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Brigitte Buchholz, Diana Griffiths, Alice Reilly
and Andrew Wheeler

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

Contributions
The theme of the December 2014 issue is ‘The Year in Review’ (with an additional focus on technology/the
digital age and ePlanning).

Contributions are welcome and should be emailed to
nswmanager@planning.org.au by Friday 31 October.

Please review the New Planner contributor guidelines

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For the past 24 years, New Planner has served as an important link between PIA and the planning profession in NSW. The Journal’s continued relevance as a forum for news, opinion and the exchange of ideas is a credit to the Institute and the many people who have contributed to the Journal’s success. In this issue we celebrate New Planner’s journey and the achievement of reaching 100 issues.

New Planner has come a long way since its first issue in October 1990. Gone are the fax machines and floppy discs that transported laboriously typed articles and news stories to the Journal’s editors. Readers now enjoy a content-rich, full-colour publication that is delivered to their door – and is also accessible with the click of a mouse.

Originally conceived as a bi-monthly publication, produced by the Royal Australian Planning Institute [RAPI] NSW Division and the Local Government Planners Association [LGPA] of NSW, the Journal soon assumed its current quarterly format and became the sole responsibility of RAPI. It has developed into a widely read publication containing pertinent articles, reviews, opinion pieces and news items.

The Journal’s past issues provide a tangible record of how planning and the Institute in NSW have evolved over more than two decades. When viewed as a whole, they provide a remarkably complete snapshot of the major planning events, concerns and trends that have defined our profession during that time. They also capture significant milestones in the life of the Institute, from the merging of RAPI and LGPA in 1992 to the launch of a new look Institute – named the Planning Institute of Australia – in 2002.

The desire to engage with topical and often controversial issues in planning is something that has come to define New Planner. To PIA’s credit, the Journal has always sought to generate spirited discussion and debate, both within and beyond the profession. Indeed, an early editorial went so far as to encourage submissions with ‘a little irreverence’ that would attract media interest.

This issue is no different. As a tribute to New Planner, we feature thought-provoking articles from an esteemed group of PIA members – our 12 NSW Life Fellows – who were each invited to reflect on their career in planning or on a planning-related topic.

The blank canvas given to our Life Fellows has resulted in an eclectic mix of articles combining personal anecdotes, historical insights, timely critique, valuable advice and a vision for the future. Our regular columns and Kirsty Kelly’s message about PIA’s evolution add further ‘food for thought’ on the future of our Institute and the planning profession more broadly.

It is my hope that this 100th issue reflects the rich diversity of opinions and ideas that have filled the pages of New Planner over so many years. I encourage you to engage with the Life Fellows’ articles and consider your own personal viewpoints on the issues raised.

But don’t just stop there. December’s New Planner will also include a ‘Letters to the Editor’ section, so that you too can have a voice and share your thoughts on the topics broached in the 100th issue. For more information on how to submit a letter, please refer to the box below.

At this junction in New Planner’s history, it is important to thank the many PIA members and external organisations that have made the Journal what it is today. In particular, I would like to acknowledge the valuable contributions made by past managing editors – Jeremy Dawkins, David Doyle, Ian Bowie, Stephen Leathley, Nicola Gibson, Stephen McMahon and Robyn Vincin – as well as past and present editorial team members, regular columnists, guest editors, advertisers, and staff at both PIA NSW and Nationwide Advertising.

The success of each New Planner issue can be credited to the time invested by many dedicated people, and the Institute’s unwavering commitment to provide an open forum for its members to share their knowledge, opinions and ideas.

Once again, I commend the 100th issue to you and trust you will benefit from the collective wisdom offered by our regular columnists and the Institute’s valued NSW Life Fellows.
President’s Message
Marking a Milestone at PIA NSW

David Ryan MPIA CPP, PIA NSW President

Congratulations on New Planner reaching 100 issues. Since removing the “Royal” from our title in 2002, we cannot expect a telegram from the Queen to mark the occasion; so a few words from the (very Republican sounding) President will have to do.

Whilst much has changed for planning and planners since New Planner’s first issue almost 25 years ago, it is remarkable how many planning challenges have remained constant. Consistently increasing population growth forecasts create challenges for how housing and employment demands will be satisfied without damaging sensitive environments and heritage, agricultural production, and the treasured values of local communities across NSW. That has been a major focus for planning for the last 25 years and will no doubt be the same 25 years hence.

While the challenges remain the same, the methods and tools we have used to meet them have changed, and we need to adapt and be alive to the opportunities they present to doing the best possible job of “leading effective planning for people and places” (PIA’s Vision).

For example, 25 years ago I had a full head of hair, but with no internet in existence, tore most of it out trying to access land information, planning controls and do the basic research that now comes in the flash of a Google or NSW Legislation search. In this year’s State Budget, the government allocated a significant amount of money — $11 million — to “e-Planning”. Whilst there are graveyards full of failed e-planning ventures over the past 25 years, a State-wide online planning platform for planning information, transactions and spatial data represents potentially the greatest boon for planning and planners over the next 25 years, to meet the challenges and harness the opportunities.

Most particularly, assisting local communities to readily visualise how their areas may look in the future, and interactively participate in shaping that future, is a truly exciting prospect for strategic planning over the next 25 years.

The strength of PIA over the last 25 years has been the quality and professionalism of its members. PIA’s accreditation of tertiary planning courses, a strong program of professional development courses, networking events, awards, mentoring programs, the introduction of the CPP program, and a strong ethical code of practice, have all enhanced the quality and professionalism of planners. This is something that I am confident will continue over the next 25 years. New Planner continues to play an important part in this by providing a robust forum for communicating information and ideas (and the odd bit of gossip) to planners throughout NSW.

High quality publications such as New Planner do not publish themselves and I wish to acknowledge the tremendous efforts of all of our Editors, editorial teams and contributors who, through the voluntary donation of many hundreds of hours of toil, have brought 100 issues to our desks.

A constant theme of my conversations with planners is that we get out of PIA what we collectively put into it. The quality of New Planner is testament to that principle. There are many other things PIA would like to do to improve planning in NSW and support our members. What we achieve for members relies on volunteers to give some of their time to PIA’s activities in the key areas of Policy and Advocacy, Professional Development and Membership. I thank all the members who have been actively involved with the Institute’s activities, not the least of which is producing New Planner, over a period stretching almost 25 years. I look forward to more of the same for the next 25.

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Chief Executive Officer’s Message

PIA’s Evolution: A New Chapter in the Institute’s History

Kirsty Kelly MPIA CPP, PIA Chief Executive Officer

Across the world, the planning profession is on the cusp of change. Population growth, climate change, rapidly-changing technology and the emergence of massive middle classes in the former third world all present enormous challenges and opportunities for urban and regional planners. The profession must evolve for planners to meet these opportunities and embrace these challenges.

At the same time, planning in Australia is increasingly becoming a congested space with many stakeholders claiming a hold on the shaping of our neighbourhoods, cities and regions. Planners are often seen as either regulators – the purveyors of red tape – or as the agents of the development industry, destroying our neighbourhoods. The role of planners has become so wide-ranging that we are in somewhat of an identity crisis. While trying to be balanced and take all types of planning related views into account, the focus on the discipline of urban and regional planning as the core of the profession – and the foundation of PIA – has been diminished by other agendas.

PIA, along with the global planning community, is moving to rally around the core competence of urban and regional planning as the central focus of the profession.

The Planning Matters strategy released in 2013 grew from a review of PIA’s role and industry relevance in light of these changes and is based around three core actions:

- Focusing our members to be bold planning professionals committed to delivering good planning.
- Invigorating the profession by inspiring planners to embrace change and understand the value we bring.
- Positioning the profession by championing good planning.

PIA’s evolution helps to deliver the Planning Matters strategy by ensuring that PIA responds to current and future needs of planners and planning, both here in Australia and abroad.

PIA is in a process of introducing a new membership benchmark and reviewing the current membership categories and entry points into PIA. We are working with members and stakeholders including the university sector, to focus and expand our lifelong learning framework for PIA members linked to a new National Benchmark Framework. With a more robust and credible framework we will be striving to ensure that our members are recognised within government planning frameworks.

We will be changing the structure we use to recognise the skills of planners seeking to become PIA members. The “chapters” structure will be rationalised to ensure that our members meet the criteria for ‘Urban and Regional Planning’. This already applies to the vast majority of PIA members who have entered following completion of a PIA accredited planning course. For others such as members who have entered through chapters such as social planning, urban design or transport, we will work with them to discuss how they may be affected. While the entry pathways will be tightened, we will be encouraging the use of online networks of planning specialisations and interests to connect members with the same areas of interest.

To support this process, we have been engaging with members to determine the core competencies of urban and regional planners and work through the most appropriate methods of assessing how individual planners meet those competencies. Each step of the way we will check our progress to ensure that every change moves us towards a more credible and valuable PIA membership that opens doors to international opportunities.

As part of PIA’s evolution, the Certified Practising Planner (CPP) program will be reshaped to become more robust and more relevant to modern standards. More than 700 PIA members have already undertaken the program of work and certification to become a CPP since the program’s inception almost 10 years ago. CPP is currently defined in PIA By-Laws as the highest level of the professional development program. This will be refined and modified to become the highest level of membership under the new National Benchmark Framework.

Existing CPPs will be fast-tracked to the renewed global benchmark through an accelerated pathway. We will work with members to focus and expand our lifelong learning framework, and to seek the formal recognition of existing and future CPPs within government planning frameworks.

We need our member’s help throughout this complex but essential process by taking part in our consultations, and by talking to local PIA staff and Committee members. The feedback received to date has been overwhelmingly positive and constructive – your contributions will help shape the PIA of tomorrow.

In talking to many members around the country already, it is clear that there is strong support for this refinement of PIA’s structure and direction. PIA’s evolution is intended to take us into the next phase of our development; one that includes strong growth in the standing of our Institute. We thank you for your support and look forward to you being a part of that journey.
The 1913-14 Royal Commission into Greater Sydney: A Window into the Future?

Bob Meyer AM LFPIA CPP, Director of Planning, Cox Richardson Architects & Planners

In 1914, the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Question of the Constitution of Greater Sydney released its report containing recommendations and the evidence of 83 witnesses. The Commission’s brief was to canvass the amalgamation of councils in Sydney – a topic that, one hundred years later, is making headlines once again.

The 1913-14 Commission explored the arguments for and against amalgamating the City of Sydney with surrounding inner suburbs as a first stage, and then with middle and outer suburbs to form a Greater Sydney Council area.

The Commission issued invitations to all persons who wanted to give evidence, as well as to each Sydney municipal and shire council, and to a number of individuals and organisations whose knowledge was likely to provide insight into the proposal. At the time, Sydney consisted of 70 local governing bodies including the City of Sydney, 65 other municipal councils and four shire councils. The Commission concluded that the number of existing municipalities was excessive.

**Evidence from the Mayors**

As could be expected, the majority of councils were opposed to the proposed amalgamations. Some of the evidence given by the Mayors was quite bizarre; at other times it was rather insightful.

The Mayor of Mosman, when asked if his constituents would benefit from the City of Sydney’s electricity supply, replied “that the people of Mosman would not care whether they had it or not; they consider electricity a novelty”.

The Mayor of Vaucluse indicated that his Council was opposed to amalgamation with the City of Sydney, noting, “the affairs of the present City Council are recklessly and extravagantly managed as compared with the economical and up-to-date methods of the suburban councils”.

The Mayor of Woollahra indicated that his Council was opposed to being included in a Greater Sydney. In answer to the Commissioner’s question as to what councils should be included he suggested Glebe, Darlington, Redfern, Paddington, Balmain and Annandale.

The Mayor of Hunters Hill, in response to those witnesses who supported the proposed amalgamations to gain control of major services such as health, main roads and town planning, suggested there was no need for a Greater Sydney Council for these purposes.

The Mayor of Kogarah, who was also an architect, was opposed to the inclusion of Kogarah in a Greater Sydney area, as his Council had been working for some time on a Greater St George, between the Cooks and Georges Rivers, comprising Rockdale, Bexley, Hurstville and Kogarah Councils. He suggested that “community of interest” was the key factor in amalgamation.

The Mayor of North Sydney pointed out that his Council was not in favour of the Greater Sydney scheme. North Sydney, he added, “is a purely residential area with interests different from those of the city where commercial interests predominate”. He indicated that several of the northern councils were keen to form a Greater Northern Sydney.

**Evidence from the Invited Experts**

W. Scott Griffiths – Map Publisher and Town Planning Engineer

Griffiths claimed he could speak on the subject of town planning with some authority having studied the science for some time. His scheme for the Federal Capital was chosen as winner by a minority of the Jury in 1912.

He supported the forming of a Greater Sydney Council particularly as a central body to control water, sewer, wharves and railways. He also suggested it would avoid expenditure on the construction of many unnecessary roads. Some body of control was needed with power to plan and develop land on a modern town planning basis, which was currently impossible given the conflicting ideas of various councils.

Griffiths suggested that Greater Sydney be divided into 12 wards based on population density (see Figure 1). Parramatta, he said, was not included as it is just now a centre for fruit growers. He did concede...
that Parramatta could be absorbed into a Greater Sydney in twenty years.

**George Sydney Jones – President of the Institute of Architects**

George Sydney Jones’ evidence reflected that of the Institute, which supported the establishment of a Greater Sydney Council, the first stage being an area within a 5-mile (8 km) radius of the GPO. A second stage would stretch to Hornsby in the North, Georges River in the South and Blacktown in the West. The inclusion of Blacktown must have surprised the Commissioners, given that very few witnesses suggested Sydney extending westwards beyond Parramatta. In 1913, Blacktown Council’s total residential population was less than 4,000. This prompted the Commissioners to ask Jones how far he was looking ahead. He answered 50 to 100 years. Jones would feel vindicated given that Blacktown today is the most populous local government area in the state, heading towards a population of 400,000 people.

Jones suggested that Greater Sydney should control water, sewerage, traffic, trains, ferries, health, fire brigades, light, power and building regulations. He proposed that the town planning component of a Greater Sydney should be made up of five professional men, such as architects, engineers, surveyors, financial and legal experts.

**John Sulman – Architect**

Sulman reminded the Commissioners of the series of articles on town planning that he had written in the Daily Telegraph in 1907 as well as the evidence he had given to the 1909 Royal Commission for the Improvement of the City of Sydney and its Suburbs. He suggested including only areas that were, or would be, mainly commercial or industrial and leave residential areas for the time being. The areas he thought to be mainly of an industrial character included Paddington, Redfern, Waterloo, Alexandria, Erskineville, Newtown, Darlington, Glebe, Forest Lodge, Balmain and Rozelle. He also added North Sydney and parts of Lane Cove, believing these areas would eventually become industrial. Sulman also made the following suggestions:

- The Greater Sydney Council should have the power to make repairs to any main road such as Parramatta Road, which was almost impassable.
- The Greater Sydney Council should have the power to build dwellings for the poorer sections of the population. These could be built in the suburbs.
- That an overall plan be prepared for the whole of the Sydney Metropolitan Area. When asked how long this would take, he cited San Francisco, where it took 12 men 12 months to prepare their plan.
- That councillors are generally amateurs and that, in order to direct officers, they need to acquire skills themselves by undertaking courses.
- When asked his views on whether a bridge or a tunnel should be built first to link both sides of the Harbour, Sulman said it didn’t matter, as one day both would be needed.
- That the outer area of Metropolitan Sydney should be the County of Cumberland. This became the area for Sydney’s first plan, the 1948 County of Cumberland Plan.

**The Founding of the Town Planning Association of NSW**

It is unlikely to have been a coincidence that a week prior to the last hearing of evidence at the Royal Commission, a public meeting was held to launch a town planning association organised by George Taylor, publisher of Building, and a fine advocate of town planning.

The outcome was the founding of the Town Planning Association of NSW in 1913, the first in Australia and the forerunner of PIA. John Sulman was elected President, a role he retained until 1925.

As part of the Association’s mission to promote town planning, a series of public lectures were organised. Walter Burley Griffin gave the first of these lectures in 1913. In 1916, JJC Bradfield, Chief Engineer of Public Works, gave a lecture on ‘Where People Live and How They Travel’. In 1926, Bradfield was elected vice president of the Town Planning Association of NSW.1

**The 2013-14 Report of the NSW Independent Local Government Review Panel**

It took one hundred years before another attempt was made to promote the amalgamation of local councils, with a very similar brief to that given to the Royal Commission in 1913-14.

The 2013-14 Panel, chaired by Professor Graham Sansom, had a slightly easier task than its predecessor: in 1948, under the Local Government (Areas) Act, Sydney’s 70 local government areas were reduced to 41.

In line with the sensible suggestions made by a number of witnesses at the 1913-14 Royal Commission, particularly W Scott Griffiths, the 2013-14 report concluded that councils should form into meaningful wards or subregions, working together on strategic and major infrastructure issues, yet retain their independent identities. This is also in accord with the State Government’s promise not to pursue forced amalgamations. The Panel’s suggested subregions are shown in Figure 2. The Panel’s final report has yet to be endorsed by the State Government.

**Lessons Learnt**

Whilst there were a good number of arguments made for amalgamation, it seems that there will always be
community and council opposition to the idea. The most rational conclusion that has emerged from both the 1913-14 and 2013-14 inquiries into council amalgamation is that subregions should be formed by councils with a “community of interest”, each participating in the preparation of a subregional strategy and plan which conforms to an overall metropolitan plan.

Each constituent council’s strategic planner would participate in the preparation of the subregional plan whilst councils would not lose their identity and would continue to deal with local issues. Each subregional body would need to have statutory powers to implement their plans.

The biggest challenge is to identify meaningful and sustainable subregional boundaries that take into account criteria, which ideally include major input from the community.

In 1913-14 there were many suggestions as to which councils should constitute the first stage of a Greater Sydney Council. These suggestions included councils within a certain radius from the GPO, councils with a similar density to the City of Sydney, councils with a predominant industrial or commercial component, and councils that were to remain residential.

The 2013-14 Review Panel suggested adopting the boundaries proposed in the Metropolitan Plan for Sydney 2036 (released in 2010). However, the subregional boundaries proposed in this Strategy differ markedly to those proposed in the (current) Draft Metropolitan Strategy for Sydney to 2031 (released in 2013, following a change of government at the State level). As such, the Panel put forward a third alternative pattern of subregions and explained the logic behind its choice (see Figure 2). The biggest problem, however, is that the Panel only looked to 2031. 17 years is hardly long term; in 1913-14 the President of the Institute of Architects suggested 50-100 years should be the time frame for strategic planning.

The 2013-14 Panel recognised the role of Regional Centres for non-metropolitan regions. This could be translated into the Sydney region – which displays the best multi-centred capital in Australia – as a model for defining subregions.

**Subregions and Strategic Centres – 2051**

In conclusion, I have proposed a scenario of subregions for Sydney in 2051 based on their accessibility to strategic centres (see Figure 3). This concept was first presented in a paper – The Polycentric Metropolis: Sydney’s Centres Policy in 2051 – which I gave at the PIA 2013 National Congress in Canberra.

Each strategic centre would serve a catchment of around 500,000 people. So, with 7 million people there would be 14 strategic centres. As the subregions are broadly based on density, subregions with 500,000 people would be served by one strategic centre whilst those with 1,500,000 people would be served by three strategic centres. This would ensure equal access by most households to higher-order jobs, hospitals, tertiary education, shopping malls, and community, cultural and recreation facilities.

Sydney’s polycentric structure stems from the centres policy of the 1948 and 1968 metropolitan plans, reinforced by each subsequent strategic plan over the past 45 years. As a result, each of the nominated centres is already in place and well developed with community facilities. The fifteenth centre, the Badgerys Aerotropolis, is yet to be commenced.

Bob Meyer is the Director of Planning with Cox Richardson Architects and Planners. From 1969 to 1989 he worked for the NSW Department of Planning, and was Planning and Development Director of the Macarthur Development Board, which was responsible for a new city of 500,000 people. He was also responsible for the Department’s urban development program and Sydney’s 1988 Metropolitan Strategy, Sydney Into Its Third Century. In private practice, with Cox Richardson, he has overseen a range of major urban and regional studies and development proposals in Australia and overseas.

**Endnotes**

1 For a full outline of the Town Planning Association of NSW refer to Robert Freestone’s publication, Cities, Citizens and Environmental Reform (Sydney University Press, 2009).
In this article I make an important point about metropolitan planning, reflect on the excitement of being a planner and end with a motto.

Metropolitan planning provides an avenue through which we, as planners, can make a difference to how our cities grow and develop. However, to continue to achieve this goal in the future, I believe we need to place more emphasis on transport and travel. Planning has been preoccupied with land use, property and the wide range of interests represented in the built environment. Transport and travel, on the other hand, have not been shaped as effectively as they should have been in order to realise the visions articulated in current metropolitan strategies. Yet transport and travel are likely to become even more important in the future. The signs are there: a population whose travel demands will become more diverse and less governed by routine; the need to adapt to and mitigate against climate change; and the move towards more sustainable urban forms.

Some modes of transport offer greater flexibility and sensitivity in bringing about more compact and sustainable cities. I take a current example. ‘Global Sydney’ is a central theme of Sydney’s metropolitan planning, and important initiatives are in train to support and develop the city in line with this concept. Yet ‘Global Sydney’ lacks the frequent, fast and reliable connections provided by underground rail systems in other global cities such as London, Paris, New York and Tokyo. Given Sydney’s topography it may be impossible to replicate the transport infrastructure of these other cities exactly, but it should nevertheless be a central aim of planning to facilitate interconnections between the city’s various parts, as well as providing adequate public transport services to new developments such as Barangaroo. At the moment, more needs to be done to ensure the city’s future transport needs are met.

Planning is an exciting profession. We all enter it with ideals about making great urban and rural places, and improving people’s lives. We might differ on what that means but it is important to retain that drive and inspiration. And planning is a stimulating and challenging career, providing opportunities to develop and exercise multiple skills across a range of planning tasks, including development assessment, community consultation, local place-making, natural resource management, teaching, research, project management and strategic planning. There are also different locations in which these skills may be exercised: metropolitan regions, central cities, different kinds of suburbs, areas designed for specialist uses, country towns, and rural and remote regions. Planning also requires its practitioners to deal with different people, ranging from cabinet ministers to the homeless, and to understand people’s unique circumstances and perspectives. This provides a wide canvas on which to paint one’s career and much of one’s life. Opportunities to work in different locations and specialities all lie within the purview of the planner, contributing to a rich life and the chance to make a satisfying contribution to society. This is sometimes hard to appreciate at the end of a long day trying to help disinterested people who may be affected by planning proposals, earnest but myopic citizens, and overenthusiastic proponents!

So I finish by suggesting a short motto for us as planners. As we ‘look forward’, we should ask ourselves: ‘What?’ The question may seem deceptively simple, but it will focus our attention on a number of key challenges. First, it will ensure that we have absorbed, sorted and shaped a body of information and data about a particular planning issue, task or necessary decision. With that understanding we can then ask: ‘What is to be done about it?’ But it can’t be just a rhetorical question. We must begin to shape a response. That often means thinking outside the box of existing protocols. And whatever course of action is proposed, it must be supported by evidence and effective arguments. So communication and connection are vital. Phew! Perhaps a post-modernist version of the old Survey-Analysis-Plan?

Raymond Bunker has worked in local government in England, and taught at universities in Sydney and Adelaide. He was a member of the Whitlam Government’s Department of Urban and Regional Development and Chair of the South Australian Planning Commission (later the Development Assessment Commission). In retirement he continues to research and write on urban affairs with the City Futures Research Centre at the University of New South Wales.
Reflections on PIA

Gary Shiels LFPIA CPP, Managing Director, GSA Planning

As a Life Fellow and CPP member of PIA for over 30 years, I have been asked to reflect on past events and provide my thoughts as we move into a strengthening planning climate in NSW.

I have been fortunate enough to hold the position of President of the NSW Division, International Division and National Council. During this time I have observed the many changes to our professional institute, with NSW enjoying a strong position within our national framework. In deference to a past President and past Senior Commissioner, Dr John Roseth, I identify three critical changes that have helped to enhance the status of PIA as a professional institute in this article.

The first critical change occurred in the late-1980s and early-1990s. More recent members may not appreciate that there were two distinct planning bodies, the Royal Australian Planning Institute (RAPI) and the Local Government Planners Association (LGPA). The RAPI and LGPA functioned as two separate entities, with their own administration, separate criteria for membership, and separate planning journals. The merging of these two organisations in 1992 had functional and financial benefits for members, and resulted in a single professional institute representing all planners.

The second critical change was the introduction of planning awards for excellence at a divisional and national level. The introduction of these awards has helped to celebrate planning achievements that were previously unrecognised. They have raised the benchmark for planning and provided planners and politicians with an incentive to produce better planning outcomes.

The third change has been the recognition and growth of the young planners movement. PIA has recognised that the strength of our professional institute is its younger members and we are increasing the number of graduate planners who are making the transition to full time membership. As part of the service to young planners, PIA NSW has been cultivating a mentoring program for the past three years, and currently has 40 mentors and mentees involved in the 2014/2015 program. As an organiser of that program, it has been interesting to observe that mentors, as well as mentees, are benefiting from this merging of different age cohorts in the planning profession.

Looking towards the future, PIA has numerous building blocks on which to further develop its position as a prominent institute representing professional planners. To do this, I believe the hierarchical relationship between the National Council and Divisions needs to be relaxed, and more autonomy given to divisions like NSW to hire staff, organise functions, improve member services and continue to grow membership. In my opinion, the chapters established by the National Council need to be revisited, and the practicality of those chapters should be considered in light of the interests and membership within the various divisions. While the concept of Certified Practising Planners (CPPs) is an important initiative, perhaps the benchmark for certification has become a disincentive for many planners with extensive experience. Perhaps the benchmark could be less onerous with less emphasis on skills offered by universities and more emphasis on continued professional development (CPD), and ensuring that planners are kept abreast of the numerous changes in the planning genre.

Finally, we need to continue to support the young and young at heart planners by providing incentives for them to join and remain members of PIA, by organising and conducting events that offer intellectual, professional and social stimulation. Looking forward to 2015 and beyond, we can be optimistic about the future of PIA. To ensure that PIA remains relevant in the eyes of our members, we need to continually challenge our approach, management and service delivery. This will give members a compelling reason to contribute to our Institute into the future.

Gary Shiels has over 35 years’ experience in local government and consulting. He previously held the positions of Director of Planning and Community Development at Leichhardt Council and Deputy Chief Planner at Woollahra Council. Gary is a qualified town planner, urban designer and traffic engineer. He has also been the NSW, National and International [Division] President of PIA and is a CPP member of the Institute.
Interview: Gabrielle Kibble

Gabrielle Kibble AO LFPIA

You’ve enjoyed a long and successful career in planning. What has been your greatest challenge?

The greatest challenge in my planning career has been dealing with the enormous amount of population growth that we have seen and had to plan for in NSW. This coupled with the higher aspirations that people have about how they live has meant constant challenges for both those who plan and those who provide the necessary services.

What is the most important contribution planning has made to NSW over the last 25 years?

I think that planning has been a major participant in raising the standard of urban development and hopefully the level of environmental assessment without stifling the economic development we need. There has been a lot of discussion recently about the need for culture change in planning. This includes creating a ‘can do’ planning culture, increasing the understanding of the planning system in the wider community, and improving how planners are regarded in the industry and by the community. From your perspective, what needs to change and how can this change be brought about?

There is enormous scope for planners, particularly those working in development control, to try to achieve positive outcomes rather than being unduly negative. This is difficult to achieve when communities want to see no change at all. Good strategic planning is absolutely crucial but the difficulty that we face is when strategic plans are translated into development that the community is not sure it wants. A really difficult dilemma!

You have been quoted as saying, “This city has been changing from 1788 onwards. It has not stayed the same”. What do you believe are the biggest changes NSW will face over the next decade?

I think that it is frequently difficult for the community to accept change, but when you think of the ongoing population increase we have seen during my career change is inevitable. There are many things that are totally different today. Society is different. Perhaps the biggest changes are in roles of women in the workforce. These social changes have made a fundamental difference to the way we live and work. We also have greater expectations of the level of facilities that we require in our community.

You’ve recently finished as Chair of the Planning Assessment Commission. What is likely to be your next challenge?

I have no idea!

If you had the chance to have your career all over again, knowing what you know now, is there anything you would do differently?

I have had an interesting and challenging career. I have worked with excellent people and had a range of fantastic opportunities. I would want to be a planner all over again!

Gabrielle Kibble has extensive experience in the public sector, particularly in urban planning and infrastructure development. She holds a Bachelor of Arts and Diploma of Town and Country Planning from the University of Sydney. In 1994 Gabrielle became an Officer of the Order of Australia and in 1997 she received the Sidney Luker Memorial medal from the Royal Australian Planning Institute for her outstanding contribution to urban planning in NSW.

From 1987 to 1997 Gabrielle was the Chief Executive Officer of the Department of Urban Affairs and Planning, and also held the position of Director General of the NSW Department of Housing from 1992 to 1994. She was Director of the Sydney Olympic Park Authority from 2001 to 2008.

In recent years Gabrielle has been Chair of the NSW Planning Assessment Commission, Joint Regional Planning Panel for Western NSW and Heritage Council of NSW. She was also an Administrator of Liverpool City Council from 2004 to 2008 and Wollongong City Council from 2008 to 2009. Gabrielle has served as Trustee and Deputy Chancellor of the University of Western Sydney, and in 2008 was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Letters in recognition of her outstanding contribution to UWS, the Greater Western Sydney community and the planning profession.

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I do not mean that town planners will need to be skilled urban designers, just as they do not need to be skilled traffic engineers or economists. However, they will need to have a much more sophisticated understanding of what is good urban design and how to achieve it.

The phrase “Urban Design” itself is relatively recent, and is credited to Jose Luis Sert, Dean of Harvard Graduate School of Design in 1953. He envisaged complete environmental solutions to cities flowing out of the integration of city planning with architecture and landscape architecture. In reality, urban design has been practiced from the beginnings of human settlement, with the Greeks and Romans being notable exponents. Even Sydney in the early 1800s had Governor Macquarie and Francis Greenway initiating an urban design revitalisation of the fledgling town. Although, as Grace Karskens says in The Colony: A History of Early Sydney, these buildings were...a means by which the middle classes might firmly set themselves apart, culturally and spatially, from the lower orders. In Sydney...[design] served not only to make a town suitable for genteel folk, but the purposes of urban, social and political control and exclusion too.

Leaving aside the interesting question of whether urban design is an expression of social and political control (see also Pope Sixtus’ re-design of Baroque Rome), we can say that the dream of reaching mastery in urban design by tacking a year onto a professional degree has not given us the range of practitioners we need now or will need in the future.

As an architect, town planner and ex-Councillor of the City of Sydney, I have seen the impact that good urban design can have on people’s lives (and on property values). Bourke and Crown Streets in Surry Hills exemplify how town planners and urban designers were able to create one of Australia’s premier, bike-friendly, mixed-use streets from a paired one-way traffic sewer. Allowing a change back to a two-way system in the 1990s resulted from a classic land-use/traffic planning exercise, which included extensive community consultation around the creation of Sydney’s Eastern Distributer. This contributed to the thriving Bourke/Crown Street village centre.

The high quality urban design now in evidence came from nearly ten years of detailed design consideration and carefully managed construction by the City of Sydney. While traditional town planning created the opportunity, skilled urban designers were instrumental in delivering the City’s vision for the area.

Bourke and Crown Streets are just one of many similar opportunities identified in Sustainable Sydney 2030: the City’s strategy plan. The preparation of this strategy in 2006 represented classic town planning at its best, with planners able to identify the multiple links that make up the city. Through an extensive program of community consultation, they were then able to create a detailed plan to make the City more liveable, more accessible, more inclusive – “a more vibrant and captivating place to live and work”. To achieve these objectives, the strategy called for a new level of high quality urban design.

While the management and implementation of the City’s strategy is undoubtedly a town planner’s job, it is reasonable to ask whether planners...
have the appropriate skills to implement or even recognise high quality urban design. The answer to this question will remain unclear until the academic, professional and cultural training of planners is broadened significantly. The planners/urban designers who will be in demand in the future may well have begun by adding an urban design year onto an architecture or planning degree. If so, we know that those trained in the design disciplines are able to learn planning control aspects more easily than planners are able to learn design synthesis. Either way, the community remains short of people who can work in a multidisciplinary way, with a capacity to relate different things, issues, places, practices and modes of thought to each other. Searching among the various name tags we attach to these people – planner, architect, urban designer, landscape architect – I am reminded of one of our foremost urbanists, David Yencken, who could himself claim no professional design qualifications at all, only a passionate commitment to every aspect of urban places and the need to make them more liveable.

Perhaps planners now have another important but unrealised role – to nurture and promote designers who have just such a passion for, and commitment to, urban places. One way to achieve this would be to include services similar to the Urban Design Advisory Service, introduced by the NSW Department of Planning in the 1990s, into other large planning bureaucracies. Another option would be to give a name and a place to urban designers in local governments. In addition, we need to promote wider public debate on urban design issues, rather than succumb to government-sponsored shutdowns of alternative community views.

I can give no better summary of my thoughts than the words of Kim Dovey in a recent publication from the Urban Design Forum:

Urban design in a democracy is a community-based process. There are many pessimists that think that democratic process leads inevitably to resistance to change, a banal production of “gateways” or window dressing. I rather suggest that it is the multiplicity of voices in a genuine public debate that is the wellspring of imaginative urban design. The urban design task is to catch the public imagination for better urban futures. We have come a long way but we have hardly begun.

John McInerney is an architect and town planner with special interests in transport and heritage. He has been Councillor and Deputy Lord Mayor of the City of Sydney, National President of PIA, Manager of Planning for the City of Sydney and City of Melbourne, and the ACT Commissioner for Land and Planning. At the City of Sydney, John was involved in overhauling the City’s planning instruments, developing his “Sydney – a City of Villages” concept, and implementing an integrated transport strategy with emphasis on light rail and pedestrian/bike paths.
What Shall I Do With These Hands of Mine?

Wendy Sarkissian LFPIA

“The world could use a hero of the human kind, so tell me what shall I do with these hands of mine” – Dave Gunning

In December 2012, Woodford Folk Festival audiences were brought to tears by Canadian musician Dave Gunning’s stirring and melodic call to action: “What Shall I do with These Hands of Mine?” I sat in the audience with a planner friend. We wept. So much to do. So little time.

Today, as I write from Vancouver, I’m humming Gunning’s song. I’m teaching two new planning courses, which present me with poignant opportunities to review my career and speculate on the future of planning in NSW.

Believe me, I don’t deny the challenges. And the penalties. In recent blogs, I’ve chronicled the delicate balance between activism and being a planning consultant in Australia.2

Planning Reform in NSW

In NSW, the past two years offered many opportunities for planners wanting to do something positive with their hands. First, we had the proposed changes to the state planning legislation and the fierce opposition by many groups, state planning legislation and the fierce opposition by many groups, including the umbrella body, the Better Planning Network.3 Several planners worked behind the scenes to help the BPN with their successful campaign, despite our professional organisation taking a contrary view. However, many planners – in government and the private sector – were reluctant to speak out. It’s a widespread malaise. A Vancouver planner wrote recently, “If you’re going to be a planner in Vancouver, you’d better leave your activism at home”. As he’s a black man, I replied, “It’s like me asking you to be a white man. My activism is now in my DNA”.

Unconventional Gas Mining in NSW

The other circumstance challenging NSW planners to consider what to do with our hands is unconventional gas mining. There’s a lot of it going on. Just 40 kilometres from my home, at Bentley in the Northern Rivers, Metgasco planned to mine for gas. But thousands of activists effected at least a temporary end to that project, with Metgasco’s license suspended in mid-May. We were on our way to buy a tent for Karl to camp there when the text came.4

The Role of the Planner

Reflecting on these circumstances and preparing to teach planning ethics in Vancouver, I reread a student paper I wrote in 1973 (at age 30) on the role of the planner. I described myself as a ‘didactic-political’ planner and speculated to the future of my new profession:

...a didactic-political planner can operate effectively, even in a bureaucracy, if two important criteria are met. First, the government of the city of region must have at least one strong man [sic.] committed to social reform through planning. And second, and most important, there must exist in the planning community a feeling of camaraderie, if only among a few. A planner must have the ideological and practical support of his [sic.] colleagues. Sometimes, they may be his [sic.] only support for a long time...

I dreamed of leadership and collegiality in my profession. I have not found much of either in the intervening 41 years.

This year, during the Bentley Blockade, I introduced in my blog American activist singer-songwriter, Holly Near:5 Holly sings: Something changes in me when I witness someone’s courage...

Something changes in me that will last for a life time
To fill me when I’m empty, and rock me when I’m low

Both Dave Gunning and Holly Near remind me that to be responsible citizens, we have to do something with our hands. And my two examples show us – as planners – where the work of our hands can occur: to achieve fair, equitable and sustainable planning legislation and processes; and to protect our precious environments from dangerous, invasive mining activities.

Something changes in me when I witness my colleagues overcoming their fear and reticence and asking the questions we need to ask about the future of our profession in NSW.

I’d ask:

(1) What changes in you when you witness acts of courage by your planning colleagues? AND

(2) As a planner, what will you do with these hands of yours?

For decades, a persistent nightmare woke me: overnight, while I was sleeping, I’d become conservative. I don’t fear that any longer. Finally, I have figured out what to do with these hands of mine. As Dave Gunning sings, “the world could use a hero of the human kind”, I’d ask: what kind of planning hero are you prepared to be as a planner in NSW? Wendy Sarkissian has worked in planning since 1966. She has been described an activist masquerading as a consultant, a consultant masquerading as an academic and vice versa. A community planner, facilitator and author, she is committed to finding spirited ways to nurture and support an engaged citizenry. She was educated in Arts, planning and philosophy. Her career as a consultant and academic in Australia and overseas has provided first-hand knowledge of many contexts. She’s written several books about housing, planning and community engagement, and is proud to be a Life Fellow of the Planning Institute of Australia.

Endnotes

1 See www.davegunning.com
4 See www.sarkissian.com.au/the-bentley-blockade-weeping-for-earth
Interview: Henry Wardlaw

Henry Wardlaw LFPIA

As you look back on your career in planning, what are you most proud of?

I think that would have to be my time working in Singapore as Director of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) Urban Renewal and Development Project from 1967 to 1971.

How did you end up in Singapore and what work were you involved in with the UN?

I had a couple of old university colleagues who were actively involved in the engineering consulting firm Crooks Michel Peacock Stewart Pty Ltd. The firm had a branch office in Singapore, which only dealt with things like water supply, air conditioning and building services; it had no previous involvement in planning. But when the UN started looking for consultants to undertake the Urban Renewal and Development Project, the firm decided that their contacts in Singapore might enable them to get an invitation to quote.

I was working at the State Planning Authority at the time and the firm asked me to join them in making the submission to the UN. The submission was successful in the face of international competition and that was very satisfying. One of the things very much in favour of the submission was that the firm had no experience in planning, nor did they have people on staff that they would have to fit into the UN’s specifications. From the beginning, the firm could recruit people to meet the specifications. We ended up with a team that came from Australia, the UK, the US and Poland. And they fitted all the slots that were required.

One of the particular requirements was to provide on the job training for Singaporean staff. Singapore was conscious of the need to develop an effective physical land use and transport plan if it was to develop its economy and gain full independence. Singapore had been independent from the UK for a while and separated from Malaysia at the time that this project arose. Previously, during the colonial period, all senior positions in planning had been held by English expatriates who went back home when independence came along. This left the Singaporean government with no experienced staff and, hence, the requirement for on the job training. But once the Singaporean staff had been assembled we worked very much as a team, with consultants and local staff working alongside one another, and that fitted very well.

How did your overseas experience in Singapore shape the remainder of your career?

It was a useful thing to have on my CV and, first of all, it worked effectively in me becoming a First Assistant Secretary at the Department of Urban and Regional Development [1972-1975], with Tom Uren as Minister at the time.

You recently returned Singapore for the first time since you worked on the UN project. What was that experience like?

Well, I was pleased to find lying on the table of a discussion group that I was invited to attend our original report from 40 years ago, as well as the Concept Plan on the walls. I suppose the immediate impression the place had on me was the enormous progress that had been made since the 1971 Concept Plan was first adopted, and I felt shock and admiration for what had been done. One of the favourable things working for us, in doing the original report, was that the Government had a clear concept of the importance of physical and transport planning, so that when we needed to, we could get quick decisions from the Government. The first of these decisions was moving the international airport from Paya Lebar, which is central to the Island, to Changi.

Thinking back to your time in Singapore and subsequent jobs in strategic planning, what advice would you give to a young person working in this area of planning?

Make sure you are working in a good team. Our team in Singapore, for instance – and this was largely required by the UN – included a statistician, traffic engineers and people with civic design experience.

In 1982 your Sidney Luker Memorial Lecture was titled ‘A Future for Planners?’ Now more than 30 years later, how would you answer this question? Do planners still have a future and, if so, is it a bright one?

Well yes, there is a future for planners, but they have to be prepared to grasp the opportunities that are available to them and spread their interests more widely than simple physical planning and zoning. During my career, for example, I was involved in the Indigenous Community Working Group of the Rural Advancement Foundation International (RAFI). And I also took on a number of voluntary jobs with Indigenous communities. In almost every case these jobs involved tasks like business planning and resolving bureaucratic issues, instead of, or at least in addition to, physical planning.

Henry Wardlaw is one of australias most experienced town planners. In the 1950s and 1960s he held senior positions with the Cumberland County Council and NSW State Planning Authority before moving to Singapore to direct the United Nation’s Urban Renewal and Development Project. Upon his return to Australia, Henry served as Managing Director of CMPS Planning, where he worked on projects with the Department of Urban and Regional Development, Darwin Reconstruction Commission and Albury-Wodonga Development Corporation. From 1976 to 1983 he was Chairman and Chief Executive of the Land Commission of NSW.

Henry is a past President of the Royal Town Planning Institute and was a Founding Councillor of the Australian Institute of Urban Studies. Throughout his career, he maintained an active interest in Indigenous affairs and international planning. He has worked with Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory and served as a planning advisor to the City of Lanzhou in China, National Institute for Urban and Rural Planning in Vietnam, Brandenburg State Development Authority for Planning, Housing and Transport in Germany, and Loe City Authority in Papua New Guinea.
It seems to me that during this period the planning profession has been moving forward, embracing change, recognising global challenges and working with communities whilst governments have gone backwards – politicising the process, placing development not sustainability at the heart of planning, and creating a bureaucratic nightmare for individuals, communities, and those 95% of developers seeking certainty and simplicity from the system.

An early practice note was on the centrality of sustainable development to planning. It observed that the Urban Land Institute in the United States, that bastion of laissez faire private enterprise, was pushing for sustainable development and intervention in the market place. They recognised that “the cumulative effect of market decisions does not act in a sustainably responsible way and this is bad for business and bad for real estate and potentially crippling America’s competitiveness”. Now 25 years later our government still does not seem to have woken up.

At the more technical level I have struggled tirelessly over the years to get for planning assessment sufficient research and factual information for decisions to be on what is now called “evidence based”. So in a string of articles like “sunlight, daylight, or is it all moonshine”, “residential setbacks”, “homework”, “notification”, “ Riparian corridors” and “rural subdivision” I bemoaned the absence of any real basis for making decisions other than “my professional judgement” – sometimes right and often wrong. So many of the “guidelines” are issued without any pretence of evidence – different daylight standards or setbacks or open space provision for different densities regardless of consumer preferences or capacity to pay.

Whilst I remain a champion for local government I worry about the current risk averse attitude and focus on statutory processes of most authorities. Attempted micro management through mind-bogglingly detailed Development Control Plans still often fails to apply common sense and professional judgement. Worse, entrepreneurial initiatives to actually make development occur, rather than waiting for something good to pop up, are rare and slipping out the hands of planners. Likewise the starry-eyed motivation of many of us joining the profession to contribute to creating a better and more equitable society is much less in evidence.

I guess my major disappointment over the years has been the failure at the national level to convert the Institute’s Council from an unrepresentative, federal organisation into a modern democratic entity, broadening its policy base and streamlining executive operations. We could have a national assembly meeting once a year at congress, representing all disciplines and divisional entities on a fair basis to set policy and elect an executive to implement those policies over the next year.

Nevertheless, it is fair to say that the Institute has become far more influential in both State and Federal affairs despite the current trend at both levels for economic expediency at the expense of longer-term growth and the rational use of resources. Having dedicated and professional staff to support us at both divisional and federal level has certainly helped.

PULLING IT ALL TOGETHER

Lately I have been involved with preparing a community plan for my local neighbourhoods as the Council gradually comes to terms with the need to let go and harness the potential resources available in the community to do what is necessary but a long way down their priority list. It has been very rewarding to get so many people involved identifying issues and articulating visions. These have been converted into a series of actions for the community and others, potentially saving tens of thousands of dollars in staff and consultant fees. Pulling it all together has been a massive task but nothing compared to that of persuading professionals, particularly engineers, that they do not always know what is best or the highest priority for the communities they are serving.

Changes for the Better – but Much More Needed

David Winterbottom LFPIA

Shortly after New Planner’s birth in 1990 I started to write a series of planning practice notes – eventually 75 in all some 20 plus years later. So I thought it would be interesting to reflect on these notes as well as changes to planning in New South Wales and to the Institute over the years.

The Planner: feet on the ground; head in the air; documents to hand (statue in Marseilles)
From the archives

Past presidents... from issue 1-100

A/Prof John Toon  David Kettle  David Winterbottom  Charles Hill
Gary Fielding  David Broyd  Monique Roser  Anthony Newland
Julie Bindon  Tony McNamara  Sarah Hill  David Ryan

Famous faces...

Gabrielle Kibble (No. 32)  Sir Peter Hall and A/Prof John Toon (No. 44)
Jennifer Westacot (No. 57)  Gough Witlam (No. 10)  Sue Holliday (No. 42)  Bob Meyer (No. 67)
From the archives

The times... they are a changing.
From the archives

Awards nights... a time to celebrate

Meetings... meetings, meetings.

Charles Hill and David Winterbottom (No. 10)  Paul Bennie, A/Prof John Toon, Charles Hill, Michael Harrison and David Kettle (No. 8)

Tony McNamara, Max Fragar, John Brockhoff, Nancye Godfrey, Carla Rogers and Mary-Lynne Taylor (No. 27)  Greg Woodhams, Julie Bindon and Tony McNamara (No. 74)
My first real planning job, when I was still an architecture student in the UK around 1950, was a small-scale housing development. It involved placing standard semi-detached Council house designs on a small field adjacent to a village church. Inspired by Thomas Sharp’s The Anatomy of the Village, I aimed to create a village green between the estate and the adjacent medieval village church. I re-visit it from time to time, trying to understand why it never worked.

My second job was a subdivision for a builder. It was a very flat and fairly low-lying site of about two acres. The real challenge was to design the sewerage and drainage system. I spent hours working out the gradients of the stormwater system and in the end it was this that determined the layout. Years later I was to marvel at the sublime treatment of drainage devised by Michelangelo for the stepped ramp leading to the Campidoglio in Rome. Drainage and the handling of water and sewerage are so critical to good planning. I learned the basics in those early years.

In quick succession after graduating I was admitted to the Harvard Master of Urban Design program but was unable to accept the offer; I was called up to do National Service for two years and, whilst serving, studied town planning by correspondence course and took the RTPI exams. I then got married, had children and took a job with the London County Council (LCC) working in the City of London section on projects such as the Barbican and St Pauls Precinct. Working at the LCC was rather like being at an International finishing school with budding young planners from all over the world. There were endless intellectual discussions about the design of urban spaces, particularly about St Pauls. The manipulation of space, especially public space, is the critical skill of place making; so too is the understanding of behaviour in space. I honed my urban design skills with the LCC. Following my time at the LCC, I taught town planning at Nottingham and then landed a job at Sydney University. With that, the Australian leg of my ‘planning journey’ had begun.

Arriving at Sydney University in 1960 I was fortunate to join a very collegiate gathering of lecturers including Ray Bunker, Ivan Boileau and Tom Whipple; and later Martin Payne, Greg Mills and John Lea. We spent endless hours discussing the philosophy of town planning, what was the justification in intervening in property markets and what was distinctive about Australian urban development. Having grown up in an established network of cities, towns and villages set in an intimate landscape setting dotted with everyday evidence dating back to pre-Roman times, understanding Australian urbanism with its concentrated urban centres and widely dispersed pattern of country towns was a challenge. It was not uncommon to hear people say all the cities were the same, and all the country towns were the same too! But it was not so. I delighted in ‘discovering’ how Sydney grew, and how urban development spread out across the continent and surrounding parts of Asia and the Pacific. I felt the struggle of the early settlers and the convicts. I heard the rattle of chained convicts being marched along George Street to work on the brickfields. I wondered at the lonely vigil of the first sentries posted at what is now the site of Macquarie Lighthouse, waiting in vain for months and months and months.

Looking Forward, Looking Back
John Toon LFPIA

This article details my journey in planning, both in terms of my career and the travel experiences that have accompanied it.
for the sight of another vessel. I consider an in-depth understanding of the history of settlements to be an essential part of every town planner’s tool-kit.

By 1970, planning was a key buzzword. It was decisive in bringing Whitlam to power and it was taking over local government through a range of community interest groups dismayed at some outrageous property developments. High density was out; low density was in.

Whilst pre-occupied with Sydney issues, I was offered a tantalising consultancy job. The question posed to me was ‘how much does a town cost?’. The town in question was a mining town in the tropical north of Australia that was only defined in terms of its workforce (it was to be both a mine and a processing plant). It was put to me that any self-respecting planner should be able to ‘cost’ a town. I could not refuse the challenge.

The first step involved working up a brief for the town. Then costings were adjusted using multipliers to take account of remoteness and difficulty of access. Having done all of that I was then asked to advise on the location of the settlement and later to prepare the plan. Getting the plan right was a ferociously creative exercise; maximising the coastal breezes was a high priority for delivering a comfortable residential environment; choosing a distinctive place for the town centre so that the town was ‘rooted’ in its topographical setting was important to me; devising a housing arrangement that would be likely to create a sense of community was also important on a personal level. The town, originally Gove and now Nhulunbuy, was built more or less as planned. The cost; I had originally estimated $30m and the accepted tender was $33m. The forecast population for the 1976 census was 3600 and it came in at 3601. I consider the exercise a triumph of planning.

Leading up to this time, in the 1960s and early-1970s, the umbilical cord tying Australia to Britain was still very strong. The White Australia policy was firmly in place. Having grown up through WW2, I was very familiar with the political geography of Europe. As I became progressively more aware of the proximity and significance of Asia I was astonished by the paucity of knowledge in Australia about this region. There were so few connections. Our immediate neighbour, Indonesia, particularly fascinated me. I had got to know two Indonesians through the 1966 API (Australian Planning Institute) Congress held in Sydney. I acted as Secretary for the Congress and we aimed to make it a pan-Asian event. It was a great success with delegates from India, Malaya, Indonesia, the Philippines, Hong Kong, Thailand and Korea.

In 1971 I was awarded a Leverhulme Fellowship which enabled me to join the teaching staff of the planning program at Bandung Institute of Technology in Indonesia for six months. There I came face to face with extreme poverty such as I had never previously experienced; there was also incredible wealth amongst the elite. The planning staff called me Kang-guru (meaning brother teacher). In a bid to raise professional standards, projects were ‘farmed out’ to the university staff to help develop problem-solving skills. Being an ‘overseas expert’, I was called in to advise on many projects. Two projects that I was closely involved with were ‘Transmet Jakarta’ – a transportation plan for a city of an unknown number of inhabitants (estimates ranged from 4 to 6 million) – and a flood management and water supply system for Pontianak in Kalimantan. In between, I visited all the major islands, stood astride the equator north of Pontianak and climbed Tangkuban-Perahu – an active volcano that hovers over Bandung. I tried to promote a continuing relationship with planners in Indonesia but there was little interest back in Australia.

A university, like all large organisations, can be a very frustrating environment to work in. Despite many frustrations I remained committed to my teaching at Sydney University and to the Planning Research Centre, which continued to thrive despite being grossly under-resourced. We did some useful research on employment with Gary Glazebrook, on Section 94 contributions with Diana Loges, on infrastructure funding with John Hall and on the planning of Sydney with Jonathan Falk. The University’s specialist short courses were also very popular with practicing planners.

Around the mid-1980s, I decided to stand again for the NSW Divisional Council of the Royal Australian Planning Institute (RAPPI)
– now PIA – and was elected President in 1988. During this year, the Division introduced the first annual awards for planning in NSW. Although we operated on a shoestring and a very limited part-time secretariat, we somehow managed to hold the first Awards ceremony in Government House with the Governor presenting the Awards. It was a memorable event.

One of the main objectives during my Presidency was to merge RAPI and the Local Government Planners Association (LGPA). Having two separate organisations was not helping to promote planning and a merger was politically possible at the time. David Winterbottom, the then LGPA President, and I worked on the joint memorandum designed to achieve the merger, which eventually took place in 1992. Not all members were in agreement. RAPI considered itself more ‘professional’ whilst the LGPA was seen by some to be overly concerned with working conditions for planners, particularly in Local Government. In retrospect I think the merger was essential in professional development terms but the combined Institute did undoubtedly lose vision and influence. I am still inclined to think that local government issues dominate the Institute, or at least the NSW Division. However, in saying this, I do think the NSW Division has significantly improved its performance in recent years. I only wish I could say the same of the Federal body.

As I drifted into retirement I was offered some consultancies. These afforded me the opportunity to see planning at close quarters. One particular urban design consultancy for Canada Bay Council involved shaping and improving the public domain in Rhodes. The opportunities were limited and constrained. We worked very closely with developers trying to achieve good outcomes. In my opinion we were only partially successful. There were several reasons for this: (1) the developers were surprisingly slow to realise the potential of the site; (2) the developers were generally ignorant of the significance of the interface between buildings, architecture and the public domain; and (3) the complex overlapping of roles and responsibilities within Council.

In 2011 I was instrumental in obtaining a substantial bequest to establish the Henry Halloran Trust for research into urban planning and development issues at the University of Sydney. I saw this as an opportunity to advance research in a field that is notoriously under researched. I also saw it as an opportunity to escape the silo mentality that pervades both academia and government. The Trust sits outside the Faculties and is directly responsible to the Vice Chancellor. I was delighted when Professor Peter Phibbs was appointed Director of the Trust.

Our challenge now is to raise the bar in re-thinking the philosophical and theoretical basis of planning as well as producing applied research that is relevant to practice.

So where are we now? I think the Institute needs to rediscover the vision it had 50 years ago. Whilst the planning system prevents the worst from happening, it does not promote the best. I believe planning should be more proactive, focusing on the positives rather than the negatives. The PIA Awards have the potential to focus the categories to reflect what we ought to be doing, not what we do. With a stronger focus on outcomes, we can play a role in demonstrating how policies and plans work to achieve these outcomes and, in turn, make a valuable contribution to the world around us.

John Toon was Associate Professor of Urban and Regional Planning at the University of Sydney from 1960 to 2005. Since retiring he has maintained a boutique consultancy specialising in town design. He is also actively involved in the Henry Halloran Trust at the University of Sydney.
Imagine you were talking to someone who was about to finish his or her planning degree. What advice would you give them as they commence their career in planning?

Be enthusiastic about what you are doing, enjoy it and do it well. If you don’t enjoy it then think about doing something else. If you are working for local government or private consultancy do it well and you will get more work.

What are the qualities or characteristics that you believe make a good planner?

Having a lateral mind, a mind that isn’t fixed in one direction, is an important way to think about planning problems and to find solutions that actually work. A lot of people don’t really think laterally enough. They are too bound by convention and don’t consider how they can look at an issue in a new light and produce solutions that aren’t necessarily the ones that have been thought of in the past.

Planners can work in many environments. Are different skills needed in different areas of planning practice?

Probably not, although in government you may need to have some understanding of legislation, including how it operates and the way in which the wording of legislation is critical to producing results. Apart from that, all planners should have an attitude towards things that is fairly similar, regardless of which area of employment they are in.

What are the projects you most enjoyed working on over your career?

The projects that were most satisfying were the ones I worked on during the Sydney Olympics. I was responsible for the preparation of the development application for the Olympic Stadium and the Olympic Village, amongst other things in that area. These projects were very satisfying because everyone was positive; no one was negative. Too often in local government these days you get a negative attitude towards anything. Planners need to be more positive about getting results that are worthwhile for the community.

What is the biggest challenge planning will face over the next 5 years?

The biggest challenge planners in NSW will have is working out how we get rid of a fairly archaic legislation from 1979, and deliver a new legislation for planning that will function and work in a way that produces good results. We need to work on that very difficult problem and get politicians to understand what we are trying to achieve.

As an active member of PIA over many years, how has the Institute influenced your career as a planner?

The Institute provides opportunities for networking which is important for a consultant planner. PIA has produced articles that have always been informative and that is always important in keeping up with issues around the country. PIA has also produced a means for planners with various forms of work, to get together and be able to discuss their particular area of work. You get government planners who work in strategic planning and all sorts of operational planning that meet with people outside who might work in different areas and fields of planning. Some planners work in mines and quarries where very few people work, so it is interesting to find out what different people do.

Do you have any additional comments you would like to add?

My advice would be for planners to get a wide variety of work and to not stay in one area for too long.

A qualified surveyor, Neil Ingham graduated as an urban planner from Sydney University in 1968 and has over 40 years’ town planning experience. Prior to establishing Ingham Planning, he founded Planning Workshop, an international planning consultancy. Neil has been responsible for the preparation of numerous master plans and environmental impact studies ranging from large-scale inner city housing projects to waste disposal plants, community studies, shopping centre proposals, subdivisions, mining operations and resort developments/tourist studies in New South Wales, Queensland and Victoria. He is also recognised for his advice on development applications, codes and controls to both local government and the private sector. He has provided expert town planning evidence on over one thousand planning appeals throughout Australia.
There are many great planners who spend their entire working lives practicing their profession – and only their profession. They will happily be a planner, and only a planner, their whole working life.

Somewhere along the way I decided that wasn’t for me. By my 30s I felt I’d pretty much achieved as much as I wanted to in the planning world. I’d worked in government and the private sector, been an owner and director of a consultancy and a State PIA President. I had worked for some amazing clients, toiled alongside great colleagues [many now lifelong friends] and helped shape the cities I’d lived in. Yet I felt that there had to be more. In 1996 I was a finalist for WA Citizen of the Year for my contribution to planning but I was only 33. What was I going to do for the rest of my working life?

Whilst planning is the sort of profession where every day can deliver interesting and rewarding experiences, I came to realise it also equips one with a diversity of skills that can be applied outside traditional planning realms. Whilst I still [to this day] work in part as a Planning Consultant at Cardno, and enjoy that role, it is increasingly the work I do without a “Planner” title that I find the most rewarding and where feel I can make the most contribution.

My journey into non-planning roles was, however, only possible because I was a planner. It started in the mid 1990s when the Councillors of the Shire and the Town of Albany in WA resigned to enable the process of amalgamation to commence to form a new City. The WA Government appointed commissioners as interim custodians of the LGAs. I had done work for the Local Government Association of the day and was approached by the Minister for Local Government’s office to determine my interest in being a Shire Commissioner. It was a great opportunity to do something different whilst still working primarily at my firm BSD Consultants but also co-incidentally where I’d had my first town planning job [as a Planning Assistant at the Town].

Any reviewer of council agendas knows that planning items dominate and are always the most contentious part of council meetings drawing the most participation from the gallery. Having a planner as a commissioner brought expertise, not politics, to the planning issues of the day. Sometimes that made the job difficult. My sworn duty was to serve the citizens of the Shire but being lobbied by members of the community to stop a complying industrial use in an industrial area because residents had bought in the vicinity led to some interesting personal reflection. Elected councillors can make politically motivated or popular decisions but, in my view, appointed ones can’t when they contradict their professional beliefs.

I enjoyed my time on the Shire Council. It is very different making decisions rather than having to persuade others to make them. I had to contribute to all aspects of Council’s operations not just in planning matters. I became familiar with works budgets, rate setting and community policing. I developed sympathy for politicians who have to cut ribbons on rainy Sunday afternoons at nursing homes or get abused by members of the public in the street.

My time at Albany was followed by a stint at the City of Cockburn, a large metropolitan Perth LGA. In the late 1990s, the elected Council was sacked pending a Corruption and Crime Commission (CCC) enquiry into the corrupt activity of the Mayor and certain Councillors. Again, my planning background held me in good stead. The corruption centred on a major residential development in the City administered by a complex planning scheme. Originally appointed for a period of 6 months, the Commissioners served for some two years whilst the enquiry played out. As has been my observation of most corruption enquiries, thick reports are produced, people have their reputations or careers severely impacted but nobody ever seems to go to jail.

One thing that did disappoint me in that role was when the RAPI State President lodged a complaint against my appointment on the basis that there would be a conflict of interest with a planning consultant serving as a City Commissioner. I understand why there could be a perception of conflict, however, I agreed to the appointments of both Councils because my company was not particularly active in either LGA and also because I believed any conflict could be managed. There are very specific conflict provisions in the Act, never mind my own personal code of ethics – and not to mention that I would go to jail if I abused the position. I was therefore affronted by the suggestion I would ever act with impropriety – one of the reasons I was considered for the appointments was because I had been a RAPI State President, and I thought [and continue to think] it is an honour and testimony to our profession that practicing planners are considered...
suitable to perform such roles. I would always support any planner serving in a Government appointed role where they can add value and do so for the right reasons. In any event, the complaint was withdrawn.

My Council Commissioner days whet my appetite to continue to work beyond, but in conjunction with, my everyday planning job. In 2000, the WA Government disbanded its unique dual planning appeals system and established the State Administrative Tribunal (SAT). I always thought I’d make rather a good lawyer so, having not taken up that profession, I decided serving on SAT would be the next best thing. I applied for a position as a part-time Member of SAT and was subsequently appointed. For that I must thank the SAT President of the time, Justice Michael Barker (now a Federal Court Judge) who showed the faith to appoint me with his very clear belief that practicing industry planners could bring a different perspective to decision making and were as important as the retired local government planners who are more typically associated with such roles.

My time on SAT allowed me to be at various times facilitator, mediator or adjudicator. Not since university had I had to present a persuasive argument for and against a proposition and research the precedence. For the first time I realised my individual decisions directly impacted on the lives of others. That can be an onerous responsibility at times.

When I relocated back to Sydney from Perth after the acquisition of my company by Cardno, I subsequently applied for and was appointed as a part time (Acting) Commissioner of the NSW Land and Environment Court, a position I still hold today. There are quite a few distinctions between a tribunal and a court, not the least of which is the high profile that legal practitioners hold in the NSW planning appeals process. However, the basic premise of fair, equitable, affordable and timely decisions are common to both jurisdictions. So too are the responsibilities that fall on the individual Member/Commissioner to be the final (usually) determining authority no matter how many lawyers or experts are involved.

My last non-planner role was my appointment to the board of the Western Australian Land Authority (LandCorp) by the WA Government in July 2011. Under the WALA Act, directors are to include people with a range of expertise and planning is specifically listed. That is probably quite unique in the Acts of Australian GTEs but is again testimony to the importance of our profession.

There is not sufficient space in this article to discuss the great work LandCorp does but it is responsible for delivering industrial and residential estates around WA, and has over 150 active projects ranging from new industrial estates to town centre revitalisations. Some Royalties for Regions funding is channelled to projects through LandCorp but the agency also has a requirement to operate commercially. Sustainability and affordability are driving factors behind many projects. In short, it is a fantastic experience serving on the Board and given me exposure to the world of a Government delivery authority that definitely is not “Utopia” – but is still pretty interesting!

So, being a planner doesn’t need to mean only being a planner. There are many opportunities for planners to use the profession as a stepping-stone to other career opportunities.

But it still gives me a buzz to pick up a National Planning Award when a good project is realised. My involvement as part of a (then) RAPI contingent to help replan East Timor in its early post reconstruction years is still one of my most memorable career highlights. And when I woke up only a few weeks ago to the news that the European Space Agency’s Rosetta spacecraft had successfully intercepted a comet 15 years after we turned the sod of their antennae in a small WA town after a protracted approval process (which completely bewildered a major international entity), it was heartening to know that yes our profession does make a difference – whether we serve just as planners or as planners we serve in so many other ways.
In this article I reflect on a wonderful life in planning, involving over forty years’ experience in local government and private practice.

My “wonderful life” and journey in planning started at the age of 17. I began working in a planning consultancy in Ipswich and served as Treasurer of the Queensland Division of the then Royal Australian Planning Institute (RAPI). Our small consultancy firm of two planners completed seven area-wide local government planning schemes in three years, all started and gazetted. Following this, I travelled to Essex in Britain, to Europe and then back to Queensland before moving to the Blue Mountains when I was 27.

What a “wonderful life” I’ve had in the Blue Mountains. My first 20 years were spent working in local government, in positions such as Chief Town Planner, City Planner and Director of Strategic Planning. Since then, I’ve been consulting in Western Sydney. Retirement is a dirty word to me. Why would I stop doing what I love!

Planning – “A Wonderful Life”

In what other profession can you feel the sense of achievement planning provides? Planning, especially planning at a senior level in local government, gives us great satisfaction and presents enormous career opportunities. It also involves pressure and stress, and so reward is always the result of effort and commitment. At my exit from local government 18 years ago, a close senior colleague said to me, “there is no better way to serve your local community that at a senior level in local government”. That really was the case in my experience. Today, my liaising with senior local government people, now as a consultant, still reminds me of the benefits our communities derive from senior local government planners.

The Many Benefits of Planning

It is fair to say that achievement in planning education and the workplace stretches much wider than the planning profession alone. Good planning empowers and motivates people to do big things. For example, the World Heritage Listing of the Blue Mountains has enabled tourist development and, in turn, stimulated the local economy and improved social and environmental sustainability. Other planning achievements that have delivered wide-ranging social benefits have included Save the Carrington Hotel in Katoomba, multiple village centre improvements, and collaboration with federal and state government to achieve services, works and grants for local government areas.

Planning in the Private Business World

Working in the private business world arms you superbly to make a difference through your profession (in my case with my son Colin). It enables us, as planners, to be the principal advisors to clients and to exercise significant influence over projects. Since I made my consultancy a real business, my son and I have been able to help many great clients throughout NSW. Using our combined knowledge, it gives us great satisfaction to help people achieve their dreams and to demystify and de-stress their experience of our complex planning system.

The Future of Planning – And for Me

The strength and value of planning, particularly at a local government level, is coming back – it is starting to feel like the 1970s and 80s again. Admittedly, there are glitches in the local government system and in particular the NSW Planning System. We regularly debate with local government planners on behalf of our clients and on behalf of a good project, but local government is still by far the most effective level of planning.

My advice to planners is to have a vision, be confident and make it happen!

I am learning faster than ever and helping more people. I would like to acknowledge the important role that my parents, two universities, multiple involvements in councils, my wife Wendy and my family, have all played in helping me to learn and achieve all that I have in planning and development. I must also thank the Royal Australian Planning Institute/Planning Institute of Australia for 40 years of appointments with the Institute, including: NSW Vice President for four years, National Council member for seven years, National Treasurer for three years, various Committee positions, and the ultimate accolade of being awarded a Life Fellowship.

There will be no retirement for me. I hope to finish my days on a nice site with a good client and our team of experienced people. Or maybe on a trek or on my favourite ski run at Alta, Snow Basin or Deer Valley in Utah. But in the midst of those fun times, I will continue to enjoy the satisfaction of planning and hopefully keep encouraging other planners to do the same.

Max Fragar is a Certified Practicing Planner and one of Australia’s most experienced town planners. Commencing his career in 1967, highlights include overseas experiences in Great Britain and Europe. Max is now the principal consultant at Fragar Planning & Development and became a Life Fellow of PIA in 2011.
Streets Can Be Fun

An aspect of European cities that impresses is the thought and imagination that goes into some of their street design, especially with regard to street furniture. Our street lighting, cycle racks and so on tend to be utilitarian, while their European equivalents are often original and occasionally witty.

I particularly liked the sewer worker emerging from a manhole in Bratislava (pictured), which, I guess, would give the average health and safety officer apoplexy even if anyone had been brave enough to propose it in the first place. Again, Bratislava has given a neat touch to its cycle racks by flanking them with penny-farthing replicas which kids can sit on and pedal. If place-making is the new mantra, then this kind of quirky design is just what is needed to bring humour and individuality to our towns and cities.  

Paul Burall

English Planning

The English planning system passed quietly away on Thursday 12 June 2014 after a long illness. A short service was conducted at the Mansion House followed by burial under the Treasury. The system was predeceased by its sister the New Towns Act, which had died from lack of use. No flowers please, but donations to the charity which supports cats that live by burial under the Treasury. The system was conducted at the Mansion House followed after a long illness. A short service was quietly away on Thursday 12 June 2014.

This nation must have a new Planning Act fit for the 21st century, including a clear purpose for planning and new national and regional planning structures. It must have a new and integrated national policy and a new principled and emboldened profession. And in fighting for this, who cares if we rock the boat? It is not as if we have anything left to lose. And so farewell to the English planning system – in the glorious expectation of its rebirth in 2015!

Tom Pain, TCPA June 2014

The Tours Tramway in France

The Tramway, which opened in August 2013, is 14.8 kilometres long and has 29 stations. It is fairly typical of the new generation of ‘tramways à la française’ and serves a conurbation with a population of 320,000 inhabitants. In terms of transport objectives, line 1 is designed to link the most important trip generating sites within the urban area, including:

- the city centre;
- the main railway station;
- the secondary urban centre of Joué-les-Tours;
- three neighbourhoods that are subject to urban renewal;
- the northern plateau of the city; and
- areas currently being developed – notably the ‘Deux-Lions’ area near the Cher river, which includes 1,200 dwellings, 50 businesses with 2,000 jobs and 6,000 students. There are also further plans to build 40,000 square metres of offices, 50,000 square metres of dwellings and 21,000 square metres of retail space. The tram will cost around 400 million euros. Its construction was partly funded by the local Versement transport, a tax levied on businesses with more than nine employees located within the area served by the Tours urban transport network.

Japanese Neighbourhoods

Historically there has been top-down, centralised control of public policy in Japan. The preferences and aspirations of communities tended to be confined to informal initiatives with little commitment to public engagement from the local state until the 1990s. Below the level of municipal or city councils, there persist informal neighbourhood associations, despite there being no formal requirement or enabling legislation.

Legislative change appears to be giving local people a sense of empowerment and genuine influence over what happens in their area. Projects and outcomes are seen to support community ties and serve to strengthen relationships between range of actors. Some examples demonstrate means of influencing local and national government too. Local plans appear to involve the very things that the UK Government wants to promote under the guise of localism, such as devolving power, volunteering, engagement with local social issues, and community ownership.

One reason (among many) why local planning and projects (machizukuri) may be so successful in Japan is that local authorities have found themselves able to shift their focus onto supporting communities, working ‘with’ rather than ‘for’ them, as they seek innovative ways to deliver services. As such, there is recognition of the potential and benefit of both machizukuri and the neighbourhood associations, and also a more pragmatic space of opportunity that has emerged in the light of squeezed public finances (exacerbated by the declining population and tax base in Japan).

Gavin Parker and Lorayne Woodend, TCPA April 2014

Man at work sculpture, Bratislava
Looking Back: History of the NSW Young Planners Committee

By Christina Livers MPIA (Grad), Consultant at AEC Group and Chair of the NSW Young Planners Committee

The NSW Young Planners Committee was established in 1993 to meet the needs of those new to the planning profession. The Committee first met informally at the pub (of course!) to discuss organising social events for young planners. Since then the role of the Committee has been formalised and NSW young planners now elect a Chair to convene the Committee and sit on the NSW Divisional Committee. The Committee meets once a month in the Sydney CBD to organise and report on professional development and networking events, the mentoring program, industry representation, and other matters.

Over the past year Committee members have been involved in:

- **Professional development** – the YPs organised an event titled Meet the Leaders. The purpose of the event was for young planners to receive career advice from leaders in the industry. Speakers included Lucy Turnbull, Kevin Alker, Sarah Hill and Prof Alan Peters. The event was a great success and was attended by over 80 young planners.
- **PIA’s mentoring program** – this year the mentoring program received interest from a record number of young planners. The program aims to help young planners build sound working relationships with more experienced practitioners.
- **Networking** – Six Small Bars Events have provided the opportunity for young planners to meet socially and share common interests.
- **University engagement** – the YPs visited planning students at universities across NSW and invited them to join PIA and be involved in the Young Planners Group.
- **Representation** – regular contributions to New Planner have given young planners the opportunity to voice their ideas and opinions on topical planning issues, and keep people up-to-date with the Group’s activities.

In this issue we provide a brief history of the NSW Young Planners Committee. We also look to the future of cities, focusing on the implications of agglomeration for planners and the planning profession.
The Young Planners Committee is made up of a passionate, committed and enthusiastic group of young planners who will continue to strive to provide opportunities for those new to the profession. The Committee would like to take this opportunity to thank the NSW Division of PIA and the NSW Executive Team for their ongoing support. It is a privilege to be so actively involved in shaping the future of our profession.

Looking Forward: Agglomeration, Planning and Cities of the Future

By Laura Schmahmann MPhI (Grad), Consultant at SGS Economics & Planning and Masters of Philosophy research candidate at UNSW

Agglomeration has become one of the recent buzzwords in planning...

The body of literature on agglomeration economics has been gaining traction within the planning profession over the past few years, reflecting a trend in Australia’s largest cities of agglomeration of knowledge-intensive industries.1 The New Geography of Jobs and Triumph of the City (by Moretti and Glaeser respectively), both released in 2012, have been highly publicised and provide good insights into the changing geography of jobs and the rise of global cities, particularly in the United States. However, literature related to agglomeration can be traced back to Alfred Marshall in 1920.

‘Agglomeration is a term used in spatial economics to describe the benefits which flow to firms from locating in areas which have a higher density of economic activity’2. Locating in an area of dense economic activity allows firms to achieve economies of scale via a large customer base. Moretti identifies three forces, or benefits, of agglomeration:

Thick labour markets: the more workers and jobs, the more likely that people will find a job that matches their skills. It is easier to match demand and supply in a thick labour market.

The presence of specialised service providers: proximity to services such as advertising and legal support is beneficial for innovative firms, as it allows them to focus on innovation without being preoccupied with secondary functions. As a result, these firms become much more productive.

Knowledge spillovers: social interaction among knowledge workers generates learning opportunities through the flow and diffusion of knowledge, which enhances innovation and productivity.3

Knowledge and innovation industries bring ‘good jobs’ and high salaries to the communities where they cluster, and their impact on the local economy is much deeper than their direct effect. Attracting high paid jobs to cities triggers a multiplier effect, increasing employment and salaries for those who provide local services like retail jobs.4

... but what does all this mean for planning?

Understanding the way cities work, particularly in relation to employment, is an important part of planning. Without a strong employment base, cities will not survive. Detroit, for example, has experienced significant population losses since the decline of manufacturing which was previously the economic base for the city’s growth. Planners not only need to protect land for employment to ensure there is enough capacity for growth in the right locations, but they also need to understand how cities and centres can attract high value jobs and economic growth.

Developing an understanding of how knowledge-intensive clusters and firms work in Sydney will be invaluable to the planning profession to facilitate the planning of employment centres to attract knowledge industries. This is particularly the case for centres such as Parramatta, which are seeking to attract the knowledge-intensive industries like those currently concentrated in the Sydney CBD (and centres within the Global Economic Corridor).

The Young Planners are excited to learn more about the economic geography of cities, including Sydney, to better inform their work in NSW and beyond.

Laura is a Masters of Philosophy research candidate in the Faculty of the Built Environment at the University of New South Wales. Over the next 18 months she will be researching knowledge clusters and urban productivity in Sydney. Laura hopes to develop a more detailed understanding about how knowledge clusters work in Sydney.

Endnotes

1 Kelly, J-F, Mares, P, Harrison, C, O’Toole, M, Oberklaid, M, Hunter, J 2013, Productive cities, Grattan Institute, Melbourne.
2 SGS Economics & Planning 2012, Productivity and agglomeration benefits in Australian capital cities, COAG Reform Council, Canberra.
Infrastructure Matters
Good Practice in Development Contributions Planning
Greg New MPIA CPP, Director, GLN Planning

Good practice in development contributions planning comes down to one word - clarity. A contributions plan may have many purposes, but its real value is to do four things.

1. Describe the developments that will attract a levy under the plan
Development descriptions should reflect the land use definitions found in the relevant SEPP/LEP. For example, descriptions such as ‘residential’ or ‘retail’ should be accurately described as one or more types of ‘residential accommodation’ and ‘retail premises’. A land use/contribution rates matrix may be useful for this purpose.

The plan should also be clear about what development IS NOT to be levied. In addition to development exempted by Ministerial direction, the plan may call up other exemptions like public authority infrastructure and development undertaken by a not-for-profit organisation. However, at this stage, care needs to be applied. Many forms of housing by not-for-profits, for example, can have substantial infrastructure impacts.

2. Describe how a contribution amount is calculated for the various types of development to be levied
Following the contribution rates schedule, there should be a section in the plan that shows how a contribution amount is calculated for any particular development. Worked examples of contribution calculations are useful for aiding understanding of a contributions plan.

Often the calculation of a reasonable contribution will involve making an allowance for infrastructure ‘demand credits’ generated by any existing or approved development on the development site. For example, when an existing lot is subdivided into two lots, the contribution is worked out only on the net additional lot created. The plan should be clear about if and when allowances for demand credits will apply, and how they will apply. For example, if a site has been vacated for many years does it attract a demand credit? Demand credits are a regular reason for section 94 DA reviews and court appeals.

An emerging issue is the increasing role of private certifiers in approving development that attracts development contributions. Contributions plans must provide clear direction to certifiers as to what development is levied, how much must be levied, and when payment must be collected and forwarded to the council. With multiple consent authorities these days, there is no room for uncertainty in calculating contribution amounts.

3. Demonstrate that the plan’s contribution rates are reasonable
The core of a contributions plan is its justification of the contribution rates in the plan. This is for transparency but is also because a section 94 consent condition can be challenged in the Land and Environment Court on the grounds that it is unreasonable.

The usual nexus and apportionment matters will be addressed. For example: What is the infrastructure? How much does it cost? Which of the anticipated developments demand that infrastructure? What is a fair unit of demand (e.g. per lot, per person, per hectare)? What regional or existing demands need to be allowed for in the contribution rate?

The reader should be able to easily verify a contribution rate formula by inserting the formula values that are found elsewhere in the plan. The values shouldn’t be hard to find, or worse, be missing. If one cannot verify a contribution rate then the adequacy of the whole plan can be questioned.

Being relevant and clear should be the focus. Overloading the plan with too much nexus information will not protect a council from an appeal. It is practically impossible for a contributions plan to prescribe a fair rate for every possible permissible development. The plan should anticipate the likely development types, and also contain provisions that enable the consent authority to adjust the contribution rates to suit the infrastructure demands of unanticipated developments.

4. Describe how the council will manage and administer the contributions
Details of the council’s administration and management of contributions is essential for probity and transparency reasons. These provisions should focus on how and when a developer’s contributions obligations will be settled and how the money collected will be used. Councils could, for example, specify:

- How developers may enter into agreements to provide facilities on council’s behalf (i.e. works in kind agreements).
- How developers may defer contribution payments or make periodic payments.
- How the contribution rates and amounts included on consents will be indexed.
- Whether the council will pool contributions funds.

Conclusion
Contributions plans, like other plans, have suffered from information overload over the years. Many practitioners have become exasperated by the complexity of contributions planning. It is possible that trust in the contributions system has been eroded simply because of its complexity. However, it need not be that way.

There needs to be a fresh emphasis on including only the most relevant information in contributions plans. The ‘must haves’ listed above are a good start for anyone wanting to prepare a good contributions plan.
Biodiversity conservation mechanisms have historically been concerned solely with conservation and reduced, or even precluded, development and other business opportunities. Mechanisms have progressed, however, to provide for sophisticated offset and trading regimes.

Modern biodiversity conservation mechanisms aim to create a market for the trade between developers and businesses with environmental impact, on the one hand, and landowners keen to access the financial incentives now associated with conservation, on the other.

This article summarises the evolution of legal mechanisms for biodiversity conservation in NSW and reviews two current mechanisms as examples, being:

- the Biodiversity Banking and Offsets Scheme (BioBanking) established under the Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995; and
- the Commonwealth Carbon Farming Initiative (CFI) established under the Carbon Credits (Carbon Farming Initiative) Act 2011 (and potentially the future Emissions Reduction Fund (ERF)).

Biodiversity Conservation Under Review in NSW

This review is particularly topical given the review announced in June 2014 by the NSW Minister for Environment, into the legislation in New South Wales which regulates biodiversity, being the:

- Native Vegetation Act 2003;
- Threatened Species Conservation Act 1995;
- Nature Conservation Trust Act 2001; and

The stated scope of the review (which specifically includes BioBanking) is to establish simpler, streamlined and more effective legislation that will facilitate the conservation of biological diversity, support sustainable development and reduce red-tape.

If achieved, all of these aims will continue the progression of biodiversity conservation mechanisms as market based mechanisms which will facilitate increased and effective biodiversity conservation.

Looking Back

Historical measures for biodiversity conservation focused on either blanket prohibitions though restrictive zoning (through environmental planning instruments) or restrictions of certain activities or uses (through specific legislation). This often resulted in “setting aside” the relevant land. While this “locked up” land may have been used to offset development, this was not always the case and was not required by these regimes. These were largely “set and forget” regimes with little ongoing management obligations outside of maintaining the associated biodiversity values. Such regimes included conservation covenanting programmes (such as those overseen by the NSW Nature Conservation Trust or the Commonwealth’s Forest Conservation Fund) and the regulation of land clearing under the Native Vegetation Act (or its predecessor Act and State Environmental Planning Policy). These regimes were, and continue to be, enforced through conservation agreements registered as covenants on the relevant title and/or restriction on development and the imposition of conditions on development consents.

Looking Forward

In response to criticisms that “locking up land” is of itself inadequate to provide effective and ongoing conservation of biodiversity values, more recent mechanisms require active management of the conservation areas. Such activities can include controlling noxious weeds, maintaining fencing to exclude feral species and hazard reduction burning.

In return for increased management obligations, recent mechanisms provide financial incentives, tax concessions and revenue streams to secure the performance of the activities.

BioBanking Scheme

BioBanking is a prime example of the trend towards active management conservation through a market based mechanism. BioBanking allows biodiversity credits to be generated by landowners who commit to enhance and protect biodiversity values on land through a BioBanking Agreement. The terms of the BioBanking Agreement between the landholder and the Minister include the management actions required to be undertaken and the money required to be deposited into the BioBanking fund. That amount is the estimate of the cost of the management actions and is “repaid” to the landholder as the agreed management actions are undertaken.

Biodiversity credits can be sold to developers to offset negative biodiversity impacts expected to occur from their development (with land clearing generating the most obvious demand for credits). The difference between the amount of the fund and the sale price of the biodiversity credits is the profit for the landholder from the scheme.

Carbon Farming Initiative

Similarly to BioBanking, the CFI aims to incentivise sustainable farming and landscape restoration projects through the creation and trade of Australian carbon credit units (ACCUs). Landholders can generate ACCUs by storing carbon or reducing greenhouse gas emissions in accordance with approved methodologies. ACCUs credits can then be sold to entities wishing to offset their own carbon emissions.

The active management activities must result in permanent environmental benefits, such as capturing greenhouse gases (for example from piggeries and landfills) or permanently storing carbon in soil or plants. The recent repeal of the carbon price, however, means the future market for these credits is uncertain.
Planning Perspectives
Global Megatrends
Steve O’Connor FPIA CPP, KDC and ERM Australia

A global megatrend is defined as a ‘significant shift in environmental, economic and social conditions that play out over the coming decades’. It is a phrase we hear more often nowadays, so I thought it might be worth taking a closer look at what some of the emerging global megatrends might mean for planners as we ‘look forward’ in this issue of New Planner.

The CSIRO recently published a study on global megatrends from an Australian perspective called Our Future World: Global Megatrends that will change the way we live. The study identified six megatrends that are considered to be particularly relevant to Australia. This article canvasses several of these megatrends and considers their planning implications.

Decline in Biodiversity
The first of these global megatrends is the worldwide decline in biodiversity. This decline is evidenced by the rate of deforestation that has taken place on the planet. Between 1990 and 1999 an average of 160,000 square kilometres of native forest was cleared each year. Thankfully, however, the rate of deforestation between 2000 and 2009 declined to 130,000 square kilometres per annum. This was largely due to new forest plantations.

On another positive note, more areas with biodiversity value are being protected around the globe. During the decade between 2002 and 2012 some 210,000 square kilometres of protected areas were proclaimed worldwide, bringing the total global protected areas network to 21 million square kilometres.

So while the declining biodiversity still presents itself as a global megatrend of tremendous concern, progress is being made to address this issue. In Australia, planners continue to consider biodiversity when preparing strategic plans, implementing planning instruments and assessing development proposals.

Climate Change
Global warming and climate change is the second megatrend worth discussing. There was an average sea level rise of 1.8 millimetres per year around the world between 1961 and 2003. Between 1995 and 2006 global surface temperatures were so high that 11 of the hottest years since 1850 were recorded in this 12 year period.

Climate Change is a megatrend that presents challenges around the world and Australia is by no means immune to these challenges. It has been estimated that a one-metre rise in sea levels will impact between 150,000 and 250,000 residential properties along the nation’s coastline. This megatrend has received a lot of attention, and the mitigation and adaption strategies to tackle the problems presents by climate change are being continually refined in Australia.

Ageing Population
The world’s population as a whole is ageing, so this certainly qualifies as a global megatrend. In 1950 around 8% of the world’s population was aged over 65 years. By 2011 this percentage had jumped to 11.2% and by 2050 it is projected to rise to 22%. This means there could be 2 billion people on the planet over 60 years of age by 2050.

The Australian population is ageing at an ever-increasing rate. In 2012, 6.4% of the nation’s population was over 75 years of
age; by 2060 this is projected to more than double to 14.4%. As a consequence, health care costs are anticipated to rise from 4% of gross domestic product (GDP) in 2010 to 7.1% of GDP in 2050. By 2050 it is projected that there will only be 2.7 people of working age to support each person aged 65 years or older in Australia, compared to 5 people in 2010 and 7.5 people in 1970. The challenges and opportunities associated with an ageing population are well known in Australia.

The Commonwealth Treasury highlighted this in their Intergenerational Report, *Australia to 2050: Future Challenges*, published in 2010. The Report concluded that, together with climate change, our ageing population present significant long-term risks for the economy and the sustainability of government finances.

**Increased Technological Connectivity**

The digital age is having dramatic impacts around the world. The world’s three largest countries in terms of populations are China, India (who both have over one billion residents) and the USA (with over 300 million). However, Facebook has over 800 million users, Skye has over 500 million users and Twitter has almost 400 million users. Social media is a phenomenon that is clearly shaping our world.

The Australian government has a stated goal of increasing teleworking and is aiming to have 12% of all employees working under teleworking arrangements by 2020. The Macquarie Group opened a new office in Sydney in 2009 (see photograph) where employees did not have a fixed workstation. This has reduced floor space requirements by 20%, electricity usage by 50% and paper use by 35.

These trends have significant implications for the way we plan our cities with corresponding benefits likely to flow to our transport systems resulting in less congestion, decreased fuel consumption and increased air quality.

**Implications for Planners**

The four megatrends discussed in this article all have interconnections (for example, climate change is having a negative impact on biodiversity and, in some locations, the health of older people). Planners have to make decisions about the future and the more informed these decisions are, the more likely they will prove to be correct. Knowing about and understanding global megatrends, including what their likely implications are for how we live our lives in future, is therefore an essential prerequisite for sound decision making about how future places should be planned.

**Endnotes**

2. Ibid
7. Ibid
Nearly 25 years later, we’re celebrating the 100th issue of New Planner and living in a world that has rapidly absorbed the Internet into nearly every aspect of society. Cat Memes, Facebook and viral videos now occupy our time between important meetings, coffee breaks and family get-togethers. But this is just the ‘book cover’ of the Internet. As we know, it’s also a powerful and unstoppable new economy that contains the ‘roads, pipes and wires’ of the future.

Digital technologies are moving much faster than we can plan. This means that forecasting the Internet’s impact and continued evolution is a tough game. As such, the heading of this article poses a question that suggests a need for innovation, a dash of speculation, and trust that the world of tomorrow will be better off for having made the jump into the technological age. As planners, we need to think about the impact this future will have on our future – on the cities we plan and those we don’t.

Around the world we’re seeing the planning profession respond to digital opportunities in exciting and innovative ways. In Canada, drones are being used for site analysis and aerial photography. In the US, solar roadways are receiving funding and will hit the market in just a few years. And across Europe, WiFi hotspots are fast becoming the norm.

Closer to home, we’re seeing similar breakthroughs in how we plan and practice with digital technology in NSW. The expansion of free WiFi spaces across Sydney and in regional centres is increasingly being recognised by both private and public organisations as a way to foster vibrancy, respond to a growing demand, and reduce disadvantage between social groups.

At the business level, consultancies in Sydney are now purchasing 3D printers and exploring ways in which this technology can add value to a client’s brief. In a similar way to how augmented reality reduces costs and delivers more tangible project outcomes, the application of 3D printing creates endless possibilities for testing design in real time.

The State Government has also made considerable digital progress with the recent launch of ePlanning by the Department of Planning and Environment. Planning tools and services are now accessible from the comfort of our homes. This is a major step towards an integrated system that recognises the growing convergence of digital and physical space. On a global scale it’s a system we should be proud to call our own and salute the professionals who delivered the platform as the digital planning ‘Think Tank’ of NSW.

These milestones are just the tip of the iceberg. The next 25 years of technology advancement will pale in comparison to the previous 25 years. With this in mind, we’ll need to do more to integrate new technologies into every aspect of planning practice.

Jumping forward to New Planner’s 200th issue in 2039, if anything is guaranteed, it’s that the Internet will play an even bigger role in our lives. As planners, we need to consider designing our cities not just in a physical sense, but also through a digital lens.

John O’Callaghan is an urban planner and director of JOC Consulting. He will be presenting a paper on technology and place making at the PIA Queensland State Conference in September 2014.

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Healthy Built Environments
Looking Forward to the Healthy City

Susan Thompson FPIA, Associate Professor in Planning and Associate Director (Healthy Built Environments) City Futures Research Centre, UNSW
Peter McCue, Executive Officer, NSW Premier’s Council for Active Living (PCAL)

The theme of this 100th issue of New Planner provides an opportunity to reflect on the issues that have been canvassed in this column for the last five years and pose an optimistic vision for the future.

When New Planner first appeared, for most of us it was unimaginable that an organisation like the Heart Foundation would be an advocate for good urban planning. There weren’t many health professionals, if any, who commented on planning proposals suggesting how a new development or land subdivision could be adjusted to better support healthy living. And yet today we see this happening.

After a long separation going back to the early 20th Century, planning and health are beginning to come together again. Rising rates of chronic disease, which cannot be addressed by the health care system alone, and environmental degradation, are contributing factors to this emerging re-connection. So too is the growing body of research about the important role that re-connection. So too is the growing body of research about the important role that the built environment plays in supporting human health.

This is acknowledged by the community. Their health has never been this good. Escalating rates of diabetes have turned around, heart disease and many cancers are rapidly declining – it’s easy and fun to be physically active as part of everyday living. Obesity is a thing of the past. The health budget no longer struggles to keep funding expensive drug treatments and lengthy hospitalisations. Spending on preventive health programs matches dollars invested in disease management and cures.

Developers routinely include infrastructure to support healthy living – community food gardens and communal composting, together with the provision of bicycle and pedestrian pathways. They are not just meeting demand but are creating new demand by improving the health of both the community and the developer’s bottom line.

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After a long separation going back to the early 20th Century, planning and health are beginning to come together again. Rising rates of chronic disease, which cannot be addressed by the health care system alone, and environmental degradation, are contributing factors to this emerging re-connection. So too is the growing body of research about the important role that the built environment plays in supporting health. And as New Planner has blossomed in NSW, the State’s embrace of healthy built environments has grown. PCAL has been a defining force in this work, bringing different agencies and stakeholders together in contributing to both policy development and practice. The Ministry of Health has also been instrumental – most recently in its Healthy Eating and Active Living Strategy which has as its number one strategic direction: ‘environments to support healthy eating and active living’.

In looking forward to a healthy environment, what might an optimistic vision entail for planners in NSW?

At the policy level we have a comprehensive health objective in the State’s planning legislation. This sets the direction for all plans, from state to regional and local. Supporting good human health is mainstream planning practice, sitting alongside environmental sustainability and protection. Planners work in close consultation with health professionals and are proud of the positive contribution that their work is making to planetary and human health.

The economics stack up – walkable neighbourhoods are keenly sought and developments sell well. It is commonplace for buildings to have green roof tops, often with edible vegetation and composting facilities, as well as communal spaces for relaxing and enjoying the psychological benefits of simply being in a green natural space.

Neighbourhoods are much more localised. People work from home, or nearby telecommuting hubs, for some of the week. They walk and cycle to get to the shops, services and recreation facilities. Neighbours know each other and look out for elderly residents who might need a hand with shopping or getting around. Children walk to school and tend kitchen school gardens, proudly taking home their harvested vegetables and fruit to share – and in the process, eating a nutritious diet. Productive street trees flourish along local streets, providing shaded walkways and with some well-designed community spaces, the public realm is safe and lively.

The transport system is focused around efficient, safe and affordable public transport, well connected to residential areas and employment opportunities. Peak oil requires judicious use of automobiles, but as car share systems are everywhere, sustainable motoring is readily accessible. A network of dedicated cycling paths makes commuting by bike convenient, safe, economic and enjoyable for all.

Earlier this year, the Healthy Built Environments Program held a Symposium where participants worked on their own visions of a healthy city. These have been compiled in a booklet which you can download from the Program’s website. While the visions are different, they all share in common the hope for an urban environment that is in tune with natural systems and supports healthy ways of living. Such a city is much more locally based and ecologically responsible, giving its citizens more time to enjoy their lives. So in looking forward, let’s be hopeful and plan this future.

Looking Forward to a Healthy City – one of the images created by Emily Mitchell of the City Futures Research Centre to illustrate the HBEP’s Symposium Visions Booklet.

car share parking are standard inclusions in medium density housing developments. The economics stack up – walkable neighbourhoods are keenly sought and developments sell well. It is commonplace for buildings to have green roof tops, often with edible vegetation and composting facilities, as well as communal spaces for relaxing and enjoying the psychological benefits of simply being in a green natural space.

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