Planning Excellence

Planning Institute of Australia. NSW Division. 2013 Awards for Excellence in Planning

The Awards for Excellence Program recognises innovation, leadership and excellence in the planning profession, stimulates the public awareness of excellent projects and emphasises the importance of good planning in the community.

Congratulations to the winners of the 2013 NSW Awards for Excellence in Planning and thank you to all the nominees.

OUTSTANDING STUDENT PROJECT Award – Laura Schmahmann for Regulating Urban Design: a comparative study of knockdown rebuild.

PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT & COMMUNITY PLANNING Award – Transport for NSW for North West Rail – Stakeholder and Community Engagement

Commendation – Defence Housing Australia for AE2 Ermington

BEST PLANNING IDEAS-SMALL PROJECTS Award – PLACE Design Group in conjunction with Warringah Council, Cardno, Godden Mackay Logan and Elton Consulting for Dee Why Town Centre Master Plan

Commendation – Elton consulting in conjunction with Mid-Western Regional Council, Caerleon Mudgee LTD and Development Planning Strategies for Caerleon Residential Urban Release, Mudgee

BEST PLANNING IDEAS- LARGE PROJECTS Award – NSW Department of Planning & Infrastructure for Newcastle Urban Renewal Strategy

Commendation – SGS Economics and Planning in Conjunction with Wyong Shire Council for Wyong Shire Employment Lands Study and Industrial Land Audit

IMPROVING PLANNING PROCESSES & PRACTICES Award – Shellharbour City Council for Aboriginal Cultural Heritage Management Development Assessment Toolkit

HARD WON VICTORY Award – Daly International in conjunction with Ericsson for NBN Fixed Wireless Project

CUTTING EDGE RESEARCH & TEACHING Commendation – University of New South Wales Faculty of the Built Environment for Redfern Waterloo Urban Design Strategy

PLANNING FOR CHILDREN & YOUNG PEOPLE Award – Cred Community Planning in conjunction with Tweed Shire Council for Tweed Youth Strategy “Speak Out” Engagement.

OUTSTANDING ACHIEVEMENT BY A YOUNG PLANNER Award - Tim Sneesby

SERVICE TO THE INSTITUTE Award – Greg Woodhams FPIA CPP

PLANNER OF THE YEAR Award – Sean O’Toole FPIA

PRESIDENT’S AWARD Award – Oran Park Town Greenfield Development Company and UrbanGrowth NSW for Oran Town Park Centre

NEW FELLOWS OF THE PLANNING INSTITUTE 2013

The Institute congratulates NSW Members who have been elevated to Fellows of the Institute. They were presented with their certificates at the Awards for Excellence Gala dinner held on 7 November.

Elevation from Corporate Member to Fellow is recognition by the National Council of the Planning Institute for Australia for the conspicuous service rendered to the profession, including a number of years in senior and responsible positions in the planning field.

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Nicole Gurran FPIA
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CONTACTING THE COMMITTEE The NSW Divisional Committee Members are elected by the NSW Membership. Their role is to represent the interests of the Members. They can be contacted through the NSW Divisional Office by phone or email to nswmanager@planning.org.au
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Andrew Wheeler
Robyn Vincin

Each quarter New Planner invites a Guest Editor to comment on the theme of that issue.

Contributors
Deadline for March 2014 edition is:
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Looking forward - looking back

Traditionally the final issue of New Planner for the year is an issue which reviews both PIA activities over the year, and activities within the planning profession.

As the outgoing President Sarah Hill reflects in her column “Often in planning we walk a tightrope to balance the opinions and perspectives of the community” and in that vein, we have called upon planners from various sides of the industry to give their views on 2013.

The variety of opinions and perspectives represented here are both the great opportunities and the challenges for our profession and our industry, and there have been some challenges.

From Stephen McMahon’s “The highway was jammed with broken heroes on a last chance power drive” reflection on what planning achieved for the development industry in 2013 … so much promise … ; to Sarah’s Reilly’s reflections from a social planning perspective: “It’s great to see outcomes for the entire community in the literature around planning reform.

However, it seems that in reality the current debate about the future of planning in NSW has paid little attention to the potential of spatial planning to provide solutions to many aspects of our most difficult social issues.”

Stephen Gow has provided a review of the 2013 Mudgee Forum “The importance of informed professional input in the context of the NSW Government’s planning reform package was very much evident in discussions from the welcome reception onwards. Moreover, the potential for members to make telling contributions in this change process was highlighted in the striking similarity between aspects of the current reforms and proposals put forward by delegates at the previous Forum in Leura.” You can read Stephen’s full report in this issue, and papers from the Forum are available on our website.

From an editorial perspective, it has been great to see New Planner become a voice for planners, with an increasing number of unsolicited opinion pieces which add to the valued regular contributions. This year we have added some new regular features including “PlannerTech” and Local perspectives: the Local Government Planners Network views.

Thank you to the many contributors who have provided the content for our magazine. Thank you to the Editorial team of Andrew Wheeler, Brigitte Buchholz and Nicole Philps and look out for new ideas from them in 2014, as we approach the 100th edition of New Planner. Thank you to Rose Saltman who has assisted with editing of recent issues.

2014 will be another big year, and New Planner will be a voice for some of the changes. The theme for our March issue is one which has received a lot of airplay this year – community engagement – your contributions will be welcome.
President’s message
Sarah Hill, President PIA NSW Division

Well it is true that all good things come to an end, and sadly for me my term as PIA NSW President has expired. I believe that every good President knows the right time to stand down and to support a new voice and fresh opinion. For this reason it is an absolute delight to announce and congratulate David Ryan as my replacement. David has proven instrumental in preparing PIA’s policy position regarding the new planning system over the past two years and for that reason I believe there is no greater person to lead us forward as next year we put flesh to the bone on matters ranging from new planning regulations to State policies to subregional plans.

Over my term as President, I have had the great privilege of meeting and learning from so many interesting people. In this respect I wish to commence by thanking every NSW member of the Institute for their input, support and guidance throughout the year. Often in planning we walk a tightrope to balance the opinions and perspectives of the community. During my presidency whilst I find that planners are not short of an opinion, I am pleased to say that I also found that planners have a respect for different points of view and a willingness to listen. We are also aware of the importance of getting our facts right, of being a professional and fresh opinion. For this reason it

represent the interests of our members. With respect to the second foci, we have and continue to work with the State Government and tertiary institutions to design a package of education programmes to be rolled out with the new planning system to support planners across all industry groups. A notable win for us was the scale of the State budget awarded to education this year following much of our encouragement behind the scenes. We are also working with the Department of Planning and Infrastructure, local government and industry to identify and resource practical measures that can be implemented by all players in the planning and property industry to enhance our culture and our collaborative approach to achieving a vision and great planning outcomes. Improvements to our culture arguably becoming more important in light of the recent obstacles faced by the draft Bills. Importantly our strategic direction and priorities in NSW business planning reflect the PIA national priorities. The key policy areas for PIA and the planning profession generally have been reflected in the major “Planning matters” campaign which PIA has rolled out across each Division. In NSW this has been reflected in and in some cases been led by, the work we have been doing on changing the culture of planning.

Whilst undertaking the above, we have sought to consistently deliver high quality networking and professional development events for our members. Robyn Vincin, our fearless executive leader has continued to work tirelessly and passionately to run over 45 successful events that also provide a positive return to ensure the sustainability of the Institute. In addition Robyn has managed our members enquiries, provided career advice, established mentoring programmes and kept us all connected and informed with the support of her highly capable team member Anthony Pignatiello.

In doing this Robyn and I have been blessed with a great volunteer team. I consequently would like to acknowledge the support and hard work of the Division Committee and thank them for their efforts on behalf of PIA NSW. A special thank you goes to Vice Presidents David Ryan and Scott Anson, to our Past President Tony McNamara for his ongoing contribution, and to NSW Board Member Anthony Newland. To retiring Committee Members Chris Pratt and Tony McNamara, who have both given years of active service to the Institute – thank you for your contributions and we know you won’t be strangers. Our Young Planner Convenor Harry Quartermain will continue to represent NSW Division but I’d like to take this opportunity to thank him for his contributions so far. To Greg Woodhams who stood down as Vice President in early 2013 – thank you for your contributions, and especially for the strong leadership of the Policy Committee. I am so pleased you were able to personally be there to receive your Service to the Institute Award.

I would also like to stop and take the time to thank Robyn personally. Not only has she delivered an outstanding service to our members but she has been my rock. It is true that behind any half way decent President there is a great Robyn. Robyn has advised me, mentored me, guided and supported me through many unknowns and challenges over the past two years. She has been available 24/7 as the job requires and kept me focused on what matters – our profession and its members. Robyn has listened to my ideas and made them happen and all I can say is thank you, you are a truly professional and wise woman. David, you will be in great hands.

My thanks to the Chairs of all our Chapters, Networks and Branches and their local Committees who have represented so well the interests of their respective groups. Your contributions to policy development, the preparation of draft submissions and organising events relevant to your areas of interest and expertise has made a huge difference to the quality and depth of our work. On behalf of PIA our thanks goes to our sponsors throughout the year for their continued generosity without which we could not continue to deliver the number or level of services that we do.

In light of the year we have had, my hope is that you can agree that there is great benefit in being a member of the PIA family. I would argue that with the changes set to occur over the next few years, it will be ever the more important to be part of a professional network of like-minded people who seek to continually grow and expand their education and ways of thinking. I encourage you to continue to be engaged and to help us to make a difference in the coming year. Whilst I stand down as President, I can say for certain that I will practice what I preach and stay active in my pursuit to raise the profile of the profession and recognition of its substantial value.

Regards
In an article in the December 2011 edition of New Planner, Sarah Hill, PIA NSW President spoke of the importance of a cultural shift, in order for the NSW planning system review to be truly effective.

That article identified nine ways to positively change the culture of planning. Two years on, with the Planning Bills before Parliament as we go to print, and under the theme of the year in review, it is timely to review those nine tenets by reference back to some of actions and the statements PIA has made over those two years.

Idea 1: Positive attitude to change – we have been overwhelmed by the support for a change in the culture of planning. Throughout 2012 and into 2013 the feedback from planning professionals and stakeholders, through working groups, seminars and responses to our submissions, was that change was both needed and supported.

Idea 2: Strategic and evidence based planning by planners – PIA submissions on the Green and the White Paper supported the need for a refocus back to strategic planning. The documents and the subsequent draft Planning Bill reflected this approach. PIA continues to support moves to ensure we have the right tools and information to do our jobs; in practice this relates to ePlanning, a new research section at the Department, a stronger and more connected research role for centres of learning and tools for real community engagement.

Idea 3: Recognition of the bigger picture – this idea stated that the focus of planners should be towards outcomes rather than process; vision rather than assessment – we need to keep reminding ourselves that this is our goal.

Idea 4: Courageous leaders and champions - we have seen many champions emerge in the culture change space, and unfortunately a number of detractors. The early work which PIA undertook in the Ambassadors for Change program will continue as the new Planning Act rolls out. We have also sought to recognise some of those Champions through our Awards program and the PIA professional recognition processes.

Idea 5: Developing smart planners – working with the Department of Planning & Infrastructure and with universities, we are developing an education program which will support planning and related professionals. The PIA professional development program, in the context of our Lifelong Learning Framework, will support and complement this broader program.

Idea 6: Supporting community engagement – this one has been a rollercoaster. The Planning Bill includes a Community Participation Charter and processes for engagement. We have a once in a generation opportunity to create a new planning system that will serve our community and our environment into the foreseeable future. Let’s not get diverted by issues that can be resolved along the way. As part of this brave new world we need to rebuild trust that has been lost between the community, government and planning consultants to show that we are all in this together and that includes de-bunking growing myths about the new system related to matters such as community consultation.

Idea 7: Planners as professionals and decision makers – PIA supports the work being done in the ePlanning space, and will continue to engage with universities and other training organisations to ensure that planners have both the technical and the soft skills to contribute professionally.

Idea 8: Aligning the culture of planning and the Act – it is important that we do not replicate the poor practices of the past by passing on incorrect information or misunderstandings. In a system that advocates the use of evidence and recognition of the big picture, we need to ensure any comments we make bear these cultural components in mind.

Idea 9: Positive media – this is another rollercoaster and we can but awo to continue to identify good news stories, and actively engage where possible. PIA has been called upon to provide background to news stories; regional media has reported on PIA activities in regional areas.

Moving forward – we’re not there yet but we have come a long way, supported by the fact that we’re not alone on the journey. PIA nationally has adopted the Planning Matters: Shaping the World Today for Tomorrow strategy. This strategy will inform a series of key actions to Focus, Invigorate and Position members and the profession through a series of key actions including:

1. Focusing our members to be bold planning professionals committed to delivering good planning.
2. Invigorate the profession by inspiring planners to embrace change and understand the value we bring.
3. Position the profession by championing good planning.

Equally significant in this move forward is the work being done to establish a culture change action group, as outlined in the White Paper. PIA is an active participant in this process.

Last but not least – we need you! We can only truly represent our Members and reflect the broader planning community, if we understand your needs. Don’t let the critics of change have the last word.

2013 wrap up

A year in review would not be complete without an acknowledgement of the contributions of a large number of Members. Thank you to everyone who has contributed to organising seminars, to our policy submissions, to informal and formal mentoring programs and to our various committees and networks. Thank you to the Divisional Committee members who finished their terms this year – Chris Pratt, Tony McNamara and Harry Quatermain and NSW Board Member Anthony Newland. Welcome new Committee Members Diana Griffiths, Jenny Rudolph, Mike Svikis and Christina Livers. Congratulations to David Ryan who takes up the NSW President’s Chair.

To Sarah Hill, who has led the NSW Division for the past two years, and who has put us on the map in the “culture change” space – thank you on behalf of our Members. I want to personally acknowledge Sarah’s drive and energy and her commitment to PIA, all of which ensure that the NSW Division is well placed to respond to changes and challenges in 2014.

Best wishes for a safe holiday!
It’s been a big year for infrastructure planning in NSW.

Every election campaign is awash with politicians in hard hats and fluoro vests. The stakes however went higher during this year’s federal campaign. The new Prime Minister, Tony Abbott said before the election that he wanted to be remembered as the ‘infrastructure prime minister’. Mr Abbott, you got the gong and now we all look forward to a full-steam-ahead program of infrastructure.

It was also during the campaign that the then Prime Minister, Mr Rudd, got caught in the headlights in the first debate when asked his views on making a start on Sydney’s second airport. Mr Rudd famously said that he was from Queensland and there were other airports apart from Sydney. The tide on this issue appears to have turned. Western Sydney councils having changed their view and are now actively promoting an airport at Badgerys Creek. There appears to be a groundswell that if Sydney’s west is to get the massive increase in local jobs it needs, then a new airport is the best way of achieving it.

The Commonwealth’s procrastination over the second airport commitment that has been ongoing for at least a generation, and from both sides of politics, has done much harm to business confidence in NSW. Is that all about to change? Time will tell.

The State Government in 2013 continued an agenda that placed a high priority on delivering infrastructure. The Budget papers state that the State funded infrastructure program will ‘step up’ from an average of $6.5 billion per year for the four years before 2013 to an average of $9 billion per year for the four years following 2013. A significant shift to be sure.

Chief among the major projects is WestConnex – a new inner urban motorway and urban renewal area that will link western and south western Sydney with Sydney’s airport and port. UrbanGrowth NSW will lead the land use redevelopment along the link. The Government has developed an innovative financing strategy for WestConnex that will see it take the finance risk for the early stages until traffic volumes are established, after which the lead role will transfer to the private sector. The Commonwealth has also promised $1.5 billion for the project. If all goes to plan, Sydney will get its inner area - port - airport transport connections by 2023. Years after Brisbane and Melbourne got theirs, but better late than never!

It’s a challenge keeping pace with the program acronyms. The State’s programs to address particular sectoral or regional infrastructure challenges including the Housing Acceleration Fund (HAF), the Hunter Infrastructure and Investment Fund (HIIF), the Local Infrastructure Renewal Scheme (LIRS), the Local Infrastructure Growth Scheme (LIGS) and the punchier ‘Restart NSW’.

With the HAF the Government is using the sale of assets to fund infrastructure in both infill and housing growth areas. $302 million has been allocated to the program in 2013-14, of which $99 million will go towards the cost of essential local infrastructure in section 94 plans that cannot be funded because of the contributions cap (i.e. the LIGS). This year’s and last year’s HAF money is going toward road, water, waste water and electricity projects supporting new housing and employment areas (infill and greenfield) mainly in Sydney, the Lower Hunter and Wollongong.

The Local Government Infrastructure Audit report in June told us the total infrastructure backlog for all councils stood at $7.4 billion in 2011/12 – an improvement since the last audit in 2004. Councils that are facing the infrastructure challenges head-on are making head way. The following concurrent events suggest to me that councils do have the opportunity to address the challenge if they are bold enough:

- Extra rate funding approval is no longer at the whim of the Minister for Local Government, but is now under the control of an independent umpire, IPART. The Tribunal approved all 23 variations approved by IPART.
- The LIGS program will fund the shortfall in development contributions at least until the new infrastructure contributions system is in place.

Mid Western Regional Council shared the prestigious 2013 AR Bluett memorial award for tackling growth-related infrastructure challenges. Achievements during the year included 3 swimming pool upgrades, the finalisation of a regional sports complex, town hall refurbishment, library extensions, main street upgrades and a $23 million sewer augmentation program. The area, centred on Mudgee, is expecting 30% growth over the next 7 years.

The council is not resting on its laurels and is positively focused on enabling development through infrastructure. In August it was successful in securing a subsidised loan of $8.2 million for lead-in water, sewer and roads infrastructure to serve a 1400-lot development on the edge of Mudgee. The infrastructure will address the critical shortage of residential housing due to the rapid expansion of the coal mining industry.

And finally, at the end of 2013 we find ourselves almost with a new Planning Act. While changes to the infrastructure contributions are afoot, the details of those changes are yet to emerge. Developers fear that with the removal of the caps, infrastructure contribution rates will return to the high levels that existed prior to 2010. The new Act promises a more equitable system that would potentially spread the cost burden across a broader population resulting in significant affordability benefits. The truth of that promise will only become known in time. It will be the details of the new Act that will likely occupy everyone in the planning profession in 2014.
Planning Perspectives

Warkworth Judgment

Steve O’Connor, KDC and ERM Australia

Given the theme of this edition of New Planner is “the year in review”, I have decided to focus on the Warkworth decision which was released earlier this year. This is arguably the most important judgment handed down by the Land and Environment Court in over a decade. In the June 2013 edition of New Planner, Peter Williams referred to this decision and presented a summary of the matters surrounding this court case. Peter concluded that it was notable for three main reasons, namely that it provided an explanation of the merit review process, it provided an exhaustive assessment of the merit issues and it contained references to the principles of ecologically sustainable development.

While I agree that these issues are noteworthy, there are other compelling reasons to take a close look at this judgment as explained in this article.

Background Information

A Project Application under Part 3A of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (EP&A Act) was lodged in 2010 by Warkworth Mining Limited to expand an open cut coal mine near the village of Broke. The application was approved after being reviewed by the Planning and Assessment Commission (PAC) in 2012. However, this decision was challenged by the Broke Milbrodale Progress Association and eventually was overturned in the Land and Environment Court.

The appeal was heard by the Chief Judge who concluded at paragraph 23 of his judgment that,

“Balancing the significant adverse environmental and social impacts against the material economic and social benefits of the Project, it has not been established that the Project is justified on environmental, social and economic grounds.”

This matter is still before the courts as a further appeal has been heard challenging the decision of the Chief Judge. The outcome of this appeal is yet to be known.

The Decision Making Process

The judgment tells us that there are four key steps in the decision making process for a major project like the expansion of a coal mine. These steps are summarized in paragraph 36 of the judgment as follows;

“first: identification of the relevant matters needing to be considered; secondly: fact finding for each relevant matter; thirdly: determining how much weight each relevant matter is to receive; and fourthly: balancing the weighted matters to arrive at a managerial decision.”

These four steps must be followed sequentially and only after proceeding down this path can a final decision be made.

Polycentric Decision Making

We are also told by the Chief Judge that, when grappling with the task of assessing a major project, we are dealing with a polycentric problem. Here is an extract from paragraph 31 of the judgment to explain what this means;

“The range of interests affected, the complexity of the issues and the interdependence of the issues, means that decision making involves a polycentric problem. A polycentric problem involves a complex network of relationships, with interacting points of influence. Each decision made communicates itself to other centres of decision, changing the conditions, so that a new basis must be found for the next decision.”

An analogy of a web is provided in the judgment where it is explained that a pull on one strand will distribute tensions and after a complicated pattern of adjustment throughout the whole web a new equilibrium will be established. The web, as illustrated in the Photograph 1, is a complex structure with some remarkable characteristics which humans have sought to replicate. Polycentric problems cannot be resolved by simply dealing with individual key issues.

For example, if the noise impacts of a mining proposal are considered unacceptable on some of the adjacent properties then some of the impacted properties may be required to be acquired by the proponent of the mine. However, if these properties are no longer used for their current purpose, then this could impact on the economic and social assessments which had been prepared for the mining proposal. Hence an iterative process must be followed across a whole range of key issues during the assessment and decision making stages which may well require additional information.

The Chief Judge therefore concluded at paragraph 483;

“a polycentric problem such as determining whether to approve or disapprove a mining project, cannot be resolved by identifying each issue and sequentially resolving it; the resolution of one issue has repercussions on other issues.”

Implications for Planners

Having been guilty of preparing reports on
complex proposals and having followed the relatively standard practice of simply listing the key issues and, one by one dealing with each of them, I may well have not given due regard to the polycentric nature of major projects as required in this judgment.

Addressing each issue and ticking it off one by one until there are no more outstanding issues is a simplistic approach to the assessment of complex development proposals. Recognition of the interdependence of issues is likely to be given increasing focus in future.

**Noise and Dust Considerations**

The Chief Judge provides a detailed decision:

“The combining of noise criteria for Warkworth and Mount Thorley mines in the proposed approved conditions is of doubtful legal validity but in any event is likely to be difficult to monitor or enforce compliance. Hence no confident conclusion can be drawn that the noise impacts of the Project will be acceptable.”

**Biological Diversity Considerations**

Similarly, 28 pages are allocated to discussing the likely biodiversity impacts. One of the critical conclusions is that it is not appropriate to trade offsets across different ecological communities. It is not surprising therefore that the Chief Judge concluded at paragraph 255 that;

"...Warkworth’s offset package of direct offsets and other compensatory measures would not adequately compensate for the significant impacts that the Project would have on extant EECs in the disturbance area. This is a fundamental matter to be considered in the decision-making process, to which significant weight should be assigned.”

**Social and Economic Considerations**

Likely social and economic impacts are canvassed in 22 pages of the judgment where the analytical tools and methodologies used in the environmental assessment report are roundly criticized for not taking into account the polycentricity of the Project. In particular the economic modeling is criticized as it did not address the issues of equity and distributive justice. There was also a concern about the adverse change in the composition of the Bulga community and the impacts that this might have. The term “solastalgia” was coined to refer to the loss of place which people experience in these situations.

Photograph 2 illustrates the ambiance of rural communities in the Gloucester Valley which like the Hunter Valley has significant coal resources. The amenity of communities like this can be threatened by a major project like a coal mine.

As a consequence of this judgment, the impact of noise, dust, biological diversity, social and economic assessment in relation to major projects may have to be significantly revised.

**Balancing of Relevant Matters and Determination**

Given that the judgment runs to over 100 pages, there is surprisingly little attention paid to balancing the various issues and drawing a conclusion. In fact, less than a page is devoted to discussing this task. This is what is said at paragraph 499;

“In my view, balancing all the relevant matters, the preferable decision is to disapprove of the carrying out of the Project.”

Having regard to the importance of this balancing process, I find it surprising that so little discussion and justification is provided under this heading in the judgment.

**Conclusions**

Although the outcome of the appeal against the Warkworth decision handed down by the Chief Judge is unknown at the time of writing, it is likely that the various principles documented throughout the judgment will remain unchallenged given that the appeal is related strictly to points of law.

The four step process to be followed when assessing major projects, that is, the importance of recognizing the polycentricity of decision making, the need to be explicit about the weightings assigned to indicate the relative importance of the various issues assessed, and the nature of the balancing which takes place in order to come to a decision whether to approve or refuse a proposal, are all part of the legacy of this decision.

It is likely that planning students will be studying this judgment for many years to come and will be learning about concepts like solastalgia. Hopefully those responsible for drafting the Planning Bill currently before Parliament had a good grasp of the lessons to be learnt from this judgment before the Bill was finalized.
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This year we have seen proposals to make significant changes to planning in NSW in 2014 and beyond.

From the large amount of case law and legislative amendments (both proposed and made), this article has selected 3 of the more important planning developments of 2013. These developments include a State amendment (the proposed NSW planning reforms), a case (Fullerton Cove Residents Action Group Incorporated v Dart Energy Ltd) and a Federal proposal (bilateral approvals under the Environment Protection and Biodiversity Conservation Act 1999).

1) The State amendment: NSW planning reforms

The release of "A New Planning System for NSW – White Paper" (White Paper) on 16 April this year provided details on how the NSW Government proposed to review the planning system, promote economic growth and productivity, increase community input into the planning process, improve decision making and transition to a system with less delay and red tape. This was followed on 22 October 2013 by the introduction into the NSW Parliament of the Planning Bill 2013 (Planning Bill) and Planning Administration Bill 2013.

The recently introduced Planning Bill has been amended in response to the consultation process that took place following the release of the White Paper. The Planning Bill now includes changes such as an expansion of the community participation requirements, a retention of all zones in the Standard Instrument Local Environmental Plan, and the strengthening of concurrency requirements regarding threatened species.

On 30 October 2013 the Planning Bill and other associated bills passed the State’s lower house, however there is no date for the legislation to be finalised. The Government promoted the review of the planning amendments as a “once-in-a-generation” reform, however with significant amendments to some of the proposals contained in the White Paper and those contained in the Planning Bill, it will be interesting to see how profoundly different the final legislation will be from that currently in place.


The Dart Energy case concerned the challenge by Fullerton Cove Action Group (Fullerton) to a proponent’s approval to carry out coal seam gas (CSG) exploration activities near Newcastle. Fullerton contended that the exploration activities were invalid as the Department of Trade and Investment, Regional Infrastructure and Services had failed to:

1. examine and take into account to the fullest extent possible all matters affecting or likely to affect the environment arising from the exploration activities, breaching section 111 of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act 1979 (Act); and
2. require that Dart Energy provide an Environmental Impact Statement despite the fact that the exploration activities are “likely to significantly affect the environment (including critical habitat) or threatened species, populations or ecological communities, or their habitats”, breaching section 112 of the Act.

The challenge was unsuccessful. Justice Pepper found that as section 112 of the Act gives rise to a jurisdictional fact (conditions which must exist before a statutory power is enlivened) the merits of determining authorities’ decisions can be called into question by third party objectors.

This finding may result in not only less certainty for proponents seeking to rely on determinations made under Part 5 of the Act, but also increase the opportunity for third party objectors to challenge the validity of such assessments. With ongoing community concerns regarding CSG activities in NSW, there may be a greater number of similar challenges taking place in the coming year.


Looking forward to 2014, there are some important changes proposed at a Federal level which have the potential to impact how planning and environmental decisions are made within NSW. Federal Environment Minister Greg Hunt recently announced the Government’s intention to create a “one stop shop” for environmental approvals through the accreditation of the State planning systems under the EPBC Act. Minister Hunt confirmed that those “willing jurisdictions” wanting to participate in the proposal will undergo a three stage process that includes:

1. signing a Memorandum of Understanding;
2. agreement on bilateral assessments and updating any existing agreement with the state; and
3. negotiation of approval bilateral agreements within 12 months.

This proposal will undoubtedly garner a broad spectrum of responses, with some entities seeing this proposal to “cut red tape” as an avenue to a more streamlined and simplified process for project approvals, and others as a significant erosion of the Commonwealth’s responsibility to protect matters of national environmental significance and ensure compliance with Australia’s international environmental obligations.

Queensland was the first (and at the time of writing only) state to enter into a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with the Commonwealth. Whilst the MOU is not a legal agreement, it provides that both the Commonwealth and Queensland are to use “their best endeavours” to deliver the “one stop shop” for environmental approvals and remove “duplication in assessment and approvals processes, while maintaining environmental outcomes.” A “watch this space” status applies to this proposal, with many of the other States expected to follow Queensland’s lead.
Revisioning planning to achieve long-term social and economic benefits
Sarah Reilly, Cred Community Planning

The NSW Department of Planning White Paper¹ states:

“The main purpose of the planning system is to promote economic growth and development in NSW for the benefit of the entire community, while protecting the environment and enhancing people’s way of life”

It’s great to see outcomes for the entire community in the literature around planning reform. However, it seems that in reality the current debate about the future of planning in NSW has paid little attention to the potential of spatial planning to provide solutions to many aspects of our most difficult social issues. There is a lot of rhetoric about improving quality of life for people, however, social planning requirements are not enshrined anywhere in the proposed legislation. Internationally, there’s an increasing interest in planning for, and measuring of, the value of social outcomes. The “social” is considered an integral part of the big picture planning process. In my experience as a social planner, there is a constant battle to convince decision makers to invest money in good social planning processes or on hard and soft social infrastructure (such as open space, affordable housing, universal design or community facilities). With competing demands for limited funds, the short-term economic costs, or ability to make a profit, seem to be the major focus for many decision makers.

Where’s the evidence?
So how do we put a value on social outcomes? There is increasing and significant evidence nationally and internationally that there are direct short and long-term economic benefits to people-focused planning, and conversely economic risks and costs to planning without social outcomes in mind. These benefits and risks reach a broad range of stakeholders including the community, local business, developers and government.

Planning for children in density
Australia is only now learning to plan for more people living within increased density and the subsequent increase of children and young people in inner city areas. (In the City of Sydney there are higher proportions of children aged 0 to 4 years living in many new high-density dwellings than in other parts of the City). But what are we doing to provide quality spaces to support the integration of kids into public space? In Copenhagen, a high density city, children are designed into the streetscape through play streets and play yards resulting in healthier, more socialised adults causing less negative impacts on society. Copenhagen has one of the lowest crime rates in the world, significantly reducing costs to the government in areas such as law and order, and health.

Planning for older people
By 2050, the number of people aged 65 plus will more than double from just over one million (one in eight people) to 2.3million (one in four people). This significant growth means that we need to start planning for more appropriate and universally designed housing, public spaces and town centres or we will face significant health and social service costs in the future. Few of our public areas are universally accessible, isolating many older people in their homes, and low proportions of new dwellings are universally designed to support ageing in place. But there is significant research to show that the costs of incorporating universal design upfront are much lower than retrofitting later, and significantly less than the costs of moving an older person out of the neighbourhood they are connected to and into a nursing home. A US study showed that for a house of between 150m2 and 200m2, the cost of incorporating essential universal design features costs about $700 for a new house compared to $14,800 if that same house was to be retrofitted.

Housing affordability
Sydney has escalating housing prices. What’s going to happen to Sydney without enough affordable housing to support key workers to work in higher income areas where they couldn’t possibly afford to live? Where are our nurses, cleaners, police, bus drivers and teachers going to come from, and where might they move? And what are the costs when housing becomes so unaffordable and unavailable that homelessness continues to increase? With about 55,000 people currently on the NSW Social Housing waitlist, this is likely to happen.

The Common Ground model of mixed housing is well known and in Chippendale this development provides social housing, affordable housing for key workers and 52 houses for long-term homeless people. A recent study showed that it costs more to leave a person homeless ($34,000 in service fees per annum) than to provide supported housing. And yet supported housing can reduce ongoing costs by 50% and has additional savings to health care (69% reduction); ambulance transportation costs (66% reduction), police contact costs (66% reduction), incarceration (62% reduction), and shelter visits (98% reduction). Furthermore, the Big Issue, a well know homelessness service, has identified through a La Trobe University study that for every $1 invested in the Street Soccer Program, a saving of $4.30 was generated to the Australian community, saving society $7million a year.

Community services
Studies from economist James Heckman show that for every $1 spent on child care, $17 is returned to the community through better educational outcomes, higher school completion rates, less expenditure on health, welfare and crime services. However, in Australia, child care is one service area from which increasing numbers of councils are opting out, while there is increasing demand for places in many LGAs. 3 Recently, Blacktown Council passed a motion not to sell of some of its child care centres, but only in response to significant protest from the local community who value Council-run child care which generally has lower fees and high quality services, and creates a stronger community. Blacktown Council is one of Sydney’s largest local government child care providers in a socially, culturally and economically diverse community. However, rapid development saw poor planning result in an oversupply of private child care centres impacting on the viability of Council centres and thus a push to sell off the assets. While many Councils are getting out of direct service provision, others such as the City of Sydney and Leichhardt Council have recognised the value of community and Council-run services and are investing significant additional money into new child care centres in their areas.

² From Hans Tavsens Ost puddle play
³ Sydney Morning Herald 27 June 2013
⁴ The Big Issue, a well known homelessness service.
Liveability and community wellbeing

Continued urban sprawl in areas with poor access to employment, public transport, open space, facilities and services, means that those families and people living in housing that is considered “affordable” are going to be the ones most heavily affected by increasing petrol prices, and their limited access to local services and community spaces. Around 70% of employment is in Sydney’s east but 70% live in Sydney’s west meaning that people are spending long stressful hours in cars, spending increasing money on petrol. Meanwhile there are kids left at home alone after school longer, playing on screens, eating packaged food and becoming at risk of obesity. There is now research that supports how housing stress, social isolation, and lack of appropriate community and engagement parks, and community facilities (including public transport, quality isolation, and lack of appropriate community services (including public transport, quality and engaging parks, and community facilities) in growth areas are contributing to higher obesity. There is now research that supports how housing stress, social isolation, and lack of appropriate community services (including public transport, quality and engaging parks, and community facilities) in growth areas are contributing to higher rates of reported domestic violence and child protection orders. These are all health issues that threaten Australians and cost a lot more to our governments than if we had planned better for this upfront. A number of studies demonstrate the economic benefits of providing quality community facilities and active urban environments:

A three year study in Victoria that shows for every dollar invested in libraries, the community receives triple the value. (For every dollar spent on public libraries - approximately $185 million annually - the value back to the community is, on average, $3.56); 4 Active transport (walking, cycling and catching the bus, train or ferry) is not just good for our health and for street activation but it’s actually good for our economy. An Australian Government report shows that for each person who cycles 20 minutes to work and back, our economy benefits by $21.20. Active transport reduces our health costs, eases the burden of congestion, cuts the costs of vehicle maintenance and saves on the need to build more roads; 2 and A UK study identified that every pound invested in an adventure playground generates £1.32 in social benefits. 8 “Planning is the messy business of anticipating the future and attempting to shape it for the good of society... While planning cannot and should not force people to live differently, it can create the conditions where more sustainable and co-operative living is possible.” The reinvention of planning requires a re-visioning within wider social policy, rather than being left within a legislative cul de sac and purely short term “cost” focus. Even within terms of narrow statutory land use, planning could work better if social outcomes were to be understood and factored into decision-making in more sophisticated ways. This means moving beyond simply assuming that all development is ‘good’, to thinking about how its benefits can be maximised for the entire community.

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1. NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure, A new planning system for NSW, 2013
2. Vincent Tanya, Study report to investigate how Copenhagen’s play yards address the parental fears and higher densities that limit the outdoor, independent play of children in Australian Cities, Sept. 2012, p.21
3. NSW Community Child Care Cooperative and Cred Community Planning are currently completing a study into NSW local council involvement in child care
4. City of Sydney Council and St Vincents T Hospital 2006
5. Mondello et al, 2007

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Sarah Reilly is the NSW PIA Social Planning Convenor and will be speaking at the 2014 PIA National Planning Conference on why planning for people makes good economic sense.

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Architectus provided Urban Planning and Architecture services for 1 bligh Street, Sydney - a 6 Star Green Star office tower tower owned by Goodman Property Group, Goodman Wholesale Property Fund and Clifs Property Group.
What Planning Achieved for Development in 2013 … so much promise …

Stephen McMahon, Inspire Urban Design + Planning

The highway was jammed with broken heroes on a last chance power drive.

So what did planning achieve for the development industry in 2013? With 1500 words to consume, my immediate thoughts turned to the injustice of not being given more space in this end of year edition of New Planner.

Yet, I struggled to fill Robyn’s generous allotment of journal space. Luckily, as the submission deadline approached I was saved by the editorial of The Daily Telegraph on October 28th.

The heading cried out “Barry – a lone voice against Badgerys”

It noted that, in a rare showing of bipartisan support, the communities, unions, big business, airlines and Federal Government all supported a new airport at Badgery’s Creek; but ‘Barry’ didn’t. I was also saved by the Labor Party’s opposition to the much watered down Planning Bill in its second reading in Parliament the next day.

More about these later.

As a town planner working for, and in, the development industry in NSW I was reminded many times during 2013, as I journeyed down the State’s clogged roads and airports travelling from interminable Council meeting to bombastic community “progress” meeting to ostentatious politician’s presentation, of the famous Bruce Springsteen line “The highway was jammed with broken heroes on a last chance power drive.”

I witnessed much rhetoric, but few results; so much management, but so little leadership.

An Optimistic Start

2013 did not start this way. First home buyers were being priced out of the long held dream of families owning their own home and there was an acute housing shortage. Our State Government had been elected with a mandate for change. Promises of change had been made.

Planners working in the development industry entered 2013 with great optimism that our profession was going to achieve many good things to reduce the barriers that had held back investment in jobs and housing over the last decade. At worst, it could not do anything as ruinous as when it suffered under the ineptitude, indecision, corruption and narcissistic behaviour of the previous Government. Former Labor Premier Bob Carr’s obstructive statement “Sydney is Full” was history.

We had the Green Paper, the Urban Activation Precincts (UAPs), the draft Metro Strategy and the Transport Master Plan among others. It is a credit to Government and to the planners in Government, that such a large amount of work was undertaken and completed in such a short time. The foundations had been laid for a great contribution by our profession to delivering confidence and certainty for planning, investment and development by both the private and public sectors in NSW.

The Clouds Roll In

Yet as the year progressed it became apparent that, despite the good work to date, change was going to be slow in coming.

Any thoughts among planners in the development industry of Kennett (Vic) and Newman (Qld) type reforms of Local and State Government (no matter how disagreeable) and legislation, or even some simple evidence of energy and enthusiasm so lacking in politics in NSW during the last 16 years, progressively evaporated.

In September, the changes introduced to the Planning Bill [and the Labor Party’s opposition to what was left of the Bill] in the face of concerted attacks by some organised community groups would perhaps count as the most significant disappointment of 2013.

PIA President Kirsty Kelly summarised the situation well by saying “there are risks inherent in groups … swaying government policy, sometimes in the absence of reasoned, researched, rational argument.”

Other professional groups were less eloquent. The Association of Accredited Certifiers called it a “U Turn”; while the Urban Development Institute of Australia [UDIA] described it as a “backflip.”

Time will tell whether the changes (if ever implemented) achieve the stated goals of the Planning Reform to inter alia “reinvigorate the planning system to act as a positive contributor to sustainable development and growth in the State’s Economy.” Without doubt they make a mockery of the comprehensive consultation (900 submissions, 2000 people and 70 organisations/ interest groups) and the investigations undertaken by the Minister’s co-chairs of the review, Messrs Moore and Dwyer, to arrive at their well-considered recommendations.

As NSW President Sarah Hill has said; “if the Planning Bills do not progress through Parliament, where does this leave NSW?”

Yet, am I being too negative? What about the UAPs? In my view the UAP process is perhaps one of the best inner city renewal initiatives ever to come out of the Department and Government. Yet of the 8 precincts announced at the beginning of the year only one, North Ryde, has progressed to rezoning and some, such as the Epping Town Centre have become entombed by the vociferous (so called) “community” objections narrowly represented by grey haired, Anglo, Lower North Shore Nimbyists and held hostage by local government politics. Epping is a fine example of the dysfunction of local government. One side of the town centre is home to a Council that supports the initiative, while the other side of the centre is home to a Council that objects to it. Where in 2013 was local government reform when we needed it?

Epping:- a Town Divided. Residents Against, One Council Supports and the other Council Objects
Playing with Trains and Planes
One bright spot has been public transport. Light rail through Central Sydney is looking promising and the State Government is even receiving the applause of the recalcitrant Clover Moore on this initiative. The staff at Transport for NSW now look very smart in their new uniforms. That Gladys should be proud. The new “hopping ball” logo with that peculiar orange colour looks very fine (and a graphic design bargain at $1.2 million). The North West Rail Link deserves a special mention with the awarding of the tunnelling contract in June. At last! But which planned link is next?
At this point I must return to Western Sydney’s airport at Badgerys Creek. I don’t need to point out to any NSW planner the economic, social, amenity and environmental benefits of decentralising some of Sydney’s air movements closer to the geographical heart of the City.
In that regard the Draft Western Sydney Employment Area Structure Plan released in June is a good example of planning investigation that could have responded to this. Its objectives certainly do. They establish the land use, infrastructure and transport framework for a large employment precinct in Western Sydney in the future. The Plan is also noteworthy, however, by the complete and utter absence of any consideration of the presence of an airport site within its boundary, notwithstanding the planning objectives it would achieve. Extraordinarily, it prefers to adopt the innocuous term “Commonwealth land” to describe the site in lieu of the “A” word. It is farcical.
Day to day we have been subject to the message from ‘Barry’ “It’s a matter for the Federal Government”.
Compare this to Qld’s Premier Campbell Newman, spruiking of the benefits of a second runway at Brisbane’s airport: “The Parallel Runway will provide billions of dollars of economic benefits, create jobs and support our four pillars of resources, construction, agriculture and especially tourism, … More immediately, during the peak construction phase of the project, the runway is expected to generate almost 2,700 jobs, not to mention 7,800 brand new permanent jobs by 2035 … This announcement is a major step towards improving Brisbane’s infrastructure.”
Alas, the dairy cows and scattering of farms and acreage households on the fringe of western Sydney appear more influential in NSW planning than these important community goals. We Sydney planners continue to gaze over the fence with jealousy and awe at the planning initiatives taking place in our neighbouring states.

PIA Hunter Branch
Update on the Greg Heys Regional Planning Collection
Alison Cook, John Hyslop and Scott Anson

The late Mr Greg Heys, a former Mayor of the City of Newcastle and a social planner at the Bathurst Orange Development Corporation, left his collection of planning documents to the Newcastle City Library for the benefit of researchers and practising planners. The collection has been supplemented with rare planning documents, historic maps and materials donated by Hunter planning practitioners. The collection was officially launched and dedicated on World Town Planning Day in 2010.

Since the dedication, a small group of volunteers has been working with the Newcastle City Library to examine the collection, assessing which items are “of value” from practitioner and academic viewpoints, and with the objective of establishing a collection with a regional focus. The Hunter Planners recently donated $500 to the collection to assist the Library to digitally scan rare documents and maps to preserve these items and, where possible, progressively make these available online.

The collection relates to Newcastle, the Hunter, Bathurst-Orange and other regional growth centres in NSW (and a few from other parts of Australia), mainly from the 1970s to the present day. The collection of over 400 items forms part of the local studies collection at Newcastle Region Library and includes a wide range of planning reports, maps, and other government agency reports, policy and publicity materials.

Of particular interest are the main planning reports and supporting working papers for Bathurst-Orange covering policy, transport and infrastructure, social and environmental issues among other matters. In addition, there is a very rare and intact set of the Northumberland Planning Scheme maps covering the Lower Hunter, circa 1955.

The collection has now been catalogued with the assistance of the Newcastle Library team and is available on the Council’s web page under the Newcastle Region Library catalogue http://www.newcastle.nsw.gov.au/services/newcastle_library/local_studies/special_collections/greg_heys_regional_planning_collection.

The first document lists those items already catalogued which are also searchable on the library’s online catalogue by searching for Greg Heys Regional Planning Collection. The link to the library catalogue is: http://nrpl.sirsidynix.net.au/client/newcastle.
We commend the collection to planners and researchers with an interest in regional planning and development.
Local perspectives: the LGPN voice

Stephen Gow

The 2013 PIA NSW Local Government Planners’ Network Forum, held in Mudgee in August, offered delegates stimulating presentations and networking opportunities in a wonderful regional setting. This event is held on an occasional basis and, although primarily aimed at those working in and for local councils, it is open to all. This year over 160 planners from across the State came together for a timely conference program entitled “New Directions: taking planning into the next generation”.

The importance of informed professional input in the context of the NSW Government’s planning reform package was very much evident in discussions from the welcome reception onwards. Moreover, the potential for members to make telling contributions in this change process was highlighted in the striking similarity of aspects of the current reforms and proposals put forward by delegates at the previous Forum in Leura. With the prospect of new legislation in NSW and calls for a related cultural shift in the profession uppermost in the thoughts of those attending this year’s event, delegates were treated to an analysis of the contemporary context for planning in Australia, as well as more specific commentary on issues emerging from the Government’s “New Planning System” White Paper.

The Forum opened with a timely reminder on the value of good planning for the future of our communities. Brendan O’Brien of development group Stockland spoke of his company’s focus on “liveability” in new housing projects. The company had developed an index for the wellbeing of residents. This was based on affordability, including a mix of housing designed to avoid mortgage stress; access and connectivity; a sense of belonging; designing for health and fitness; as well as resident engagement in community management. Stockland is seeking to realise the concept of “Shared Value”, espoused by Harvard Professor Michael Porter, which seeks to align corporate management with social sustainability on the basis that “what’s good for society is good for business”. In the context of social heterogeneity, Brendan felt that a new planning system should embrace flexibility and, in particular, maintain the potential for Voluntary Planning Agreements to respond to local circumstances.

The challenge of keeping pace with change was reinforced by demographer Mark McCrindle. Mark entertained his audience with a brisk and illuminating analysis of Australian society and its place in the world in 2013. As well as the massive (490%) growth in Australian population over the past century, he outlined the evolving impacts of global economics, migration, changing social mores and new technologies. All these factors were affecting the composition, relative affluence, behaviours and aspirations of successive generations, from the ‘builders’ of the early 20th century, the baby boomers, through to today’s youth - Generation Z and the emerging ‘Alphas’. In particular, Mark highlighted the increasing pace and global context for change and a move away from command and control structures in society to a more collaborative, relational basis for social engagement.

In this context, delegates were keen to hear from Jill Reich, Deputy Director General for People, Culture and Business at the NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure. Jill, who has been charged with overseeing the delivery of a new culture for planning as part of the current reform process in the State, spoke about community engagement processes locally and internationally, as well as organisational reforms within the Department itself. Jill indicated a desire to build a collaborative, outcomes-based culture, in which motivating and developing practitioners who could work with constant change and think outside the square would be critical.

The need for such attributes was reinforced by several speakers on the second day of proceedings. Lucy Turnbull AO and experienced Queensland planner Gary White both endorsed the necessity for strategic planning to regain pre-eminence and respect. They saw this as the key tool for managing growth pressures, including better coordination of infrastructure planning, with a clear line of sight between agreed strategy and local delivery. Lucy considered that building greater respect for planning would involve politicians stepping back in the process. She also felt that achieving sustainability could not involve doing nothing, but required effective engagement processes, especially with those currently disengaged in typical ‘town hall’ forums.

This theme was later taken up by consultant Stuart Waters who argued that “consultation is dead” and a new paradigm of ‘collaborative engagement’ was upon us. He spoke in particular about the ‘Cynel’ model for engagement, based on levels of complexity, and a new ‘collaborative governance’ approach in which stakeholders helped to design and therefore own planning processes, from inception to implementation.

Anthony Whealy from Gadens Lawyers provided delegates with an insightful analysis of responses to the White Paper from major stakeholder groups, including PIA, whose position he considered to be a responsible and balanced one.

Especially impressive at the Forum was the obvious enthusiasm of participants in questions and discussion, where presenters and audience members had clearly started to consider the realities of a new planning system in practice. A ‘Q and A’-style forum of senior local government planners led by Greg Woodhams on this topic was especially provocative, with ethical, collaborative and informed behaviour seen as cornerstones of best practice. In similar vein, a break out session in which David Broyd and Matthew Brown discussed work undertaken for Port Stephens Council on desired culture ‘at the coalface’ – including foundational values for staff and the need to address cultural fit in recruitment – was also memorable.

The forum concluded with an excellent presentation by Kelly van der Zanden on the potential for envisioning future environments through 3D computer modelling, which will clearly become a major component in planning engagement processes.

Once again our thanks go to the team at the Divisional Office for putting together such a topical and valuable program. Catherine van Laaren and her colleagues at the Mid-Western Regional Council are also to be commended in hosting the event, providing a series of informative local tours highlighting the planning challenges facing their LGA, particularly as a result of recent growth in mining activity. Delegates were treated to some of the best produce the mid-west has to offer at a memorable ‘degustation’ dinner at the recently renovated Mudgee Town Hall/Library building.

This forum was held over two days and consisted of an exciting mix of topics given by a variety of presenters. In addition to the excellent presentations, there were opportunities to network such as at the welcome reception on the Wednesday night, the formal dinner on the Thursday night and the numerous opportunities offered during the lunch and coffee breaks.

Since the theme of the forum was “taking planning into the next generation” I wanted to share some thoughts related to the administration of the new planning system and some insights on the current system. Early on in the presentations there was an interesting talk by Brendan O’Brien from Stockland. Brendan showed a chart demonstrating the large disparity of investments made throughout Australia by Stockland in residential developments between 2004 and 2011. One striking comparison was between NSW and Queensland where Stockland invested 10 times more in Queensland than NSW with $1,000 million invested in Queensland compared to $100 million for NSW. A major factor influencing the disparity seemed to be the more streamlined approach to development approvals adopted by the Queensland planning system compared to the NSW system. Investment comparisons were also given for Western Australia and Victoria where these states received $600 million and $400 million respectively.

This presentation was followed shortly after by Jill Reich from the Department of Planning and Infrastructure. Jill outlined how there are steps in place to make significant cultural change within the Department. The need for change was based on extensive surveys conducted by the Department that showed a dissatisfaction with the current system. It is hoped that this cultural change will result in a more collaborative and enabling attitude with the Department acting as a “facilitator” rather than using the “regulate and compliance” approach. This potentially positive change in the Department appeared to be welcomed by the audience but during the Q & A session one planner pointed out that this same type of reform was promised by the Department in 1998, and that promise was not delivered upon. His question therefore was “what is different this time”? Jill reiterated that the willingness to accept the challenge of cultural change was being embraced by all levels within the Department and that it would occur.

Being new to the planning profession I do not have much experience dealing with the current system, but the experience of Stockland appears to confirm that the hopes for reform in 1998 were not realised in the current planning regime. Hopefully this time things may be different.

I would very much like to thank Ian Sinclair of Edge Land Planning for the support that allowed me the opportunity to attend the Mudgee forum. Anthony was the recipient of the 2013 Edge Land Planning NSW Travellers cheque.
During this year the NSW State Government has been tasked with the major responsibility of revisiting the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act of 1979 (EPAA). And while we may have naïvely thought that we would see a radical transformation in our planning system, the indications of the draft legislation are that the new system will end up quite similar to the EPAA, despite all the fuss.

While community attention has focused on the Act, the Department of Planning and Infrastructure has also been refining its Metro Strategy to a seemingly arbitrary point in the 2030s. Difficulties in economic forecasting and the limits of futurology may justify this approach, but planners surely must not disregard the longer term future given the rapid pace of change in technology, societal objectives and environmental conditions. Indeed, the dire projections in climate change can only make matters more difficult for planning Australia, placing obvious limits on where and how future development must occur.

By 2035, however, the forecasts suggest that Sydney will have grown by an additional population equivalent to a whole new city the size of Adelaide. The decisions which are being made now will have huge and irreversible ramifications. I will first look briefly at an important basis for future metro growth, the “Draft NSW Centres Policy”, before thinking how growth has been managed in other Australian Capital Cities and major tourist destinations in the Asia Pacific. In the Centres Policy the emphasis is largely on establishing a hierarchy of centres within the metro region. This is intended to make best use of available infrastructure and meets certain residential and commercial employment and space targets over time. The nominated centres have been chosen because of access to infrastructure, most notably public transport. However recent advice received from a spokesman for the Department of Planning and Infrastructure is that the draft has effectively been abandoned, although what will replace it is unclear, beyond broad objectives of “fostering economic growth, employment and community engagement”.

To my mind, the Centres Policy is the key element of strategic thinking in the Metro Strategy since it underwrites greater efficiency in the use of infrastructure and rationality in the future disposition of commercial development and work opportunities rather than unregulated growth and sprawl. In Australia, the low density of population means that cities like Sydney would otherwise collapse under the high cost of extended lines of communication, utility services and roads. Such concerns have supported consistent policies of intensification balanced against outer metropolitan growth. Interestingly, current evidence would indicate increasing market support for this by younger demographic sectors which are opting for apartments closer to the city centre rather than single lot housing in remote locations, requiring long commuting journeys to work each day.

Similarly, the pattern of Australian cities which has evolved particularly since the Second World War strongly favours metropolitan regions comprising centres and corridors. Sydney has obviously been planned this way with growth channelled along the main road and rail arteries out of the city centre, although the considerable future growth in the Metro Region will probably lead to the spaces between the corridors being filled in.

A more linear form of growth can be seen in Adelaide’s Metro Region where the Mount Lofty Range has constrained development into a form of extreme sprawl from beyond Gawler to the North and beyond Willunga to the South. Perth, for quite similar reasons, has a pattern of north-south containment along a coastal strip constrained by mountains to the east. Adelaide and Perth, from a public transport point of view, are more efficiently serviced (like beads on a string) than the radial-centric type of growth which Sydney and Melbourne infrastructure has been unable to avoid.

The most recently planned of our cities, Canberra, demonstrates most clearly the successes and failures of the hybrid centres and corridors approach. Canberra is, at least by car, our most accessible city. However the public transport situation is not quite so pretty. Canberra has a clearly defined hierarchy of centres based on size and population catchment. The large strategic centres of Gungahlin, Civic, Belconnen, Woden and Tuggeranong are
serviced by correspondingly regional scale facilities including regional shopping centres, hospitals and high schools which operate with varying degrees of economic success. The main centre of Civic is a particular casualty of the approach and, to my mind, has always suffered an identity crisis lacking the scale, density, diversity and interest that we expect from one of our capital cities.

Similarly, at the neighbourhood scale, small centres like Mawson do not appear to work effectively, being too close to the competing regional centres and restricted in activity and use to underwhelming supermarkets and substandard restaurants. One exception to this is the highly successful Manuka-Kingston subregion which has benefitted enormously from more intense housing opportunities and cultural attractions within its catchment.

In order to go beyond the experience of our own Metropolitan physical/spatial planning experiments, it is worth reading some of the significant exponents of creative and knowledge cities. Leading writers such as Richard Florida, Alan J Scott, John Montgomery, Tan Yigitcanlar, John Montgomery and Charles Landry have posited radical imperatives for the future beyond simple quanta of population, employment and commercial space. Instead they promote better ways of leading meaningful lives in places not simply designed to meet minimum standards but dynamic, vital and interesting. Such imperatives are, in my view, a direct consequence of the changing nature of the working economy from mass production manufacturing to knowledge-related work, from changing societal values demanding creative enrichment and from new capabilities via technology to network, while at the same time demanding ever greater access to physical movement.

Centres will be distinguished not so much by their population catchment/size as by their distinctive characteristics. Examples of this are the small town of Bowral in their distinctive characteristics. Examples of this are the small town of Bowral and the City of Liverpool which each year growing reputation for book collectors by their population catchment/size as by their distinctive characteristics.

Turning to some of our neighbours in the Asia Pacific, the three island centres of Phuket, Penang and Bali have each been driven by intense and rapid growth in global tourism. Phuket has grown from an almost sleepy tourist destination to one which now attracts international air carriers, five star hotels and tourists from all corners of the earth. Despite the catastrophic tsunami which very nearly wiped out the whole of its western coastline including Patong Beach, it continues to flourish although environmental issues will grow to haunt the island unless they are managed more effectively in the future.

The island of Penang in Malaysia has also grown in spectacular fashion since the 1970s. From a period when it relied entirely on a ferry connection across its narrow strait to the mainland, it now boasts two bridge crossings and a future underground road tunnel planned for completion within the next decade. Penang is particularly noteworthy because of its spectacular success in recognising and conserving its essentially Chinese heritage in the centre of Georgetown and boasts an amazing number of UNESCO heritage sites. On the other hand, the growth in physical connectivity with the mainland seems destined to intensify the level of growth beyond sustainable and manageable limits.

My last example is the island of Bali which, like Penang, has a remarkable Hindu-based cultural heritage arguably by far the most important attractor beyond the brash hot spots like Kuta on the western side of the airport peninsula. The lessons from Bali are quite similar to those of Phuket and Penang: that growth has to be managed, cultural values have to be reinforced and interpreted, and the environment must be protected. Bali is already awash with sewage effluent from its five star hotels flowing into the once beautiful seas which surrounded it. Burgeoning low density development between Kuta and Ubud has gradually erased the very values which attracted tourists in the first place, including its emerald green terraced paddy fields. Particular tourist sites are too loved and threatened by over-visitaiton.

We can learn a lot from Phuket, Penang and Bali which, to my mind, have been far better at enhancing culture and creativity than we have in Metro Sydney (with the exception of some of the more enlightened inner city councils including the City of Sydney most notably). Their economies flourish because of higher levels of ingenuity and entrepreneurialism which occurs without welfare or social programs. Indeed, each of these islands deserves a far greater share of the economic revenues that stream in each year from global tourists, money that is siphoned off into national accounts or the pockets of corrupt officials and politicians.

Overall, however, the key conclusion for Sydney is that future planning must go beyond the simple metrics of height density and land use, with far greater concern for intelligent urban design, urban vitality and cultural enrichment. The mechanisms to achieve this are not limited to physical or spatial planning, but must have equal regard to the creative and social economies. Dr Rodney Jensen is a Sydney based consultant in urban design, heritage and regeneration. During 2013 he has re-visited Penang and Bali.
NEW directions: taking planning into the next generation

PIA NSW
LGPN Forum 2013
Promoting Improved Efficiencies in Major Project Development Processes

Darren Holloway, Certified Practising Planner, Montech & Powys Pty Ltd.

This is a summary version of an issues paper which is available through PIA website.

1. Introduction
Earlier this year the NSW Government released its White Paper for a new planning act in NSW. The changes promoted include an attempt to reduce approval times especially for minor development, however, major and more complex developments will generally be the subject of a merit based assessment process. At the time of writing the bill for the new legislation is before Parliament.

A number of state and national initiatives (including COAG) have attempted to reduce development approval times in recent years, however, doing so for more complex projects has been difficult to achieve. The Productivity Commission (PC) is currently embarking on a project to benchmark Australia’s major project development assessment (DAA) processes against international best practice, part of which will be to explore potential opportunities for further improvement. At the time of writing a draft report has been prepared by the PC.

2. Purpose of this Paper
The purpose of this article is to comment on potential efficiencies that can be adopted in major project development approvals. At the outset, it is important to note that major projects are often complex projects and there will always be a balancing act to ensure the economic, social and environmental impacts are appropriately assessed.

3. The Value of Major Projects
Major projects are important for growth in cities and regions especially in the face of global competition for business, tourism and investment. As well as creating housing, recreation, education and transport related outcomes, major projects are also significant job creators. The NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure (2013) notes that in the two years since April 2011 the Department approved major projects worth $29.8 billion which is estimated to have created 43,715 operational jobs and 73,875 construction jobs.

4. Costs of Delays
There has been limited research on the costs of time delays in issuing approvals for major projects. Some research has been conducted in relation to development approvals and residential housing prices, most of it on the relationships between planning regulations and housing outcomes in the US and UK (Dawkins et al 2002), which generally identifies a positive relationship between planning process and house prices (Gurran et al 2009). In Australia, the Residential Development Council (RDC) has stated that about a third of the cost of a new house and land package relates to taxes, levies and ‘compliance costs’¹. The Urban Development Institute of Australia (UDIA) has previously identified that a typical rezoning process adds an additional $7,000 to the cost of a lot (UDIA 2007).

The PC (2009) notes that delays for major upstream petroleum projects can increase net present value of returns by 10-20%. Attempts to examine the impact of planning regulations on tourism development in Australia (LEK Consulting 2011), emphasise the lack of consideration given to tourism in planning regulations rather than costs.

5. Overview of Delays in the Process
The PC identified some of the reasons why major projects can be delayed or increase the end cost of a project:

- Compliance costs;
- Unclear, overlapping and inconsistent regulatory objectives;
- Different objectives at and between different levels of government;
- Unclear governance and institutional arrangements;
- Resourcing and regulator behaviour;
- Regulatory complexity;
- Cost effectiveness of existing processes;
- Use, or lack therefore, of strategic planning;
- Effectiveness of current processes.

Other factors include the experience and capacity of government officials to undertake assessments on major projects, as well as the quality of information that is submitted with major project applications.

6. Efforts to Improve Development Approval Processes
Some jurisdictions (e.g. Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils) have attempted to implement benchmarks against which development assessment systems can be assessed against, providing a baseline for future improvement.

Other options to reduce delays and costs within development assessment systems includes the establishment of technical reference groups, through to identifying best practice models (e.g. Development Assessment Forum) and examining the role of environmental assessment systems.

7. Major Project Assessment in NSW
As part of this article, a random sample of 120 major projects from the NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure’s major project register over the last seven years was analysed to inform the discussion.

Table 1 below presents the results of this analysis.

The results reveal that from the issuing of the Director – General requirements (DGRs) for the preparation of an environmental assessment through to determination it takes, on average, 603 days for a major project to be approved. On face value the results of the analysis suggest that there is significant capacity to reduce timeframes for major project determinations in NSW. The results also reveal that proposals in certain land use sectors take significantly longer to give effect to the above.

### TABLE 1: ANALYSIS OF A RANDOM SAMPLE OF MAJOR PROJECTS, NSW

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Sector</th>
<th>Average Value ($) (n=120)</th>
<th>Average No. of Days from DGRs to Determination (n=120)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture, Timber, Food</td>
<td>$72,644,998</td>
<td>504</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chemical Manufacturing</td>
<td>$41,500,000</td>
<td>651</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Health and Public Service</td>
<td>$111,912,500</td>
<td>513</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Manufacturing and Storage</td>
<td>$82,161,111</td>
<td>274</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mining, Petroleum, Extractive Industry</td>
<td>$43,471,429</td>
<td>374</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Residential, Commercial and Retail</td>
<td>$232,166,667</td>
<td>522</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Resource and Waste</td>
<td>$23,851,786</td>
<td>850</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Tourism and Recreation</td>
<td>$46,331,818</td>
<td>969</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transport, Energy, Water &amp; Telecommunications</td>
<td>$188,407,692</td>
<td>878</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Total</td>
<td>$98,034,900</td>
<td>603</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
longer to approve than others. Tourism and recreation major projects take, on average, the longest to assess whereas manufacturing and storage projects take the least amount of time to assess.

8. Consideration of improved efficiencies in major project assessments

The PC’s current draft report on major project assessment systems identifies 28 recommendations to improve efficiencies in major project approvals.

From the analysis of major projects above, together with consideration of the proposed NSW planning legislation and the PC’s recommendations, a number of issues need to be considered to improve efficiencies in major project approval processes. The following issues are drawn from experiences in the major project approval system in NSW.

1. Improved monitoring of major project timeframes

Development applications assessed by local government in NSW are monitored on an annual basis and this should be extended to the state level, allowing the quantification of major project approval times and identification of areas for improvement.

2. Legislative timeframes for all government agencies

Other NSW state government agencies with a concurrence role in major project approvals need to commit to agreed time frames for assessing projects.

3. Improved coordination between agencies and legislation

All government agencies should have a consistent approach and focus on achieving an outcome on the ground. Inconsistencies between Commonwealth and state legislation need to be addressed if major project approval times are to be reduced.

4. Improved information on issues that may affect major projects

Government agencies need to provide sufficient information up front to proponents to allow them to address the economic, social and environmental aspects of projects adequately. If this information is available, proponents can incorporate environmental constraints into assessment, saving time and costs, as well as speed up the process.

5. Cultural change

Without a doubt one of the major challenges facing the major project development assessment system in NSW is changing the culture of the development assessment authorities, as well as stakeholders, charged with major project determinations. As the Planning Institute of Australia (PIA) NSW notes, there are several tasks that can occur to create cultural change including clear and consistent planning advice, relevant and practical planning policies, developing capacity and skills and investing performance through relevant and measurable key performance indicators.

However, other factors are important in creating an efficient planning system, including recognition of professional accreditations, effective engagement with stakeholders early in the process, as well as all government agencies and planning authorities attempting to achieve an outcome rather than viewing themselves as assessment bodies.

While the new planning act proposed for NSW provides some encouragement in the area of cultural change, efficiencies in a system do not occur unless all stakeholders are heading in the same direction.

6. Improved capacity within the system

Improved efficiencies in major project determination rely on capacity being built into the existing system for assessment of all land uses at the State level. A PC report in 2012 that identifies only 36% of staff in NSW planning agencies had relevant qualifications and more than five years of experience. This is inadequate for an organisation that assesses projects worth billions of dollars in NSW. Professional development programs need to be a component of ensuring capacity in the planning system including the public sector.

7. Acknowledgement of professional qualifications

The 2012 PC report identifies one of the major impediments to management of the approval process for local government authorities as being the poor quality of information provided by applicants. In NSW, local or state government authorities do not require suitably qualified professionals to prepare environmental studies which is seen as a key obstacle in the major project development process in NSW and may add significantly to the assessment time of major projects.

It is important that government agencies continue to update and provide guidance on requirements for preparing environmental studies for major projects, and that appropriately experienced staff are assessing applications. It is also important for proponents that professional industry bodies have the right to rescind certifications if consultants are not meeting professional standards. In addition, state and local government authorities should consider involvement in establishing professional accreditation systems.

8. Supporting the Process

While cultural change, providing better quality information and consistency across government agencies and legislation in trying to deliver an outcome is important, the system also relies on resource availability such as ensuring resources are sufficient to support the process and implementation of new systems. This does not mean only financial resources, but also capacity building, professional development, IT resources (e.g. GIS), and the ability to source expert advice when required. Overall, a system can be put in place, but it does not function unless it is implemented in an appropriate manner. This also means that all government agencies play a role in major project development assessment systems, not just planning authorities.

9. Conclusion

This article set out to examine potential efficiencies in major project development approvals in NSW. This examination was borne out of the new planning act proposed for NSW as well as the Productivity Commission’s research on major project approval processes. The analysis has revealed that in NSW new major project applications have taken just over 600 days from Director General Requirements to determination.

There are significant improvements that can be made to reduce this timeframe. For government agencies consideration should be afforded to better information for proponents, better coordination between agencies, better alignment of processes, capacity building and cultural change.

In regards to the proponent, it is important that appropriate information and assessment is undertaken on projects which can help reduce timeframes. In this regard, both proponents and government agencies need to consider professional accreditation systems in the preparation of environmental studies and impact statements, which can have a significant impact in reducing assessment times. Government agencies also need to be proactive in consulting with proponents upfront and in providing more information in relation to cultural change including clear and consistent approach and focus on achieving an outcome on the ground.

Overall, a system can be put in place, but it does not work without appropriate implementation including staff, finance, and tools to enable the implementation to occur as seamlessly as possible.

NSW competes in a global economy and with other cities in Australia for trade and investment. Major projects from both industrial and tourism projects provide significant investment and jobs in the economy. While balancing the social and environmental impacts is important, the major project assessment process can be more efficient in NSW. As the PC noted, a suit that is designed is also being undertaken, but it is concerning there has been little examination of major project approval systems considering the significant contribution major projects make to the economy.

Bibliography and Further Reading


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In the Courts:
You can’t stop the MUSIC

Peter Williams, Faculty of the Built Environment, UNSW

Yates and anor v Blue Mountains City Council [2013]
NSWLEC 1174 (29 August 2013) involved an appeal to the Land and Environment Court against the refusal of development consent for the construction of two tennis courts. Central to the appeal was that the proposal was in Sydney’s drinking water catchment and so was required to comply with State Environmental Planning Policy (Sydney Drinking Water Catchment) 2011 (‘the Sydney Catchment SEPP’). Significantly, cl 10 of the SEPP required that a consent authority must not grant consent to development in the drinking water catchment unless it was satisfied that the carrying out of the proposed development would have a neutral or beneficial effect (‘NorBE’) on water quality.

The proposed tennis courts were to be positioned on top of an existing stormwater pond and associated stormwater control works on allotments created as part of a subdivision consent granted by Council in 2008. One element that was required, as part of the 2008 subdivision, was the construction of a ‘rain garden’ across two of the lots in the subdivision. The use of the rain garden was an essential element of achieving NorBE when the original subdivision was approved.

The whole of the subdivision site was zoned Living Bushland Conservation under the Blue Mountains Local Environmental Plan 2002. Two aspects of the LEP were relevant to the proceedings. First was the zone objectives and the second was development standards contained in building envelop controls. In this case the proposal did not comply with either the site coverage or landscaped area development controls contained in the LEP, but could be set aside if objections to compliance were sustained pursuant to State Environmental Planning Policy No 1.

For the purposes of NorBE, the Sydney Catchment SEPP placed a prohibition on the approval of development in the catchment unless the consent authority was satisfied that NorBE was achieved as a consequence of that proposal. Assessment of whether a development proposal achieved NorBE was undertaken through utilisation of a NorBE Guideline published by the Sydney Catchment Authority. Further, to assist applicants in the preparation of applications within the catchment, the Authority also prepared a manual and software program known as MUSIC (‘Model for Urban Stormwater Improvement Conceptualisation’). The Authority encouraged the use of the MUSIC software for the preparation of material in support of development applications where appropriate.

Considerable detail was devoted in the judgment to a discussion of the purpose and operation of the MUSIC software tool and manual in relation to undertaking NorBE assessments. Specifically, the manual required that in utilising MUSIC a site analysis be undertaken first, which included an identification of the current land uses. In the case of the subject proceedings, this meant a description of the physical state of the site prior to the granting of the 2008 consent. Here there was a key point of difference in the application of the MUSIC software by the parties. While both parties agreed that the appropriate land use type (referred to as ‘node’ in MUSIC) prior to the 2008 consent was ‘forest’, Council’s calculation of forested area (80%) was quite different from that of the applicant (61%). This disparity was crucial. If the Council’s estimate was accepted, then the application was not capable of achieving NorBE and thus must be refused. However, if the applicant’s calculations were accepted then the proposal would be capable of achieving NorBE (i.e. the Catchment Authority’s requirement of effectively NorBE plus 10%) and so was capable of being granted consent.

On the basis of the evidence the Court held that the calculation of forest cover used by the Council was appropriate for consideration of the site, and so concluded that the proposal could not satisfy the NorBE requirements for the proposed development and, as a result, it was necessary for the application to be refused.

Although dismissing the appeal on the grounds of failure to satisfy NorBE, the Court decided to consider the two objections under SEPP 1 in relation to non-compliance with the site coverage and landscaped area requirements in the LEP. In undertaking this assessment of the proposal, the Court considered the underlying objectives of the zone and the two development standards. Regarding the site coverage standard, the Court held that, as NorBE had not been able to be achieved by the proposal, the underlying objective of the site coverage standard also could not be achieved. The Court was prepared to accept however, that if a NorBE compliant application were to be made, it would be reasonable to sustain an objection to compliance with this development standard.

Non-compliance with minimum landscaped area was not supported by the Court on several grounds. First was the inability of the proposal to achieve NorBE. Second was the failure of the subdivision to satisfy its NorBE requirement by not maintaining the approved rain garden to the extent and condition indicated in the 2008 consent. Third, the tennis courts would, if approved, cover much of the rain water garden that was identified and required under the 2008 consent.
Opinion

Community Engagement in the new planning system Moving from contest to consultation

David Robinson

The NSW Government’s reforms to the planning system are being touted as a fundamental shift that will not only place community engagement at the fore, but also provide more certainty for the property industry.

There appears little argument that the current system is in need of change. Disputes about what is appropriate development and the sometimes inevitable contest between developers and community groups, particularly in traditional suburban areas, adds to the perception that the current system creates winners and losers.

Engaging communities upfront when establishing a planning framework is an opportunity to move the debate away from a contest over individual projects to consultation about the future make up of a suburb. The changes outlined in the Department of Planning and Infrastructure’s White Paper will be an important move towards achieving this.

However, getting the wider community involved in a new planning framework will only be successful if there’s a shift in the way industry and governments communicate. Engaging diverse groups with different priorities is a difficult assignment. Often the most active voices are those that feel they have something to lose when a development proposal comes before Council.

Faced with an active and well organised community, elected Councillors can often feel they are basing their decisions on broad community feedback when, in fact, only a small number of the entire community may have been heard. This doesn’t mean that residents who have strong affiliations with their local area should not have a legitimate say in developments that affect their suburb. But the most active view isn’t the only one that should be heard.

It’s important that a range of voices are considered.

The real question for government and industry which is yet to be resolved, is how to engage a broad section of the community and ensure the views of a small and often-active group are not the only voices in the debate?

One of the main barriers to encouraging broader interest is the way the planning process is presented. Take, for example, the key objective of engaging communities at the strategic planning stage. It would be a fair bet that not many people other than those from the planning industry or from an active community group could even describe what ‘strategic planning’ means. This type of ‘planning speak’ hardly inspires sometimes bewildered and often time poor communities to get involved.

It’s incumbent on the planning industry and on government to adopt a plain English approach to communicating planning matters and establishing the parameters for discussion. Strategic planning needs to be explained in terms of its intended outcome and not just focused on building envelopes, density and land use jargon.

The ability to communicate effectively is a key skill that is fundamental to engaging a broad cross section of the community when discussing planning. Successful consultation is often part education, part conversation.

If the aim of the reforms is for consultation to focus on the desired outcomes of the planning process and not simply to measure support for or against an individual development, then there is a real need to simplify the language. In other words, the narrative needs to move away from planning terminology by asking people about their future aspirations for their area.

Changing lifestyles, along with better access to public transport, jobs and services, all play an important role in the way people live their lives. Demographic changes and a preference for living closer to where people work, together with issues such as affordability and sustainability particularly in city areas, need to be part of the conversation. The benefits of concentrating development in town centres and along transport corridors in order to meet housing demand, while retaining the feel of traditional housing in a residential suburb, also needs to be conveyed in a manner that encourages an informed debate.

How communities are consulted should also be considered. Although public meetings or online engagement can effectively engage an active community, it is important that consultation has a broader focus and seeks to obtain a range of views. The problem is that people often only attend an event or go online if they are motivated. So the question is how to engage with a community that isn’t really interested until a particular development directly affects them?

Not every one has the time or inclination to participate and gaining a broad range of views becomes even more complex when looking at the make up of the community. This is particularly relevant when considering people from non-English speaking backgrounds, different age groups, the affiliation someone may have with their area, and general work and family pressures, which all impact on someone’s willingness or availability to get involved.

The answer is that a broad range of consultation activities must be considered and a ‘one size fits all’ approach doesn’t work. Even in the digital age with all of the convenience it provides, some people still appreciate being able discuss their views face-to-face. Direct discussion can also improve understanding particular for communities not adept with technology.

The need to engage communities and to convey an abundance of complex information to people not used to the technical vocabulary of the planning system is a difficult exercise. But it is one that must be addressed if we are to engage a broad cross section of the community in an informed and transparent debate.

David Robinson is an Associate of KJA and Principal of Precinct Marketing Communications. He is an Associate Member of PIA.
2013 – The year of new population data for NSW

Dr Kim Johnstone, Senior Demographer, Department of Planning & Infrastructure

During the last quarter of 2013, three new data sets were released that affect how we understand population demand on infrastructure and services. The first of these is a preliminary release of population projections prepared by the Department of Planning & Infrastructure. The other two reflect reviews by the Australian Bureau of Statistics of historical data sets (population estimates and births). This article highlights the key outputs of each data set and identifies implications for planners.

1. Preliminary population projections 2011-2031

On 9 September 2013, the NSW Department of Planning & Infrastructure released preliminary population projections for New South Wales and each local government area. A summary report New South Wales in the Future: Preliminary 2013 Population Projections, a brochure, an excel file of the projection data and interactive maps covering each council area are available on the department’s website at www.planning.nsw.gov.au/projections.

These preliminary projections are the start of a review of the official projections for New South Wales. They reflect information from the 2011 Census, births data from NSW Health, international migration information from the Department of Immigration & Citizenship, deaths and internal migration data from the Australian Bureau of Statistics and information from stakeholders across the state. They show key changes in birth rates and levels of overseas migration that had taken place since the previous review of the New South Wales projections.

The 2013 population projections indicate that the New South Wales' population may grow from 7.2 million people in 2011 to 9.2 million people by 2031. Projected growth is faster in Sydney compared to the rest of the state, with the population growing from 4.3 million to 5.8 million between 2011 and 2031 respectively. Over half of New South Wales and Sydney’s projected growth is likely to be due to natural increase (that is the difference between births and deaths) and the remainder net migration (the difference between the number of people arriving from overseas and interstate and those leaving for elsewhere). Outside of Sydney, internal and overseas migration will be important drivers of population change.
A key issue for planners is that ageing is most prevalent in smaller populations which are also affected by out-migration of young adults. This affected projected growth and leads to high levels of dependency with a proportionately smaller "sandwich" generation responsible for the provision of services through paid employment and in a volunteer capacity.

The 2013 preliminary population projections are now being finalised to include analysis of new historical population estimates and updated births information available from the ABS (see sections 2 and 3). During this final review, the Department will continue to liaison with key stakeholders across New South Wales. Many local councils participated in workshops during 2013 and have replied to letters sent to them requesting feedback. Demographers from the Department have also taken part in a range of meetings and workshops to explain the projections and the assumptions that underpin them.

The Department of Planning & Infrastructure welcomes any feedback or comment about the projections. Any local level evidence that can provide more detail about the underpinning patterns of demographic change are especially useful, particularly in relation to the movement of people in and out of an area. Feedback can be given using demography@planning.nsw.gov.au, phoning 02 9228 6313 or writing to the Demography Unit, Centre for Demography, Policy & Research, Department of Planning & Infrastructure, GPO Box 39, Sydney NSW 2001.

2. New estimated resident populations 1991-2011

On 30 August 2013, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) released revised sub-state population estimates including:

• Recast figures from June 1992 to June 2006
• Rebased figures for the period 2007 -2011

Rebasing is a standard practice for the ABS. After every Census, annual population estimates for the period between the previous Census are revised. In this instance, that is the period 2007 to 2011. The recast of historical population estimates was a one-off event. Total populations were revised back to June 2002. This was done because new methods in measuring census undercount indicated that populations had previously been overestimated throughout Australia. (For more information see www.abs.gov.au and search for Catalogue No. 3218.0, Regional Population Growth Australia).

In most instances, local government area populations in New South Wales are now higher for 2005-2010 than previously thought. These previously uncounted births are likely to have an impact on demand for infant and children’s services across New South Wales, with the first of these babies now being at primary school and those born in 2010 reaching pre-school age.

3. New birth rates 2005-2010

During 2005-2010 a processing error by the Australian Bureau of Statistics meant just over 33,000 births were excluded from the New South Wales annual birth counts. Births numbers for the six-year period of missing births were released on 24 October 2013 in Births Australia 2012 (see www.abs.gov.au and search for Catalogue No 3301.0).

The combination of more births than previously thought and smaller populations arising from the ERP revision means fertility rates are now higher throughout New South Wales than past measures have shown (see Figure 1). Total fertility rates for all local government areas are now higher for 2005-2010 than previously thought. These previously uncounted births are likely to have an impact on demand for infant and children’s services across New South Wales, with the first of these babies now being at primary school and those born in 2010 reaching pre-school age.

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Healthy Built Environments
2013: A Watershed in Healthy Planning

Susan Thompson¹ and Paul Klarenaar²

2013 may well go down in NSW history as a watershed year for healthy planning. Just a decade or so ago, only a handful of health professionals, and even less planners, recognised the crucial role that the built environment plays in supporting people’s health and well-being as part of everyday living.

We have come a long way since those days. The NSW Planning Bill 2013 currently before the State Parliament has a specific health objective framed around the notion of healthy built environments:

1.3 ‘Objects of Act’ (1) (i) to promote health, amenity and quality in the design and planning of the built environment.

The result of ongoing and concerted lobbying from different stakeholders in healthy built environments, the ‘health and wellbeing’ objective will make NSW the first Australian state (and an international leader) to legally recognise the impact of urban planning and development on the health and wellbeing of our whole population.

Healthy planning will be part and parcel of what planners do, working in close collaboration with health professionals. Within the Northern Sydney Local Health District, the Health Promotion service has an ongoing ‘Urban Planning 4 Health’ (UP4Health) team who contribute to national, state and local government strategic planning and development processes maximising opportunities for communities to lead active, socially connected and well-nourished lives. Physical infrastructure must be provided within towns and suburbian neighbourhoods, as well as across cities and regional centres, if the built environment is to support health and well-being as part of everyday living. Bike parking and car share spaces in development control plans for commercial centres, residential developments and industrial estates will be standard practice. So too the provision of walking and cycling paths that link houses and apartment blocks to local shops, public transport and recreational facilities. Green and expansive open space parkland will be a given in both newly developing suburbs and retrofitted neighbourhoods. Urban agriculture in various forms such as community gardens and nature strip verge planting will be everywhere, connecting neighbours, local schools, aged persons housing developments and isolated members of the community.

Education of urban planners and health professionals in the same classroom will be commonplace – it’s happening now both at the tertiary level and in professional development offerings across NSW. Today recruitment to health promotion positions frequently requires expertise in healthy built environment issues. The Healthy Built Environments Program (HBEP) at UNSW has just finished a series of workshops up-skilling the health and related workforce in understanding the planning system. Research into healthy built environments continues to grow. Academic conferences are replete with papers crossing the health-built environment disciplinary divide. The 6th State of Australian Cities Conference held in Sydney late in November will showcase some of this scholarship.

So it seems that healthy built environments have a very bright future in NSW. While this is most likely the case, and we must make sure that this happens, there is no room for complacency. Budget bottom lines are constantly in the headlines. We hear political rhetoric about the need to redirect public health funds to ‘front line’ health services. The implication is that anything other than direct patient care is somehow less important for community health and wellbeing. This implication is obviously over-simplistic and incorrect. A functioning health system that caters for the whole population is necessarily complex, with many equally indispensable components (including many non ‘front line’ departments performing research, administration, policy development and even cleaning services).

Population health services exist within this uncertain economic and political climate, where we must demonstrate value for money. Why should the government invest in health promotion – simply because it makes good economic sense. Our tiny health promotion workforce exists on just 0.39% of health funding, yet saves Australia thousands of lives and billions of dollars every year. Health Promotion is our true ‘front-line’ in health services. It prevents chronic disease so that people don’t get sick and need costly medical care. Conservative calculations indicate that for every dollar invested in primary prevention our health system saves over five dollars. So even if we ignore the thousands of lives saved and wellbeing generated, investing in healthy built environments is sound economic policy.

As we head towards 2014, healthy built environments will be very much part of the remit of NSW planners, working in close collaboration with health promotion professionals. The new health objective in the State’s Planning Legislation sets the stage for continued recognition of the role of the built environment in supporting people’s health across our whole population. The synergies with action on climate change are a further opportunity for health gains for both humans and the planet (see the June 2012 issue of ‘New Planner’ for more). 2013 has been a watershed for healthy planning – join us in 2014 for lots more action as we see healthy built environments realised in different, innovative and exciting ways across NSW.

² ibid

¹Susan Thompson is Associate Professor in Planning and Director (Healthy Built Environments) City Futures Research Centre, UNSW
²Paul Klarenaar is the Director of Health Promotion for Northern Sydney Local Health District (NSW Health)

Creating a healthy built environment is just what we do! School kitchen gardens and bike hire in city centres.
Opinion

Economic and social impacts of mining camps

Tim Sneesby, Senior Consultant, SGS Economics and Planning

Temporary accommodation villages (aka FIFO or mining camps) housing Fly-In-Fly-Out mining workers have been the subject of planning contention across NSW and Australia. The contention focuses on their contribution to the existing social fabric and economic prosperity of regional communities. The recent history of many regional areas (particularly remote areas) is one that is characterised by declining populations driven in large part by the lack of access to local jobs.

Because FIFO workers and camps are seen as detracting from the possibility of deepening and diversifying the regional economies, the concern surrounding the socioeconomic impacts associated with FIFO villages is understandable.

Recently the Hunter and Central Coast Joint Regional Planning Panel (JRPP) refused the development application for a proposed temporary accommodation village 2.5 kilometres outside of Singleton. The mining village was proposed to house up to 3000 FIFO workers (in up to 1500 accommodation units). It was found to be an inconsistent use within the current and proposed LEP. The JRPP also found that the proposal did not adequately balance social and economic impacts on the Singleton community.

Economic Impact Assessment

The Economic Impact Assessment from the proponent measured the impacts of the construction and operational phase of the village development on Singleton and assumed all employees would have been FIFO workers. Crucially, one of the shortcomings of the proponent’s EIA was that it did not consider the socioeconomic impacts on the locality of using FIFO workers compared to the impacts from using a local or regional workforce. A more general criticism of EIAs is that while they typically outline the economic impacts of a proposal, they do not indicate the economic or social costs or the impacts of alternative scenarios. It is critical (and should be self-evident) that important planning decisions need to be made by balancing both the benefits and costs of proposals and considering what the alternatives might be.

SGS completed an assessment of the social and economic impact of hiring FIFO workers compared to the scenario of hiring local resident workers from the Singleton region. The analysis demonstrated that there was no strong need for FIFO workers as the regional workforce would be sufficient to cater to future mining jobs.

The image displays the accessibility to Singleton by car (within 60 minutes drive time), and the resident labour force catchment within these accessibility contours. In total, nearly 170,000 employed residents live within an hour’s drive from Singleton, with nearly 9,000 of these employed in the mining industry in this region.

Social and Economic impacts

Evidence indicates that temporary workers confer fewer economic benefits and are unlikely to invest in the social capital of the community in comparison with workers who reside in the town (or the region). Benefits of employing local workers include:

- A more productive resident workforce;
- Increased regional spending due to new construction activity and spending by additional workers;
- Higher utilisation of existing businesses and capacity of services in town;
- Higher property values in the vicinity of settlements;
- Developed local social networks and friendships;
- Potential to have family members employed in local businesses and services; and
- Involvement in local sport and community organisations.

SGS’s modelling showed the use of FIFO workers can lead to significant losses to the local and regional economy compared to the use of local and regional workers. By examining both direct and flow-on effects, the regional economy stood to lose up to $311 million in Gross Regional Product (GRP) and 3,138 full-time employment positions annually by contracting FIFO workers instead of using a permanent resident workforce. These losses would have continued annually.

Admittedly, there are some instances where FIFO villages are desirable to plug accommodation and labour shortages (such as in remote locations or construction phases of projects). However, planning decisions should encompass a regional view and a long-term perspective. Labour markets typically function at a regional level and so workforce skills and availability need to be accounted for at this scale. Similarly, planning should take a long-term perspective to ensure sustainable regional economic development. Short-term accommodation should be a stop-gap measure to account for the construction phase workers, but operational workforces should be resident workforces so that the economic benefits accrue to local communities.

Policy implications

The NSW Government is currently drafting guidelines for temporary accommodation villages and this will hopefully provide clearer guidance. As context, the NSW Government’s decentralisation agenda outlined in NSW 2021 aims to strengthen local and regional economies. Employing resident workers would align with the NSW Government’s investment in infrastructure and programs to support local regional economies including a skilled labour force. Therefore, based on existing state policy and the preceding evidence, it is paramount for policy makers to consider the social and economic impacts of FIFO villages on local communities. Given that the impacts relate to scale – both the number of mining jobs and the population size of the surrounding area – at least two tests should be conducted before allowing mining camps:

1. evidence that the regional labour force is unable to absorb future mining jobs and that there are no reasonable avenues to train local workers
2. that the regional housing and short-term accommodation markets are unable to house the required workers
This year ‘planning’ received a lot of attention from the NSW community and government, understandably given the new planning system’s introduction.

PIA responded to the sometimes negative discussion by reminding us of the importance of planning, and outlining the fundamentals of ‘good planning’ (http://www.planning.org.au/policy/what-is-good-planning-0913).

Planning is important, however, ‘good planning’ is more than the broad objectives listed by PIA. The method of achieving those objectives is missing from the PIA list.

Setting objectives is only Step One of the iterative and responsive planning processes which are needed to manage our complex and constantly evolving urban environment. It seems the crucial steps between identifying an urban problem and imagining and constantly evolving urban environment.

Setting objectives is only Step One of the iterative and responsive planning processes which are needed to manage our complex and constantly evolving urban environment. It seems the crucial steps between identifying an urban problem and imagining it solved are often overlooked in NSW.

A methodical planning process can be applied to any planning exercise, whether a metro strategy, or a house extension DA.

1. Define the problem or objectives. Is it fostering social and cultural wellbeing? Providing infrastructure to support thousands of new homes? Creating safe and walkable neighbourhoods? Addressing the risks of rising sea levels? Preventing overshadowing?

2. Collect information. Get the facts and put the jigsaw puzzle together. Do land use surveys, commission specialist reports, do site inspections, walk the streets. Understand the planning controls, infrastructure availability, hazards, assets, history and character.

3. Formulate the plan, or assess the proposal. Prepare options and apply strategic thought to their evaluation. Which will meet objectives most effectively given competing demands, resource and infrastructure requirements, impacts and mitigation, and benefits?

4. Implement. Developers deliver our built environment, so it may be ‘watch and wait’. 5. Monitor. Urban areas are constantly evolving, and plans are rarely implemented exactly as formulated. Is housing being built where planned, in the anticipated time frames, and in the volumes targeted? Did that battle over bulk and scale result in a better project? Publishing DA determination time frames is currently popular, but may inadvertently lead to planners focusing on quick, not quality decisions.

6. Respond. Are objectives and problems still relevant in the light of new information, or changing circumstances? Are housing targets of 30/70 splits or ‘balanced growth’ relevant if not enough housing is being produced anywhere? Is that growth area productive? Are there new assets that can be incorporated into plans, or new constraints which need to be considered?

Responding may require amending the objectives or redefining the problem, or changing the fundamentals of a plan or a development assessment policy. This is not ‘corrupt’ or an admission of failure. It’s just an appropriate response to the iterative nature of planning.

Consistent application of a methodical planning process to every planning exercise would address some of the vexing issues planners face in NSW. The community and applicants would better understand why that approval was/was not given, that land released, or that high rise zone imposed if the decision resulted from a methodical planning process.

Potential perceptions of corruption would be reduced as all projects would be subject to the same process.

‘Planning culture’ has also been a prominent issue in 2013, with millions of words and thousands of dollars being spent on its improvement. Apparently planners need to ‘embrace the value of planning’, think strategically, and focus on ‘delivery’ and ethical practice. But could this discussion actually be a symptom of a culture with an unhealthy sense of self importance?

Perhaps NSW planners should instead work on being quietly confident professionals. This means:

1. Striving to be dispassionate. Take yourself out of the equation and focus on the planning issues. Don’t like that architecture? So what if privacy, amenity and overshadowing are addressed? Think detached houses in new suburbs are sprawl, well you’re not a large, extended family, and there are new bus services, local shops and plenty of sports fields. Developers are greedy? But are their projects compliant? The community are whingers? But are they making relevant planning points?

2. Understanding the project. Read the documents, plans, and controls. Recognise gaps in your understanding, and fill them. Talk to managers and colleagues.

3. Understanding the consequences. Planners are powerful, they can impact people’s homes and businesses, whether it’s a house extension, a major land release or a commercial rezoning. Will the changes you want make the project unviable or impact on amenity? Understanding the consequences before a plan is finalised or a condition imposed will save everyone time and money trying to resolve the problems created.

4. Working in a team. Planners work in organisations, with the community, other agencies, and with applicants. Contributing and collaborating with proponents isn’t corrupt, it’s creative. Managers may want to you to change your work, not because they’re unethical, but probably because their experience creates awareness of the bigger picture. There’s no need to talk to the media, elected representatives or anyone when you don’t agree with the outcome.

5. Communicating. Don’t just write letters, meet, take and make phone calls, reply to emails... bore your name and title. Be polite, no eye rolling or watch checking, no threats of refusals, or jargon. Solving problems early ultimately saves time. If you’re avoiding communication, then you’re not confident, so get some advice. Don’t worry about ICAC, you know the difference between breaking the law, and collecting or communicating information.

6. Taking responsibility. Make decisions, or ensure the right people make them. Manage the project, keep records, and meet deadlines, statutory or otherwise. Provide advice to applicants, the community or elected representatives.

7. Understanding the profession’s role. There are many problems and objectives which are not ours to solve. Designers, developers and the market determine architectural quality. Families put children on bikes and decide what they eat. Landscape architects and engineers design parks.

Developers understand the market and project feasibility. Citizens choose to consume travel, water, energy and goods. Body corporates allow pets into buildings. The BCA regulates minimum building standards.

Health, taxation and welfare are considered by other agencies. Communities initiate community garden projects.

8. Being quietly confident. Forget the branding and marketing. Too often planning is being ‘sold’, and the community has bought, resulting in unrealistic expectations of what can be achieved, and unnecessary criticism when it fails to deliver. What’s the point of explaining a plan with an animation, when planners can’t control what is eventually delivered? There will always be difficult media, necessary compromises will always leave someone aggrieved. But bad media is irrelevant if the planning is done with quiet confidence.

Planning is important. Planners use information to create a coherent guide for the strategic direction of our cities, neighbourhoods and project sites. But in NSW the profession seems to have forgotten how to plan. Instead we seem caught up in issues which we can’t influence, and an ongoing public relations exercise which is forever going wrong.

So let’s get back to being quietly confident professionals, consistently applying methodical planning processes to every planning exercise.
In May 2013, an internal competition was held by the Department inviting ideas from staff on how to transform its work, technology, culture and future. A range of ideas were presented focusing on improving public involvement in planning decisions, education and perceptions of the planning industry. My winning entry sought to promote planning and its related disciplines as a career to high school students, as well as discussion and involvement at a local neighbourhood level on planning related issues.

The Department wants to play an integral role in developing future professionals at a time when engagement with the community is central to its planning reform, and when the interest in geography among high school students in NSW is declining. Geography as a discipline is recognised for its importance in planning, landscape and urban design spheres, not to mention the myriad of related disciplines that have a role in urban planning, including but not limited to ecology, water management and flooding, and Indigenous and European heritage. A recent study into the subject choices by HSC students indicated that geography has slipped in popularity from eighth place to eleventh between 2003 and 2008 out of a total of 14 subjects, and has remained there since (McNeilage, A, Geography loses as HSC students map their futures, Sydney Morning Herald, 5 October, 2013). The report commissioned by the Department of Education and Communities identified obstacles to the teaching of geography and has remained there since (Erebus International, 2008, A Study into the teaching of Geography in Years 3-10 – Final Report, pp 36-42).

The Board of Studies has published student enrolments in 2 Unit HSC Geography which show a significant decline between 1991 and 2012. This is mapped in Figure 1.

The opportunity to encourage young students to consider a career in planning is pivotal, particularly with the Department’s current review of planning legislation, its development of eplanning and its renewed focus on community engagement. The benefits of such a program include students gaining an earlier insight into how their interests can be steered toward a career in a certain discipline; supporting an industry that is multi-disciplinary and interdependent on expertise across a range of specialty fields; and educating and encouraging civic involvement at a local and regional level.

Promoting an interest in planning in young people

It is impossible to plan local neighbourhoods without considering how citizens interact amongst green spaces, how they travel to work, school and retail and recreational activities, how water features and vegetation treat and convey water runoff, how a hierarchy of retail centres meet the essential and recreational needs of the consumer, and how heritage is preserved and integral to the local character of an area. These are just some examples of the influence of the planning discipline in shaping communities and cities. It is expected that the demands for specialists who can analyse, test, and recommend suitable responses to such specific urban challenges will continue to grow. The new planning system proposed for NSW is being developed with community and stakeholder participation. By influencing young students who may not have previously contemplated a career in planning, a shift toward a more proactive approach within communities will develop, particularly as students progress through their studies and careers as young adults. Capturing this pool of interest in Year 7 prior to the selection of elective subjects in Year 8 and with opportunities to link back to later high school years, PlaceMakers can create an inter-generational awareness of local and regional planning issues.

Architectural Study Tour 2013

The Department offered the winning entry a place on the 2013 architectural tour with the Australian Institute of Architects, taking in cities and rural areas in China. The 14 day tour commenced in the city of Chongqing and travelled a stretch of the Yangtze River, stopping at world heritage listed places, well-preserved water towns and ancient cities. The tour provided an opportunity to explore not only the architecture of China, but the extent of urbanisation that is occurring, and its impacts on China’s citizens, as well as its society and culture.

Key themes from the tour will be integrated into PlaceMakers which will be specifically explored at a local neighbourhood level.

Implementation Options

Specific examples that are being considered include the following:

- Lesson plans developed to meet syllabus objectives
- Access to existing resources and programs across Government via an online portal
- Use of technology including GIS systems and urban design tools
- Workshops, site visits and field work
- Competitions
- Government, industry and university representatives on judging panels

Development of the program is ongoing in consultation with key stakeholders, with implementation targeted during 2014. If you would like further information about PlaceMakers, please contact Evelyn Ivinson at evelyn.ivinson@planning.nsw.gov.au

The Author on the Yangtze River

Figure 1. HSC enrolments in 2 Unit Geography, 1991-2012 (Source: http://www.boardofstudies.nsw.edu.au/ebos/static/ebos_stats.html)
**Introduction**

Welcome to the final Consulting Planners’ column for 2013. The theme for this edition is ‘the year in review’. This year has seen many exciting projects across the consulting planners arena. In this edition we provide a snapshot of some of these key projects from four consulting planning and design firms, highlighting the value that consulting planners and designers can bring to projects. As we move into 2014 under the coverage of new planning legislation, we look forward as consulting planners to continue to be involved in helping deliver better outcomes for NSW.

**McGregor Coxall**  
*By Michael Cowdy, Associate*

**Maitland High Street Shared Zone: Renewing An Aging Pedestrian Mall**

McGregor Coxall are leading a team that includes CHROFI Architects to prepare renewal plans for the High Street Precinct and Riverfront of Historic Maitland, the Lower Hunter Region’s ‘Major Regional Centre’. The High Street Precinct contains a 1980’s Heritage Mall at the heart of historic Maitland that has been in decline for the past decade due to increasing retailing competition from expansion of the nearby regional shopping centre. The master plan converts the Heritage Mall into High Street Central, a shared pedestrian and vehicle public domain zone. The project aims to revive the local economy through targeted urban design strategies repositioning central Maitland as a day time centre for leisure based retail activity supported by a night time food and wine economy featuring local produce. The project utilises public investment to seed street activation via a new Council owned Riverlink building and plaza connected to a new riverfront ‘levee precinct’.

**Sydney Central Station City Park: Belmore Park Master Plan**

Belmore Park is one of Sydney’s oldest, yet undervalued and least recognised parks. Located in front of Central Station, the 2.1 hectare Belmore Park has been eroded by progressive railway infrastructure encroachments. McGregor Coxall in association with CHROFI Architects and a team of seven consultants are developing a strategic master plan with the City of Sydney to create one of Sydney’s new ‘Three City Squares’ outlined in the City’s Sustainable Sydney 2030 program. The plan resurrects the park as an active forecourt by concentrating the pedestrian network and improves view corridors with phased tree replacements. The plan establishes a central recreation spine to activate the park, and increases the area of flexible open space for event use. Passive surveillance is improved by removing barriers, and activating the edges by incorporating the Western Ramp and light rail into the park. The Strategic Master Plan establishes a vision and a framework that can activate and reconnect people with the park.

**Hill PDA**  
*By Christina Livers, Consultant*

**Review of Dubbo Residential Areas Development Strategy**

Dubbo is currently experiencing a housing crisis. It has some of the lowest vacancy rates in NSW and is becoming increasingly unaffordable due to a lack of housing diversity. These challenges led Dubbo Council to engage Hill PDA to come up with solutions. By undertaking comprehensive market research, stakeholder engagement, feasibility modelling and policy research Hill PDA found a number of market, policy and cultural barriers were contributing to Dubbo’s housing challenges. A range of recommendations were made by Hill PDA to overcome these barriers including amending subdivision controls, reviewing developer contributions (for infill development), designing and embarking on an awareness campaign to educate landowners on the various uses permissible within the residential zones. Hill PDA’s findings were highly commended by Council and heralded by the local media; the Dubbo Mayor Mathew Dickerson was quoted as saying “This comprehensive review has provided Council a menu of possible planning policy adjustments and development incentives to allow Council to select and implement a set of measures to address housing supply issues”. The recommendations have since been adopted by Council for implementation and will act as a catalyst for improving housing diversity and affordability in Dubbo.

**Leichhardt Employment and Economic Development Strategy**

Leichhardt Council wanted to improve the vitality and viability of their local economy. Leichhardt Council took a proactive approach and commissioned Hill PDA to develop the Leichhardt Employment and Economic Development Strategy. In order to formulate the Strategy, Hill PDA undertook extensive consultation with over 200 hundred people including: Leichhardt’s businesses, residents, land owners and key government bodies.

The findings from the consultation along with research allowed Hill PDA to develop a framework and direction to guide, support and help promote sustainable economic development in Leichhardt. The Hill PDA Team found that in order to stimulate the local economy, a number of complementary strategies needed to be put in place including: improving place making, providing greater choice and diversity in the range of services provided by businesses, encouraging creative industries, protecting and leveraging economic assets, making businesses and employment
news

easier, ensuring businesses in the LGA share information and improving marketing in the LGA. Over 100 actions were developed to ensure the delivery of these strategies. The Strategy was adopted by Council on 25 June 2013. A key element to ensuring the success of the Strategy is its implementation. Leichhardt Council have allocated a budget and resourcing to deliver the strategies and key actions to ensure there is a vibrant and self-sufficient local economy.

DFP
By Kirk Osborne, Principal Planner
Eastlakes Town Centre

In September 2013, the NSW Planning Assessment Commission approved a Project Application for the redevelopment of the Eastlakes Town Centre. A new mixed use town centre will be built comprising 405 apartments in 9 buildings which range in heights from 2-6 storeys above a retail podium, 14,400m² of retail and community floorspace will be established along with basement car parking spaces, landscaping and associated infrastructure works. The new town centre will provide a significantly improved main street, new public spaces, enhanced pedestrian linkages and an active urban edge to Eastlakes Reserve. The approval of the Eastlakes Town Centre redevelopment is the culmination of several years of collaborative effort between DFP, the joint venture partners Crown Group and Prosha, and Rice Daubney Architects. DFP prepared the Project Application for the development and led negotiations with the Department of Planning and Infrastructure. The project recently won the 2013 UDIA NSW Concept Design Award.

DFP
By Kirk Osborne, Principal Planner

Wyong Retail Centres Strategy
DFP has prepared a Retail Centres Strategy for the Wyong Local Government Area (LGA). The Strategy sets out the retail hierarchy across the LGA based on the role and function of each centre. The Strategy details the long term planning and development objectives for the centres and sets out directions to encourage investment in centres. It also includes a ‘toolbox’, based on net community test principles, to assist in preparing and assessing Planning Proposals that seek additional retail floorspace. The Strategy has been prepared in consultation with major stakeholders, Council and NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure and will be considered by Council at a meeting in November 2013.

JBA
By Nick Smith

Barangaroo and Darling Harbour

Barangaroo is Sydney’s biggest urban renewal project since the Olympic site was built at Homebush Bay. This year the project is beginning to take shape, with the first residential developments on the western fringe of the CBD now approved and the project coming out of the ground. JBA has been closely involved with the $6 billion development since 2006. Apart from Barangaroo, JBA has continued to shape the revitalisation of Darling Harbour and the western edge of Sydney, being involved in the new Sydney International Convention, Exhibition and Entertainment Precinct, The Ribbon (the proposed redevelopment of the IMAX site), Darling Quarter plus the Ultimo Pedestrian Network.

Housing Diversity Package for Sydney’s Growth Centres

JBA assisted the Department of Planning and Infrastructure in the preparation of a Housing Diversity Package for Sydney’s Growth Centres. The package includes amendments to the SEPP, new DCP and a Dwelling Density Guide with examples of innovative housing types. The purpose of this package is to unlock the rules that currently prevent the delivery of more compact housing forms such as small lots and abutting housing to improve affordability and diversity in the greenfield Growth Centres.

Wentworth Point Urban Activation Precinct

On the strategic planning front, JBA continued its involvement in the landmark Urban Activation Precinct (UAP) program. UAPs are a key part of the NSW Government’s commitment to implementing the draft Metropolitan Strategy for Sydney to 2031 and helping to tackle Sydney’s current housing challenges. One of the current UAPs is located at Wentworth Point, which is approximately 12km to the west of the Sydney CBD and forms part of the broader Sydney Olympic Park Specialised Centre. The 18ha precinct has a number of attributes that make it suitable for large scale, urban renewal. JBA worked closely with the CM+ as the project designers and the Department of Planning & Infrastructure to prepare the planning documents including new LEP controls, a site specific DCP and a suite of marketing and communications material. The future controls for the site will facilitate around 2,300 high density residential dwellings along with a new primary school, substantial new public open space / headland park and a boating and maritime precinct.
Welcome to the final edition of BasePlan for 2013. In this edition, I jump into the Editor’s hot seat replacing Christina Livers who was recently elected to NSW YP Committee Convenor. At the same time, Michael Dixon has handed on the NSW National Young Planner Representative baton to Harry Quartermain. Thanks to Christina, Harry and Michael for all their time and effort in these previous positions.

This edition reviews the year of 2013 and flags the keynote event for 2014 – YP Connect. YP Connect 2014 is to be hosted by the NSW Young Planners and is set to draw young planners from across the nation to Sydney. Register to be enthralled by industry leaders sharing their visions on how to create a better tomorrow.

Year in Review
By Harry Quartermain – URS Corporation

The Committee worked hard in 2013 to produce professional development and networking events that were complemented by valuable input provided to the PIA submission on the White Paper.

The year began by building on the 2012 success of the Sydney Small Bars events. Bi-monthly bar tours took place in some of Sydney’s more tucked-away venues. These events provided attendees with a chance to enjoy an over-priced beer while building on their professional networks in relaxed surroundings.

In May, the Young Planners Forum saw nearly 100 young professionals descend on the North Sydney Coal Loader Centre for Sustainability. This event featured addresses from Minister for Planning and Infrastructure - Brad Hazzard, PIA NSW President - Sarah Hill and EIANZ President - Michael Chilcott. This took place amongst a packed day of triple bottom line discussion in the context of the White Paper.

In September, the NSW Divisional Committee produced an in-depth submission on the White Paper. Each section of this submission had input from the NSW YP Committee, thus ensuring the submission had influence from our demographic.

In November, we visited the Central Park Urban Redevelopment Site as part of our annual study tour. We were returning to the site after visiting for the first time during the 2011 Study Tour. It was great to be able to return two years on to see how much has changed.

The NSW Divisional Christmas Party was also held at the Abercrombie on Broadway – once again the NSW Young Planners proved they can throw a party.

In 2014, the National Congress and YP Connect come to Sydney. I for one, am looking forward to another rewarding year ahead.

Planning at the Tail End
By Rebecca Lockart – JBA Planning

Fresh from graduating, I applied for just about every job available. The aim was to gain an on the ground understanding of planning, ideally from a local government perspective.

With this aim in mind, I applied for a compliance role at Marrickville Council. Given my lack of experience, I didn’t actually consider that I’d get the job – as it turned out, it was first interview, first job offer and my first graduate role.

Compliance work is diverse. Challenges ranged from industrial properties abutting residential properties, pop-up rave parties, forklifts competing with traffic, massage parlours offering extra services, and boarding houses that may be more accurately defined as share houses? They did not teach this at University!

Nor is compliance for the faint hearted. It’s Council’s role to investigate the reported illegal use of a building. I believed it to be all about land use conflict and judging the impact of the wrong doing. If it’s to do with use of an approved building the complaint goes to the planners or if it’s an unauthorised building, then the building compliance officers. This diversity gives reasoning to the multi-disciplinary roles within the compliance because often the problem isn’t clear-cut and a combined approach is needed.

I’m often asked why planners are in compliance at all and I usually rattle off the list of land-use conflicts that a Council such as Marrickville faces and they understand. Despite this, compliance...
really is a section of planning sometimes forgotten by the planning industry, until they try and get consent for an illegal use or make representations to an order issued. After working in compliance for two years, I now realise that without regulation there’s no use in having planning at all. Why would you bother getting consent to use a premises if there’s no repercussions? Why bother with policy in the first place if there’s no intent to follow up on the success of its implementation? If we don’t have planning professionals to follow up and manage the implementation of policy objectives, then who should? Should we be leaving it to building inspectors and rangers to pick up the pieces and deal with poorly contrived conditions of approval, or unresolved assessment issues?

I’m grateful to have had the opportunity to get a first-hand understanding of why we bother with strategic planning and assessment at all. It really is getting planning experience from the tail end of the system.

Interview with Tim Sneesby

Senior Consultant at SGS Economics and Planning

Where do you work and what interesting projects are you involved in?

I work at SGS Economics and Planning. We provide planning and economic advice to State and Local Government, as well as the private sector. Most of the work I do applies economic analysis and planning principles to solve strategic planning issues. The work is very interesting. I recently project managed a Retail Impact Assessment for a shopping centre expansion, which used a Cost-Benefit Analysis framework to underscore a Net Community Benefit Test.

What advice would you give to Young Planners who would like to work for a firm like SGS?

I think what you need to work in strategic planning is strong analytical skills as well as ability to conceptualise issues and an ability to join the dots. It’s important to have a good grasp of the complex issues behind planning problems, such as different economic forces and political ideologies. So it’s pretty important to read widely and constantly ask ourselves why and how?

Having a general appreciation of economic and statistical concepts is essential. I think knowing the role, function and shape of the forest is more important than focussing on the details of every tree.

What is the value of being involved in the YP committee?

Being involved with PIA Young Planners is a great way to meet people from all walks of planning. There is a lot of value gained from sharing knowledge, work experiences, career tips and learning about the many differing career paths. I also think that mixing with other like-minded young planners reinforces a collegial identity that provides a greater sense of purpose and awareness of your role as a planner.

The NSW Young Planners welcome the following new PIA NSW Student and Graduate Members:

Isabel Dong – Graduate
Catherine Gilbert – Graduate
Yaqi Mao – Graduate
Hamish McCaughey – Graduate
Laura Schmahmann – Graduate
Wei Yuan Wu – Graduate
Simon Wu – Graduate
Charles Wu – Graduate
Victor Bajada – Student
Judith Elijah – Student
Yu Guo – Student
Dean Rance – Student
Ainsley Rotgans – Student
Andrew Golden – Student

Call for Expressions of Interest

The NSW Young Planners Committee is comprised of:

Christina Livers – Hill PDA
Harry Quartemain – URS
Michael Dixon – Roads and Maritime Services
Timothy Sneesby – SGS Economics & Planning
Mathew Quattroville – Four Towns Consulting
Mark Thompson – Urbis
Jeffrey Bretag – Port Stephens Council
Andrew Wheeler – DP&I
Mitchell Davies – DP&I
Rachel Gardner – Kogarah City Council
Laura Schmahmann – SGS Economics & Planning
Sophie Butcher – DP&I
Tina Kao – City of Sydney Council
Candice Pon – Willoughby Council
Wil Nino – NUPD
Lachlan Abercrombie – Cox Architecture
Sarah Court – GTA Consultants

The David Kettle Cardno Trust Award

This Award has been established in memory of David Kettle and is supported by Cardno (NSW/ACT). The Award will be made to a current Student or Graduate (up to 5 years after graduation) who is a Member of PIA or who is willing to become a Member.

The Award will be made annually in the form of a conference registration and contribution towards travel to attend the PIA National Congress 2014 or the NSW State Conference, up to total value of $2,000.

Criteria for the Award will include a statement of 500 words or less on why regional planning is important.

If you would like to attend the 2014 National Congress, including YP Connect to be held in Sydney from 15-19 March 2014, please submit your expression of interest, including a statement of 500 words or less on why regional planning is important, to NSW Executive Officer email nswmanager@planning.org.au by Friday 31 January 2014.
Looking at the past year, for the first time, Twitter was alive and well during the PIA Congress. This meant those who couldn’t attend, could follow the talks, presentations and discussions in real time, but also that the conversation and, most importantly, networking could continue long after the day’s formalities had ended. Interested in what was said? Search #piacongress in Google. The planning insights, fun facts and banter, are still there! Social media also provides vital insights into the soul of a city and helps breakdown barriers within the industry. Many architects, designers and creatives use Instagram to capture and promote their projects. Following the experts is only limited by a friend request and, 99% of the time, it’s accepted. They’re as much interested in your digital portfolio as you are in them.

As for Facebook, love it or hate it, we all use it. By doing so, there is untapped potential here to incorporate Facebook in planning better communities.

While we might regard social media as a very urban activity, some of the earliest pioneers can be found in rural areas. They acknowledge the importance of being connected online, communicating with the world and sharing knowledge. If I can suggest one thing for the festive season, be inspired by these pioneers and download a new social media app. You might just like it. And this is not because you can see Kim Kardashian’s newest shoes, but for us, being passionate about people and place, it provides some interesting insights into planning trends and community connections. So where do we start? With small steps. There’s nothing wrong with having an account and ‘listening’ but not actively ‘participating’. After all, you’re definitely not the minority, with 89% of Twitter users just listening to the discussion. As your confidence grows, you’ll naturally move from observing to participating and eventually leading. This is where I believe we should sit. As facilitators of urban change we should also play a role in the digital sphere by navigating discussion, fostering ideas and advocating critical debate.

John is a freelance urban planner and will be presenting a paper on Planner Tech at the 2014 PIA Congress. By this time he expects every Planner to be on Twitter. More details about @John_OCal here > www.john-ocal.com.
Bob Zehner was the longest serving member of the town planning program at the University of New South Wales. He was Acting Head of the School of Town Planning in 1986 and Head from 1991-1993. As a fixture at UNSW for 3½ decades, he will be remembered by hundreds of former students as a dedicated, personable and ethical educator. His teaching revolved around sociology, statistics and survey methods. His research integrated all three threads with an enduring interest in planned communities. His private preoccupations were family, running, hiking and – unusual for someone growing up on the fringes of New York City - cricket.

Initially studying engineering at Amherst College, Bob switched to social science and graduated in 1964. He married that same year and moved to the University of Michigan to study sociology, taking his MA in 1965 and PhD in 1970. His early working life was intertwined with his education and from 1969-70 he was an Assistant Study Director in the Institute for Social Research. He then secured another research position at the University of North Carolina, becoming a Senior Research Associate in 1974.

Bob’s early American career had been extremely productive, producing five singly or jointly-authored books, their titles capturing his expertise and life-long interest in ‘how communities are planned and how people respond to them’. His words: Planned Residential Environments (1970), Across the City Line: A White Community in Transition (1974), New Communities U.S.A (1976), Indicators of the Quality of Life in New Communities (1977), and Access, Travel and Transportation in New Communities (1977).

Bob first came to Sydney in 1975 as an Honorary Visiting Fellow on a Fulbright Scholarship but returned the following year as a Lecturer. He never regretted moving to Australia although even coming back a second time the intention was always to return to the USA. But the more relaxed lifestyle and less frenetic pace of the Australian academic scene appealed. He received tenure in 1978 and with a young family stayed put. He was promoted to Senior Lecturer in 1979 and Associate Professor in 1988. From 2004 to 2009 he served as Associate Dean (Education) and retired after serving two years as Senior Associate (Deputy) Dean in 2011.

Bob maintained his interest in new communities after laying down new roots in Sydney’s eastern suburbs. His major work, produced with John Lea, was Yellowcake and Crocodiles (1986), a study of governance, community and planning in the remote uranium town of Jabiru in the Northern Territory.

His mastery of research design and data analysis saw him involved in a string of consultancy projects for public and private sector organisations ranging from aircraft noise amelioration to resident attitudes to medium density housing. From the late 1970s he was an assiduous surveyor of planners and planning in NSW built around a core of UNSW alumni. Spinning off a long-running project looking at environmental priorities in Australian local government planning came a significant early excursion into responses to climate change.

After diagnosis of prostate cancer in 1996, Bob by his own admission took stock of his professional career and directed his energies to teaching and to serving the faculty and the university on numerous boards, committees, panels, and working parties.

He had always been a capable, innovative and popular teacher. He was the first staff member in the planning program to introduce student assessments. But he felt it was time for universities to take good teaching more seriously and transition to student-centered approaches. So his last decade at UNSW was distinguished by an embrace of the scholarship of teaching.

As the first Associate Dean for Education in the Faculty of the Built Environment, he moved to lift standards and secure scholarships and was involved in a nationally funded project on curriculum development in studio teaching which triggered international conferences on design education in 2007 and 2010. His personal contributions won plaudits. In 2002 he received the Vice-Chancellor’s Award for Teaching Excellence and in 2008 came an Australian Learning and Teaching Council Citation. It read: ‘For the ability to motivate and engage students to achieve excellence, and to encourage academic staff to value and enhance their teaching and learning activities.’

The late Serge Domicelj from Sydney University captured the essence of Bob as a planning academic: ‘capable, gifted and likeable’; ‘extremely hard working, most obliging to colleagues’; and ‘very unselfish with a strong sense of equity and an all-together self-effacing nature’. Bob Zehner was a valued teacher, colleague, friend and mentor to many people, inside and outside the university. He will be missed and fondly remembered by all of them.

Rob Freestone FPIA is Professor of Planning and Associate Dean Research in the Faculty of the Built Environment at the University of New South Wales. A memorial service was held for Bob Zehner at UNSW on 27 September 2013 with contributions from former colleagues, students and family. A full obituary by David Zehner was published in the Sydney Morning Herald on 2 October 2013.
International Snippets

Dead Plan Walking
Many have commented on the unconsolidated legislative mess that now frames the planning system. The new system is non-strategic, neither national, nor regional nor sub-regional. It is focussed on local and neighbourhood planning but heavily deregulated in terms of issues such as permitted development, so these plans have decreasing effectiveness. The objective is no longer ‘sustainable development’ because social justice no longer appears as an objective of the policy. Instead, it’s all about growth and numbers. It is possible for gazelles to be shot through the head and continue to run for a few seconds, as if the body hadn’t registered it was dead. Well, that’s the closest I can come to summing up the new planning system: morally and structurally decapitated but the toes are still wriggling.

Tom Pain, TCPA Journal, Sept 2013

Disasters in Christchurch and New Orleans
For planners, the physical, economic and social impacts of disasters such as these are critical to recovery. Foremost, we must ask how people responded. In brief, people simply left New Orleans and did not return. Christchurch city has also lost people but relatively smaller numbers, and many of them have simply moved to the suburbs. What of planning? In New Orleans, the hurricane’s aftermath saw a flood of NGO’s, planners, architects and well meaning outsiders. Conflicting plans were made, planning cars came and went, money was spent, but the Lower Ninth Ward remains desolate and the city struggles. The value of strong government involvement is clearly visible in Christchurch. A planning process is underway with the aim of reinforcing the city’s tradition of green space and beauty. I think it will happen.

Mike Teitz, TCPA Journal, Aug 2013

Transit-oriented developments
Transit-oriented developments (TODs) often consist of new housing near rail stations. Channeling urban growth into such developments is intended in part to reduce the climate change, pollution, and congestion caused by driving. But new housing might be expected to attract more affluent households that drive more, and rail access might have smaller effects on auto ownership and use than other factors. A survey of households showed that auto ownership, commuting, and grocery trip frequency were substantially lower among households living in new housing near rail stations compared to those in new households farther away. But rail access does little to explain this fact.

Daniel G. Chatman, JAPA, May 2013

Pop-up Shops
Pop-up shops are shops which intentionally trade for only short periods of time. Traditionally, they have been seasonal or event focussed, with shops opening for the pre-Christmas period, for the sale of fireworks on Bonfire Night, for costumes for Halloween, or during sporting events such as the Olympics. Charity ventures have taken units to sell goods for a short time, and indeed much of the current ‘fair trade’ concept has its roots in the sale of products through temporary shops. Increasingly we live in an environment where change is of the essence rather than unwelcome. It is important to use temporality (daily, weekly, monthly and in the form of evening economy, morning economy, festivals, events, markets, seasonal events, and varied opening hours) to get variety and diversity into the high street. Engaging with this sort of dynamism is critical for the future planning of high streets.

Anne Findlay and Leigh Sparks, TCPA Journal, Aug 2013

Beirut
Beirut has always been a fascinating city, with layer upon layer of complexity. Soldiere and the Southern Suburbs, both (with very different motives) demonstrate the power of dedicated, non-governmental delivery vehicles to achieve real change, fast. Elsewhere, however, the city screams out for some real planning at both strategic and local scales and, without it, becomes an ever more unsustainable and challenging place to live for those without significant wealth. While the city as a whole shows great resilience and many of its citizens obviously continue to enjoy their daily lives despite their sometimes precariously situations, the city as a whole could deliver so much more if only someone would take charge. But that, in essence, is the problem in Beirut – too many factions, too much division, and no sense of a common direction. It needs planning!

Matthew Carmona, TCPA Journal, Aug 2013

Households
There was an abrupt break with longer-term trends in household formation in England between 2001 and 2011. Net additional household formation was down by some 20%, with almost one million fewer one-person households in 2011 than had been projected. There were also other large scale shifts in the mix of household types, with far more couple-plus-other-adult households and multi-adult households than expected. In part this is about younger people staying at home or sharing accommodation for longer. But that is not the whole story as changes are observed in all age groups.

Alan Holmans, TCPA Journal, Sept 2013

Local Economies
Successful local economies are ones where key economic and political decision makers live and work locally: they work together effectively and are well networked with each other and the wider community. US evidence shows that areas with higher levels of small and medium sized enterprises have higher job growth, enjoy greater worker satisfaction levels, benefit more from civic engagement, and produce better health outcomes. EU studies show that economically successful parts of peripheral regions have local political and economic power and use it effectively. They also show that distant government decision-makers and non-locally-owned firms are a recipe for long-term economic failure.

Jan Morris and Karen Leach, TCPA Journal, Aug 2013
As we experiment with the return of double decker buses and bicker about whether the North West Rail Link should be double deck or single deck trains, Transport for London has been knuckling down producing new bus and train stock to keep the Capital’s public transport up to date.

On the bus network the famous rear stairs and platform are returning, complete with ‘clippies’ (conductors – remember Reg Varney and the ‘On the Buses’ show – for diehard fans it can be found on YouTube and occasionally pops up on channel 7TWO!). However unlike the old Routemaster buses, the rear platform will include doors and the clippies will not collect fares – only supervise passengers and the rear platform.

On the underground, Engineering firm Siemens has proposed the latest generation of tube trains. Called “inspiro,” they are designed to be driverless, have air conditioning (nothing like a peak hour tube train on a hot London day!) and consume 30% less electricity (The Tube is London’s biggest single electricity consumer, accounting for 2.8 percent of total demand).

Source: www.dailymail.co.uk and www.theengineer.co.uk
AGSU, Australia’s leading graduate school in urban policy and design, is pleased to introduce the Master of Urban Policy & Strategy.

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