



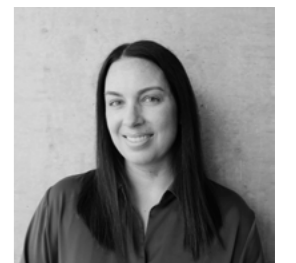
# Elevating passenger experiences for the future of travel

*We interview the design team behind Adelaide Airport's refurbishment from global architectural firm Woods Bagot.*

**WOODS BAGOT**



Rosina Di Maria  
Director, Adelaide  
Studio Chair



Hayley Packer  
Senior Associate



## Introduction and Context

***For those unfamiliar with the project, how would you describe the overarching design vision for the Adelaide Airport refurbishment?***

**Rosina:** The overarching design vision is directly linked to the passenger experience: it starts with people – with the traveller, the airport employee, with those who live in Adelaide and those who visit it. It's a taste of South Australia as a state and what it can offer.

Another layer blends concepts of Deep Time, weaving in the stories of the Kaurna People, the Traditional Owners and first inhabitants of this land.

*"We brought in cultural consultant Karl Telfer to tell those stories so we could effectively and meaningfully translate them into our design."*

We pay homage to the site's history a significant former wetland, incorporating the stories of Witongga tarto through our design thinking. We brought in cultural consultant Karl Telfer to tell those stories so we could effectively and meaningfully translate them into our design.

The third is the existing asset: we're layering into something that already exists, and with that comes real consideration. We wanted to be respectful of the existing building, to weave into what's already there – understanding what works, what needs to be evolved, and where a fresh new layer should be applied to take the airport into the future.

***What were the early conversations with Adelaide Airport focused on? What were they wanting to improve or evolve?***

**Rosina:** It was all about the passenger experience. Airports are measured by the people who use them; Adelaide Airport wanted to create a signature that was functional as it was beautiful. For us, it was about how you serve functionality equal to design, while making something enduring – because the space needs to last a long time and service a vast number of diverse users.

Finally, they wanted something unique to place, to showcase the innovation of Adelaide Airport and reflect how they service their customers and travellers through a curated statement that is the gate lounge.



## A Unified Experience of Comfort and Clarity

Adelaide Airport's major terminal refurbishment reimagined how travellers experience waiting, dining, and connection — with design leadership by **Woods Bagot**, one of Australia's most respected architectural firms.

Working in close collaboration with the architects and Estilo Commercial, Derlot supplied a comprehensive fit-out drawn from both our **standard collections** and **custom solutions**, creating a cohesive visual and functional identity throughout the terminal.

### Furniture Solutions

- **Gateway** and **Twig** seating systems were tailored to suit gate lounges, commercial areas, and transitional spaces.
- Custom configurations were developed to respond to passenger flow, luggage integration, and accessibility standards.
- A mix of single and group clusters allowed for flexibility, comfort, and efficient maintenance.

The result is an interior that feels both **robust and refined** — balancing durability with a hospitality sensibility.

Furniture was designed to support long-term lifecycle performance, with replaceable components and finishes specified to meet heavy-use conditions.

This collaboration set a new benchmark for regional airport interiors — merging design integrity with operational intelligence.





## Cultural and Design Narrative

***The design references the Kurna landscape and the interplay between earth and sky. How did this narrative shape the palette, textures, and atmosphere of the spaces?***

**Hayley:** Each space is unique and has its own narrative tailored design expression. We took the knowledge from Karl [Telfer's] work, using natural materials and crafted details to reference the local ecological history and the landscape.

We translated the site's heritage and cultural relevance into a specific design language. From its history as a former wetland, we took the stories of the rain from the Adelaide Hills that filled the planes. We used that story and reinterpreted it in our design with carvings that represent rain, curved forms to depict the hills, and statement feature lights to represent the sky.

We wanted spaces to feel like a "warm embrace", creating comfort through materiality, texture and tactility, offering a generous welcome at arrivals and a nostalgic farewell at departures, while feeling deeply connected to place.

***Airports are high-movement environments. How did you approach creating calm, clarity, and orientation for travellers?***

**Hayley:** Adelaide Airport is a big gesture and a grand space. While looking at the big picture, we've also tried to focus on those small, micro, human moments of experience. In what is a traditionally high-stress environment, we've integrated moments for refuge, calm, and regulation. We've designed spaces to be intuitive and easy to navigate to mitigate disorientation and overwhelm, and we've created a variety of spaces, from playgrounds, sensory rooms to VIP suites, to cater for a plethora of needs and moments.

“... in the international lounges, we have this beautiful snake-like configuration that weaves through gates..”



## Passenger Experiences and the Future of Travel

***Passenger profiles are increasingly diverse – from families to business travellers to neurodiverse users. How did these considerations influence spatial planning and seating layouts?***

**Hayley:** Adelaide Airport has a comprehensive catalogue of passenger data we could use, profiling the diversity of traveller types, whether they were solo traveller, business traveller or a family. That was valuable for us to understand what spaces were missing and what we needed to cater for those people.

The airport had a bold vision for the overhaul with a strong focus on inclusive design.

Spaces such as sensory rooms, small play spaces, and large family gathering spaces consider the myriad needs of staff and visitors. With a diversity of users, we focused on providing spaces that were truly inclusive, providing furniture and joinery settings for people to choose from, that could be influenced by mood, ability, or specific user needs.

*“In what is a traditionally high-stress environment, we’ve integrated moments for refuge, calm, and regulation.”*

We have incorporated two planning configurations in the gate lounge layouts. The domestic lounges have a linear configuration, while in the international lounges, we have this beautiful snake-like configuration that weaves through the gates. This caters for moments to look outwards and engage with the space, while also accommodating moments for privacy and seclusion.

We worked closely with Derlot to ensure our design incorporated integrated solutions for both accessible and ambulant settings. Together, we tailored the seating response to have areas with integrated alcoves for wheelchairs and higher seating profiles for ambulant/priority travellers. We workshopped extensively with a member of our design team who is also a wheelchair user, who provided critical insights into her experience of airports. We made it easier for wheelchair users to sit with their friends and family, who may not be wheelchair users. We also integrated seating solutions for elderly, pregnant, people with hidden disabilities to feel comfortable and considered within the space.

***Looking ahead, how do you see airport design evolving in the next decade? What becomes more important?***

**Rosina:** I think the blended and blurred lines of activity and process. Within a highly functional space such as an airport, you have to support the process of moving people through gateways. Historically, the purpose of airports was based directly on how you move people from A to B for the ultimate purpose of travel – through security, through gates, and through boarding process.

Today, we’re starting to see the experience of those passengers within the airport environment in and of itself, blending those lines between activity and process so they don’t even feel present.



## Collaboration and Furniture Integration

*Furniture plays a significant role in how people rest, wait, and observe in terminals. What qualities were you seeking in the seating solutions for this project?*

**Hayley:** We were looking for a furniture system that could adapt and flex to the airport's current and future requirements. We used a modular system that has been planned out meticulously, so the airport can slot in additional modules in if they experience growth. This 'plug and play' system is flexible and adaptable for removing modules, replacing, adding or reconfiguring.

*Why was Derlot selected as a furniture partner, and how did their Gateway and other collections support your design goals?*

**Rosina:** We went through a democratic selection process where we invited different Australian manufacturers in to create prototypes of their product for the design. The prototyping process meant that we, alongside the airport team, could assess each of the prototypes against a very strict criteria of functionality, comfort, aesthetics, maintenance, and endurance. The Derlot product punched above its weight in all criteria. Further, it was sustainable in its

componentry, being adjustable and adaptable into the future without creating waste. It's the best of sustainable and ethical manufacturing, where the entirety of the production loop could be seen.

Derlot was successful for their ability to work with us on evolving their product for the airport. They were happy to collaborate with Woods Bagot, listening to our feedback on how the product could be tweaked to support best outcome. We took their prototype and adapted it through a process of genuine codesign.

Supporting Australian design is really important for us, both from a sustainability standpoint, but also from a placemaking perspective, showcasing the best of South Australian innovation.

*Can you speak to the importance of local manufacturing/Australian production?*

**Hayley:** For us, it's about focus on supporting local economy and reducing our carbon footprint. As designers, we're focusing on that content a lot more, as are our clients. It's an opportunity to promote local talent and stimulate regional economy, while embedding principles of placed-based design into our projects.



## Project Reflection

*When you walk the completed spaces, what moment or detail feels most meaningful to you?*

**Hayley:** When I'm furthest away and I can see the details en masse, I can see how successfully the project has come together and how beautifully it fits within the space.

For me, the space feels meaningful when I can appreciate the diversity of users, and when I see people looking relaxed and happy in an environment where people don't usually feel relaxed and happy. Standing back and having that big picture view is when I feel like we've achieved something pretty awesome.

Inversely, it's equally special when you're up close and can appreciate the little moments. On my last visit, I saw two pilots sitting up at our marble high tables, having a coffee and a chat while sharing some family photos, looking so at ease. It's not often that you see the flight crew lingering and connecting within the communal spaces and looking so comfortable. It made me think: we created that environment.

# Embracing inclusivity

*Enabling global travel experiences through accessible spaces.*





## Modern power integration for a seamless recharge



**OE Elsafe are industry leaders in soft wiring and workspace technologies.**

With an in-house electronic engineering team, OE Elsafe designs and produces quality solutions with unparalleled safety and reliability in mind.

To comply and meet regulatory standards all around the world, OE Elsafe and Derlot worked together to integrate their PIP powered units for Adelaide Airport.

Featuring USB-A and USB-C connectivity, Adelaide Airport passengers are able to fast charge their smart devices, creating a better travel experience.







**Adelaide Airport**  
Australia

**Architects**  
Woods Bagot

**Local Furniture Partner**  
Estilo Commercial