is a good indicator that the GI sector in our neck of the woods wanted stronger representation.

Like you, we advocate for more and better-quality vegetation and greening. So, I don't need to give you my usual elevator pitch on why this work is needed. I'd rather ask for a minute of your time to share with you some of the amazing GI work from our members. You can see many examples in the project library on our webpage (www.agin.org.au). The library provides detailed information for each project, including project partners, size, cost and much more. It really is worth checking out!

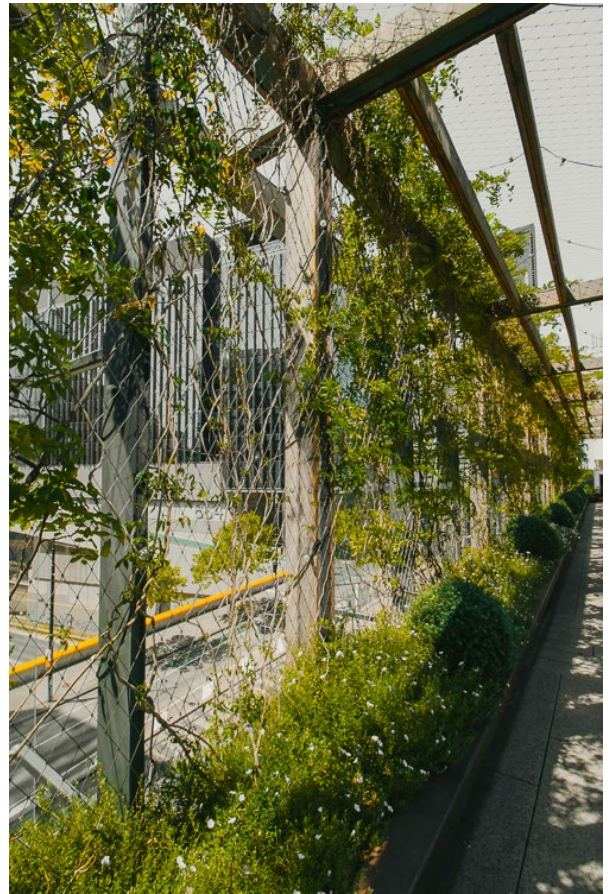
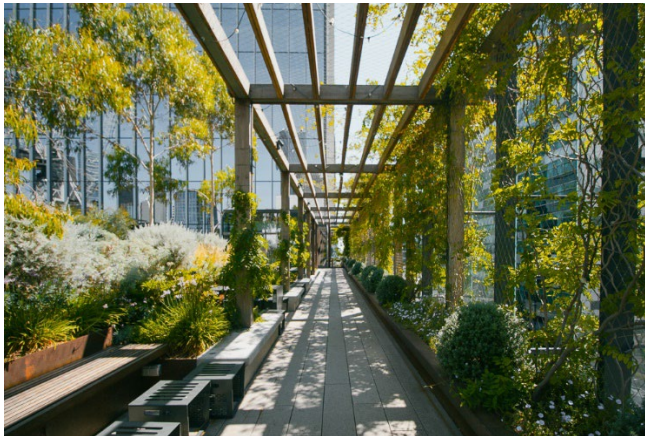
One example in the library is a vertical greening project in Brisbane, delivered by Fytogreen. Brisbane, the capital of the state of Queensland, has a strong subtropical climate with hot, humid summers. During the summer, people spend a lot of time indoors to escape the heat. The Fytogreen project delivered indoor greening in the form of ten, eight metre tall columns, which together host nearly 2,000 plants in the atrium of the Queen's Wharf building. It is a fantastic example of how, here in Australia, GI companies are bringing plants into complex indoor environments, without losing floor space, to improve air quality and the microclimate.



Another example is a project in Melbourne, a city where the climate is cool-temperate and deciduous tree species thrive. A typical saying for this city, the capital of Victoria, is that you experience four seasons in one day. I can attest to this!

The brief for the Tensile Design and Construct project in Melbourne was to deliver an accessible green space where workers and visitors can relax and chill out for a while. The result is the Skypark, a 180m² semi-enclosed rooftop space covered in green façades, planter/podium gardens and an intensive green roof.

Who wouldn't like to have their lunch or coffee up there?



Australia has a reputation for being a dry and desert-like country. Still, I can tell you that it's green in many parts, and AGIN is determined to make it even greener, especially in urban environments. Please reach out to us if you would like to know more about AGIN. And definitely contact us if you happen to visit this land down under. As a kindred spirit, we'd love to show you around our growing green towns and cities. Cheers.

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