

Innovators create housing solutions



■ Suzanne Hunt

As the holidays end and we head back to work relaxed and ready for the challenges ahead, it is a good time to reflect on our professional goals for this year.

Last year was challenging for the construction industry but I was proud to see firsthand the generosity of architects and other built environment professionals in their support of the not-for-profit sector.

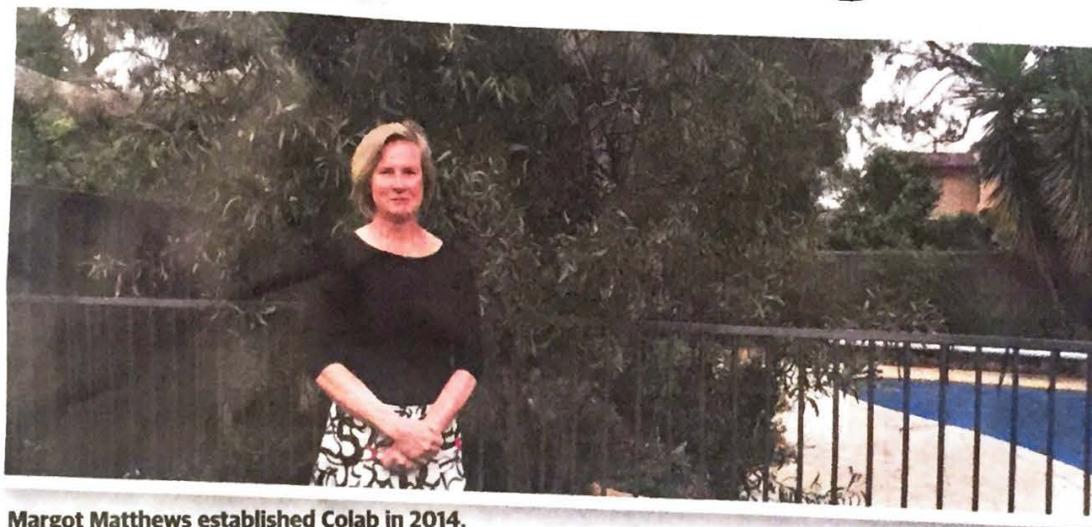
Philanthropy is most often expressed publicly by giving money to a good cause.

However, in our industry we have the chance to make a practical impact on people's lives, through volunteering our time, professional advice and services.

Using their design skills allows architects to provide positive tangible outcomes. When combined with our industry partners, these outcomes can be life-changing.

The desire "to make the world a better place" is the Australian Institute of Architects' mission statement and is representative of how many of us hope we can use our training to make a difference to our clients, the community and future generations.

During my presidency I have seen an increasing number of architects volunteering their services to support community groups through amazing



Margot Matthews established Colab in 2014.



Katie Liew

organisations that connect us.

Three particular groups have piqued my interest and deserve greater attention.

COLAB

COLAB was established in 2014 by engineer Margot Matthews.

Matthews likens COLAB to a dating site connecting engineers and architects with community

groups requiring strategic advice, design and construction services.

These services range from stakeholder engagement and master planning for funding approval, to full design and documentation services.

This work delivers much-needed services to WA community organisations. In four years COLAB has delivered \$1.5 million in pro bono professional services.

SHELTER WA

Led by chief executive Michelle Mackenzie, Shelter WA is the peak body advocating for social and affordable housing and an end to homelessness.

I recently attended a facilitated Shelter WA workshop with a coalition of built environment stakeholders and

community groups to discuss innovative policy solutions.

Housing plays a pivotal role in enhancing physical and mental health and enabling people to fully participate in community life.

We agree increasing housing density is the key to improving housing affordability and enabling increasing numbers of people to enjoy the benefits of secure housing but there is a need to reframe outdated models.

The Institute plans this year to contribute to this important work.

THE UNDERGROUND COLLABORATIVE

The Underground Collaborative was founded in 2017 by social entrepreneur Katie Liew.

It aims to create employment



Michelle Mackenzie

and housing solutions for the homeless, at-risk and disadvantaged, through collaboration with industry, governments, social services and the community.

Liew's vision is to address homelessness in three ways: to generate training and employment opportunities for these groups, to educate people about the issues associated with homelessness and finally, to empower the community to empower those less fortunate.

There are many ways those of us in the property and construction industry can give back to our communities.

We all have unique skills and together we can make an incredible difference to people's lives.

This year, the Institute looks forward to continuing our efforts to make a positive social impact in the community.

■ Suzanne Hunt is WA president of the Architects Institute of Australia and principal of Suzanne Hunt Architects.