Women’s Planning Network
Strategic Planning and Review Background Paper – July 2013

Summary

This paper is intended to support a strategic review of the Women’s Planning Network (WPN) and planning for WPN’s future form and function. It provides background on WPN, including its objectives and key achievements, as well as financial, membership and operational matters.

Background

WPN was established in 1994 to promote the role and interests of women in planning and development processes.

WPN aims to educate and inform its members and other groups about the role of women in decision-making processes and raise awareness of women’s perspectives, supporting women as individuals and professionals as well as representing and responding to women’s issues related to planning and development.

WPN Mission Statement

The mission and purpose of the Women’s Planning Network is to:

- Promote the role of women in all aspects of the planning and development process.
- Facilitate communication with Government related organisations, other women’s groups, other professional organisations and amongst Network members.
- Educate and inform its members, the government sector, employers of planning and development related professions, and the general public about the needs of women and the important role that women play in all decision-making processes.
- Raise awareness of women’s perspectives on specific issues, and advocating gender balance in the decision making process.
- Support women’s role in the community as individuals and as professionals.
- Represent and respond to women’s issues as they relate to planning and development in both metropolitan and rural areas.
- Be an independent and non-party political but a politically active organisation.
- Sponsor and mentor young women and students in planning related professions.
- Research planning issues and influencing policies, particularly those affecting women’s aspirations and needs.
- Provide a forum for communication and networking for women in planning and related professions.

Key achievements

Research, policy submissions and communications

WPN has undertaken research into issues involving women and planning, including:

- Women’s Transport Needs Study (1995)
- Women’s Guide to Town Planning (1997) (supported by the Victoria Women’s Trust)
- Women’s Perception of the Central City Study: Women’s perceptions of the central city: does the city offer women the range, type and quality of the goods and services which women seek? (1997) (supported by Melbourne City Council)
• *Listening to Women – women’s participation in local decision making* (2002)
• *Toolkit for Affordable Housing for Women* (2006/07)
• *From Accidental Planner to Agent Provocateur: 60 Years of Women in Victorian Planning* (2008/09)
  (Commendation in the 2009 PIA Awards for Planning Excellence)

WPN has made submissions and participated in policy development including:

• Contribution to the development of the Victorian Local Government Women’s Charter (1997)
• Design Outcomes and Issues on the Urban Fringe (1996/7)
• Melbourne 2030 consultation
• Contribution to VLGA publications for newly-elected Councillors (1999 and 2012)
• Response to the Metropolitan Planning Strategy Discussion Paper (2013)

*Vantage* has been published quarterly since 2000, and annually, circulated by email in the past two years to over 250 WPN members and contacts.

WPN maintains a website which receives 2,200 hits per month on average with the rising star scholarship, ‘about wpn’ and events sections pages most popular.

**Building the profession**

WPN offers a Mentoring Program, almost continuously since 1997 and with RAPI/PIA from 2001, involving over 150 Victorian planners. Participant feedback on the program has been excellent, with some members specifically citing the Mentoring Program as their reason for joining WPN. WPN provides oversight of the program via participation in the working group and promotes the program to members and networks.

WPN has delivered a range of professional development activities, including seminars on ‘Being an Expert Witness’, native title, and development control and an Urban Design Forum (2001). WPN has also been represented at national and international conferences, including a several Victorian Planning Conferences and the Rural Women’s Summit and the Women, Planning and Design: International Perspectives’ conference in London, in 2007.

**Developing networks**

WPN predominately maintains networks through members including with PIA, VPELA and Women’s Participation in Local Government Coalition (WPLGC). These networks have assisted sponsorship and marketing for WPN, but have not been used strategically. WPN holds regular events to promote WPN and enable members to build their professional networks:

• International Women’s Day activities – including a lecture and seminar series, and more recently a breakfast with a keynote speaker. The breakfast has grown steadily in profile with 120 guests in 2013.
• Regular events with guest speakers sharing career development and experiences, including Virginia Rogers, Leonie Sandercock, Kim Rubenstein, Judith Klepner, Chris Gallagher
• Regular urban walks and film nights
Scholarships and awards

WPN has supported emerging planners through a range of awards, including:

- Annette Mastrowicz Prize for female undergraduate urban planning students (1995-2001) (co-sponsored by the former Urban Land Corporation)
- WPN annual Planning Award 1998, 2003
- Rising Star Scholarship (2006-2014), sponsored by Hansen Partnerships and SJB Planning, on topics including co-housing, young people, queer theory, and redevelopment of Melbourne’s city centre

WPN and WPN members have also been recognised for their achievements:

- Roz Hansen, inaugural WPN President, was included on the Victorian Honour Roll in 2001, for her contribution to women in the planning profession and PIA National Hall of Fame in 2013.
- Gabriel Hodgson, former WPN president was awarded the RAPI 2002 Young Planner of the Year for her work coordinating the WPN Mentoring Program.
- Former President Lecki Ord was made an Honorary Fellow of PIA in 2007, for her services to the planning profession.

Current Initiatives

In 2006, WPN began exploring opportunities to deliver a leadership program to address the gender gap at senior levels in planning, and potentially more broadly. This program is now being scoped, and is considering formal training for women with five to ten years of professional experience: an ‘Emerging Leaders Program’.

Governance

WPN is an incorporated association, registered in Victoria, operating under its own Rules of Association, which specify how members join and leave the organisation, how the Committee is formed and how meetings are run.

An annual nomination and election process determines the committee, which comprises a President, Vice-President and Treasurer and at least four other members. Meetings are held monthly. Members of the current Committee have served terms of up to nine years, though the average duration is two years.

Membership

WPN membership is open to individuals and organisations with an interest in planning and development of the built environment. Most individual members are working or studying in these fields. WPN opened to corporate members in 2003.

Membership fees are currently $425 Corporate, $80 Individual, and $20 Student (all inclusive of GST). Individual membership was initially $66, rose to $75 in 2003 and has been charged at the current level since 2010. Corporate membership was initially offered at $280 for large (>8 employees) and $150 for small companies (<8 employees) until 2010, at which point memberships was increased to $425 for all.

On average, WPN members are financial members for two to three years, though many continue to come to WPN events after their membership lapses.
In 2012/13, WPN had 23 individual members (full and concession) and 6 corporate members. Membership trends are shown in the table below.

![Membership Trends Graph]

**Finance and administration** – Draft 2013/14 budget at Attachment A

WPN has received an annual grant from the planning area of the Victorian Government since inception. This is complemented by membership fees and a modest return on events. The subsidy enables paid secretariat and accounting functions, low membership fees and low or cost recovery event charges.

PIA provides the secretariat services on a fee for service basis and has done so since 2004, though the agreement with PIA lapsed in 2012. Turnover is about $26,000 per annum.

**Key Issues**

**Relevance**

The role of and need for WPN may be less pronounced than when WPN formed. Women are well-represented in the planning profession, though less so at senior levels. WPN’s objective is to promote the role and interests of women in planning and development decision making processes, and has generally been advanced from a policy perspective.

Is this objective still relevant? What are the land use and development policy matters affecting women today?

**Viability**

WPN’s current operating model relies on a subsidy from Government, which is not assured. Without this, WPN’s reserves will only support the current operating model for two years at most. What alternative funding or operational models are available?

**Membership**

WPN membership numbers are declining, though participation in WPN events remains steady. Can WPN generate active support and interest among its members and grow its membership base? Who should be a WPN member? What services should they expect?

**Capacity**

What level of activity and what contribution are WPN members prepared to provide?
### Revenue

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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item</th>
<th>Number</th>
<th>Amount</th>
<th>Total Revenue</th>
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<td>DPCD Annual Grant</td>
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<td>20,000.00</td>
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<td>Other Grant - research</td>
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<td>Bank Interest</td>
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<td>Events Surplus</td>
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<td>Individual Memberships</td>
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<td>Student Memberships</td>
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<td>20.00</td>
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<td>Corporate Memberships (organisations with &lt;8 employees)</td>
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<td>425.00</td>
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<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
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### Expenditure

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<th>Item</th>
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<th>Total Expenses</th>
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<tr>
<td>WPN Secretariat - admin, events and comms</td>
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<td>$1,920.00</td>
<td><strong>$23,040.00</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Monthly meetings</td>
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<td>$25.00</td>
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<td>Events</td>
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<td>Stationary and office supplies</td>
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<td>Travel</td>
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<tr>
<td>Other</td>
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<td><strong>Net profit/loss</strong></td>
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**Principle One:** As a business objective WPN will always have one year of operations costs in reserve.s

**Principle Two:** All events will have a break even budget (ideally small surplus to cover intangible costs)

**Principle Three:** All activities will have a clear objective, plan and allocated budget which is then reconciled and reviewed