From Green Paper to a New Culture: Supplementary Submission on the NSW Planning Review Green Paper, prepared by the NSW Division of the Planning Institute of Australia. September 2012

The Planning Institute of Australia (PIA) is the peak body representing professionals involved in planning Australian cities, towns and regions. The Institute has around 4,500 members nationally and around 1,300 members in New South Wales. PIA NSW plays key roles in promoting and supporting the planning profession within NSW and advocating key planning and public policy issues. This paper has been prepared on behalf of PIA NSW by Members of the Institute.
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The Planning Institute of Australia, NSW Division (PIA NSW) acknowledges the reference in *A new planning system for NSW Green Paper* to changing the culture of planning in NSW and congratulates the Government on reinforcing this important aspect of planning reform as one of the 23 transformational changes. In our earlier submission¹ PIA NSW identified that a cultural shift in planning is required first and foremost to set a framework or foundation to enable a new planning act and the related planning system to be effectively and efficiently implemented.

The Institute has received considerable support for this approach from a wide range of stakeholders and members of the profession recognising that a change in our culture could be the defining factor in a truly new and innovative planning system for NSW. The key issue moving forward will be in translating these ideas and support into realistic and tangible actions. PIA NSW emphasizes the importance of dedicated actions and funding for the implementation of a change programme.

**The Challenge**

To help define what PIA NSW refers to as the culture of planning, we have undertaken some international research on the topic. The UK Department of Communities and Local Government quite succinctly defined the issue in a planning paradigm by recognising:

“*Much of the literature on cultural change in organizations is focused on the way the organisation, its employers and a relatively narrow range of stakeholders relate to each other. However for culture change in planning the agenda is much more complicated and wide-ranging since the agenda is not just about the local planning authority or service changing its espoused value systems and artefacts, but all the other stakeholders who engage with the spatial planning system needing to re-evaluate their ways of thinking and working with planning. Thus culture change involves hearts and minds, organizational structure and new methods of working.*”²

**PIA NSW Actions to Date**

In recognition of the importance of the issue of cultural change, leading up to and further to the release of the Green Paper, PIA NSW has continued to engage and educate on the matter. Specifically we have:

1. Engaged with our members on the topic through a series of forums across Sydney, the Hunter Region, Illawarra South Coast and North Western NSW;
2. Established a cultural change working group. The group of Cultural Changes Champions was established by PIA with representatives of State Government (the Department of Planning and Urban Growth NSW), local government, universities, consultant planners and PIA;

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¹ Planning Institute of Australia. NSW Division. Planning Review Supplementary Submission, November 2011
² Cultural change and planning literature review. London, UK Communities and Local Government, December 2006, page 10
3. Expanded our Mentoring Program for planning professionals to enhance our future leadership capabilities;
4. Engaged with the Universities on current and future planning programmes to better skill our profession;
5. Shared our knowledge and progress on the issue with the Coalition for Planning Reform members (i.e. PCA, AIA, UDIA, Business Chamber);
6. Prepared a comprehensive action list of changes that can be implemented across all stakeholders and commenced implementation on behalf of PIA NSW Members.

Figure 1. A summary of the factors that influence planning culture

Next Steps – From a Green Paper to a New Culture

Based on the work and engagement we have undertaken to date, PIA NSW identifies four key actions which must occur to effect the changes in culture if a new planning system is to be effective:

a. Confidence through high level plans embedded in a legislative framework to provide certainty and direction; clear and consistent planning advice; relevant and practical planning policies; learning to do things differently with communities through explaining and consultation;

b. Developing capacity and skills through ongoing professional development for planning professionals; a formal bridging course on the new Act and system for local government planners; improving performance through relevant and measurable KPIs;
learning to do things differently as planning professionals;
mentoring;

c. Overcoming barriers to cultural change; between State and local
government, including support for the current review of local
government and the basic tenets of Destination 2036; between
State agencies (the proposed Chief Officers Group should address
this in part however we contend the changes must extend to the
operational level); and

d. Maintaining the momentum PIA NSW contends that implementing
a new planning system is the beginning of the change journey. To
ensure commitment and real change, there needs to be regular
progress reporting and a clear action plan and funding.

PIA is uniquely placed as ambassadors to lead on change as the peak
body representing the broadest cross-section of the planning and allied
professions. PIA members span government, private and development
industries bringing together varying levels of experience to effect change.
Our members have identified the following actions as a priority to allow
for the movement from Green Paper to a White Paper and a new system:

- Embed the Cultural Change Working Group into transitional
  arrangements for a new act – that identifies how culture (i.e. use of
  language etc.) can be integrated into the wording and approach of
  the new Act;

- Establish a high level taskforce to oversee the integration of cultural
  change into the broader planning system evolution;

- Allocate a healthy resource budget to fund a transitional
  Professional Development course available to all practitioners and
  compulsory for all local government planning professionals, as per
  1979 Act’s implementation program;

- Work with key agencies including Department of Planning &
  Infrastructure, in either an advisory or joint delivery agency; and

- PIA NSW to act as a means of translating cultural change messages
  and mechanisms to the broader profession through professional
  development and education.

This submission becomes just the next step in the process for
implementing positive cultural change. As with our earlier submission, as
planners we have collectively prepared this paper and identified solutions
recognising that their implementation requires collaborative work with the
community, government and elected representatives if they are to
effectively achieve lasting change beyond any legislative reform.