Planning Education Discussion Paper

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Foreword

The Planning Institute of Australia (PIA) is the national body representing planning professionals. The Institute is the voice of the planning profession and an advocate for improved planning performance and better planning systems; actively promoting economically, socially and environmentally sustainable communities. A key role of PIA is to support and promote education and training in planning, in order to set and maintain professional standards.

PIA accredits undergraduate and postgraduate planning programs at Australian universities to provide professional recognition and to provide for Membership of the Institute. The National Education Committee, which oversees program accreditation, commissioned the preparation of this Discussion Paper to inform the future direction of the Institute’s involvement in planning education. The Paper is intended to provide a catalyst and framework for debate about the future education agenda of the Planning Institute.

The Discussion Paper unpacks and explores Australian planning education. Its genesis is in issues of specialisation and professional accreditation and the continuing shortage of planners; however it also acknowledges the growth of new planning programs, emergence of new education models, and ongoing changes in the education sector. The Paper:

- Provides an overview of pressures and trends in planning, in education, and specific to planning education, and the implications for the profession and practice;
- Profiles the Australian planning education ‘landscape’, identifying universities as the key source of professional knowledge and research as well as of practitioners; and
- Describes ‘creative tension’ between expectations of industry, the community and the academy; and the reality of education rationalisation, competition and resources.

The Paper describes issues to promote discussion, identify possible future directions and elicit comment. It does not – and should not – resolve questions, but rather sets out their dimensions and implications, and suggests possible courses of action. Review of the PIA Education Policy will follow this research, and the discussion it generates.

The National Education Committee commends this Discussion Paper, and acknowledges and notes its appreciation for the significant dedication, rigour and responsiveness of the authors. The Paper has been extensively peer-reviewed by senior academics on the Committee and details a range of pertinent themes and questions both in its general discussion and through its formal recommendations. It will hopefully attract submission and commentary, and elicit engagement, from a wide range of stakeholders. This discussion will shape PIA’s ongoing engagement with Australian planning education, in accreditation or beyond, to be relevant to both the profession and the education sector.

Comments and responses to this Paper are invited. In particular, feedback is sought on the following issues:

1. What are the key skills and capabilities required of planners? What knowledge and experience are relevant to effective professional planning practice?
2. How best can planning education (each provider and as a whole) develop the necessary knowledge, skills, attitudes and experience of those who require it?
3. What is the role of accreditation in planning education?
4. What responsibilities do various stakeholders have in planning education, and what role should PIA play?

I invite you to consider this paper and provide your perspective on these questions.

Trevor Budge
Chair, PIA National Education Committee
March 2008
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Executive Summary

Planners are increasingly at the forefront of societal issues and debates. From climate change to rapid urbanisation, from housing choice, and affordability to public transport, from regional disadvantage to urban renewal, the planning profession is expected to play a major role in facilitating and managing profound transformations during a time of global uncertainty.

How well does planning education equip practitioners to meet these complex and shifting challenges? This discussion paper, prepared for the Planning Institute of Australia (PIA), considers this question in relation to Australian planning education. It follows a National Inquiry into Planning Education and Employment, completed in 2004. A number of issues relevant to planning education in Australia have emerged or intensified since this time. These include:

- The introduction of a formal, ongoing program of professional certification for Australian planners (the ‘Certified Practising Planner’ program); the development of specialist Chapters within PIA, whose members hold diverse educational qualifications or experiences; and the revision of PIA’s requirements for continuing education (‘professional development’);
- National and international changes to tertiary education delivery models, including the need to impart generic skills and a rounded theoretical and practical education, distinctions between undergraduate and postgraduate degrees, and the introduction of a TAFE level IV certificate program in planning;
- The pressure on traditional planning programs to expand their curricula to include new subject areas as the discipline and practice of planning broadens, and to meet the needs and expectations of increasingly diverse employers;
- Resourcing of university planning programs in the context of broader shifts in the higher education and research sectors; and,
- The accreditation of planning courses, the increasing number of universities seeking accreditation for new courses, and the need to ensure that the content of accredited courses is relevant to the profession, the needs of employers, and the practice of planning.

The paper recognises a broad continuum of planning education – from secondary education through vocational and para-professional training, undergraduate postgraduate and research degrees to continuing professional development. At the same time, the paper proposes that PIA affirm a central role for university planning programs in delivering organised and accredited planning education, and in furthering knowledge about the theory and practice of planning within its social and political contexts.

We seek to explore and generate discussion in response to the following questions:

1. What are the major pressures and trends affecting planning education internationally and within Australia today?

2. What is the current profile of planning education in Australia and how does this compare internationally?

3. What does planning education in Australia need to deliver, in relation to industry, community, graduate, professional body, and disciplinary expectations?

4. What key interventions may need to be implemented for planning education to meet these expectations?

Available information regarding each of these questions is presented in this paper in order to inform and encourage further deliberation.
Key Recommendations and Questions for Discussion

Following the introductory chapter, a series of further recommendations, discussion points, and questions are raised in each chapter of the paper.

The Changing Context of Planning Education (Chapter 2)

This chapter highlights the creative tensions between the needs and expectations of industry and the broader role of planning education in driving policy agendas and research. These tensions are particularly pertinent in the current climate of rapid societal shifts and significant environmental uncertainty, whereby new skills, new knowledge and new processes or systems are likely to be required. There are also major changes within the educational sector, such as the introduction of the “Bologna model”, of generalist undergraduate education followed by postgraduate specialisation.

The chapter identifies the following issues for further discussion:

1. What are the implications of a shift towards the Bologna model for the delivery of planning education in Australia? Is it important to distinguish between broader undergraduate education and more specialist postgraduate education?
2. How can the core research or knowledge generation functions of university planning schools be better integrated with their core teaching programs? Or should a division between research and teaching functions be accepted and even embraced?
3. How can planning education in Australia, particularly tertiary planning degree programs, better inculcate the ‘theory / practice’ nexus? What are the most effective pedagogical models for this?
4. How effective are university planning schools in leading constructive analysis and review of current directions in planning policy and practice and how should this role be supported? Is there a role for other educational providers, particularly PIA through its continuing professional development activities, in supporting members to participate directly in broader policy debates?
5. Does planning education in Australia, particularly tertiary and continuing professional development programs, need to equip planners for international practice in the context of globalisation? How should this be done?

The Delivery Needs of Australian Planning Education (Chapter 3)

Chapter three explores a range of perspectives from industry, students and graduates, planning academics, universities, and the community sector. It highlights many points of convergence about the knowledge areas and skill sets that planning education needs to deliver. However, there are also perceived tensions between the expectations of industry and planning students for their university education to equip them directly for the workplace and the broader aspirations of planning academics, universities, and the community for planning graduates to develop a deeper understanding of societal issues and the higher order skills in critical analysis, research or communication, to work effectively within different professional or community settings.

The chapter proposes the following key questions for further discussion.

1. To what extent should PIA’s educational policy dictate clear expectations and roles for the different sectors now involved in planning education and what should these be?
2. How should PIA’s educational policy extend to recognise the different PIA chapters and their foundational educational disciplines? Is it necessary or feasible to scrutinise or audit these wider qualifications and if so how should this be done?
3. To what extent do planning programs currently complement each other and what is the potential to enhance collaboration? Should PIA continue to encourage programs
to complement one another or is this contrary to the reality of universities competing for students and resources?

4. How should indigenous interests in land and environmental management be incorporated and addressed through planning education in Australia?

5. What are the broader community expectations of planning education and how are these currently addressed? To what extent are Australian planning programs currently involved in community engagement and outreach activities and to what extent should such engagement be enhanced?

The State of Australian Planning Education (Chapter 4)

This chapter outlines the range of PIA accredited graduate and undergraduate planning programs in Australia. These are offered at universities in all States but mainly in the capital cities. There are similarities and differences in the length of planning degrees as well as the core and optional content they cover. Increasingly, continuing professional education and the TAFE sector may have important roles in providing initial professional training or in updating skills and knowledge in response to industry needs. Connections between PIA, university planning schools, and secondary education could also be strengthened in the future. There is potential to enhance access to planning education and increase choice through greater use of distance education and online learning.

Key questions for discussion highlighted in this chapter are:

1. What should be the core foundations of undergraduate planning education in Australia? Is there a need for more, or less, standardisation in the content and length of undergraduate planning degrees?

2. Should PIA encourage the current proliferation of postgraduate planning programs at the Master and Graduate Diploma level? To what extent should basic requirements about degree length and status be standardised?

3. What is the real level of industry and local government demand for a TAFE certificate IV, and to what extent should PIA foster and embrace such a qualification?

4. How should rural and regional access to planning education be better facilitated?

5. What connections between university education and continuing professional development programs are needed?

6. What are the potential and emerging roles of internet-based learning in Australian planning education and how might these be best fostered? Is there potential to promote greater collaboration across the planning programs and different educational providers?

Quality Assurance and Accreditation in Planning Education (Chapter 5)

This chapter considers the ways in which university planning programs are reviewed for educational quality and adherence to professional standards. The opportunity is to use higher education quality assurance processes and PIA accreditation requirements as strategic planning and performance monitoring tools for individual programs. However, in practice there is a need for far greater streamlining and convergence if university quality assurance requirements are to align with, and complement, overall program planning and accreditation processes.

Key questions for discussion include:

1. Should PIA seek to support Australian planning programs in external quality assurance and research performance assessment exercises? If so, how?

2. What are the discipline specific markers of quality and high performance in planning education and research, as a basis for external assessment and review?

3. What are the likely implications of the Commonwealth’s new research assessment exercise for planning schools and educators?
4. What are the indicators of planning program quality in Australia, as a basis for PIA accreditation?
5. Are the current PIA accreditation requirements for programs appropriate and adequate?
6. Should the current PIA accreditation process be reviewed? Would more frequent monitoring and evaluation be preferable? How might this be done?
7. Is it possible or desirable to maximise convergence between university quality assurance processes and PIA accreditation reporting requirements?

Resourcing Needs and Issues in Planning Education (Chapter 6)

This chapter identifies the range of resource issues affecting planning education, particularly within the tertiary sector where formal, accredited planning accreditation is provided. In the context of growing resource scarcity and relentless managerial concern with costs, planning schools find it increasingly difficult to maintain the core capacities and activities needed to meet accreditation and broader pedagogical expectations. The chapter outlines issues associated with access and equity in planning education, the role of industry funded placements, forms of scholarships and student support, and the need to attract and support new planning scholars and educators as senior academics in planning schools retire. The chapter concludes by identifying opportunities for “closing the loop” between research, teaching and professional practice through much stronger practitioner engagement in the provision of planning education, particularly through courses delivered by university planning schools.

Key questions for discussion include:

1. How can PIA best identify, monitor and support the resource needs of tertiary institutions in Australia, through the accreditation process and or other advocacy activities?
2. How can PIA, universities, and the profession, improve access to planning education for those of lower socio economic backgrounds, people with a disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, and those from regional and rural areas?
3. How can PIA better encourage and support planning educator engagement in key PIA events and forums?
4. How can PIA and the profession more broadly, support the needs of planning students, for instance through industry placements, scholarships, and cadetships?
5. How can planning schools attract and retain educators with the appropriate academic qualifications and professional knowledge as senior academics retire?
6. What strategies can best encourage new planning academics to establish a research and teaching career while maintaining connection to professional practice? How can PIA best support the research activities and profiles of Australian planning academics?
7. How should PIA and the planning schools support industry engagement in the delivery of planning programs?

The Future Agenda (Chapter 7)

The concluding chapter summarises the discussion themes and proposes the following vision for planning education in Australia as a basis for further discussion.

Australian planning education supports the profession in facilitating, promoting, and responding to processes of urban and regional change. A spectrum of distinct learning opportunities, ranging through secondary, vocational, tertiary, and continuing professional development engages students, practitioners, researchers, and members of the community in sharing and generating knowledge about spatial processes and governance. Dynamic learning environments emphasise the nexus between theory and practice, fostering capacity for Australian planners to lead public
policy and discourse for sustainability and social equity, in a climate of rapid societal change.

The chapter also outlines seven recommendations to progress the proposals contained in this paper and future discussions arising from it.

**Review of PIA Education Policy and accreditation requirements**

1. It is time to review the PIA educational policy to recognise the specific roles of different educational sectors and providers, and reiterate the core role of University planning schools in providing initial planning education through to the production of future planning educators.

2. It is also timely to review the PIA accreditation requirements and processes in the light of existing quality assurance reporting requirements, as well as clear indicators of planning school quality. These indicators should align with international markers of high planning program performance, as well as Australian accreditation requirements and expectations.

**Increasing access to planning education**

3. Increased access to planning education in rural and regional areas is a priority. There is also a need to maximise choice in course offerings for planning students, beyond the range able to be offered within any single planning school. PIA and the Education Committee should encourage course providers to collaborate with TAFEs in the provision of distance education, including internet-based learning opportunities. Resources should be sought to establish a common pool of online post graduate (and potentially undergraduate) course materials, perhaps hosted by the Australia and New Zealand Association of Planning Schools (ANZAPS).

**Enhancing industry engagement**

4. More consistent and structured industry engagement in the provision of university planning programs (teaching, assessment, research supervision, tutoring, and mentoring, as well as industry support for work placements, scholarships, cadets, and relevant research commissions) would benefit planning programs and participating professionals. The planning schools and the PIA should foster stronger models for industry engagement.

**Supporting planning research and scholarship**

5. A dedicated planning research agenda and research body is needed to generate independent, high quality research delivered through a competitive process by Australian academics. One stream of this Planning Research Institute could invite universities to tender for specific research consultancies, or provide a clearinghouse for industry-based work including an innovative or research element. PIA should take the lead in establishing such an Institute.

6. PIA and the planning schools should continue to support and reinforce the key role of planning research and pedagogy, through its own and related congresses, through the dissemination of research through its own and affiliated publications, and by recognising significant contributions to planning scholarship and education.

**Advocacy**

7. We have argued that the PIA needs to develop a more explicit and ongoing awareness of the resource issues facing planning education and to commit itself to identifying ways of assisting planning schools to maintain capacity and quality. One broad means for doing this would be for the PIA to identify, codify and promote awareness of the resource and capacity needs of planning education within the university sector, through its accreditation requirements. Advocacy might also target the university hierarchies that manage teaching functions, typically a Deputy Vice
Chancellor with designated responsibilities for ‘Education’, ‘Learning’, ‘Students’ or ‘Academic Affairs’.

The next step in this process will be a period of discussion, through circulation of this paper and meetings with key stakeholders from PIA members and education providers.
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Chapter 1: Introduction

The education and training of planning professionals is central to achieving sustainable urban, and regional and national outcomes. This is particularly so during the current time of global uncertainty and change across environmental, social and economic spheres. This discussion paper, commissioned by the Planning Institute of Australia (PIA) National Education Committee, highlights key trends and issues relating to planning education. The objective of the paper is to stimulate debate on the possible responses to the issues and themes raised here and in previous forums on planning education in Australia.

1.1 Background

The Planning Institute of Australia (PIA) is the national peak body representing professionals in the practice of urban and regional planning and related disciplines and specialisations. A key role of PIA is to promote professional standards through quality planning education and training.

The PIA Education Policy Guidelines for the Recognition of Australian Planning Qualifications (PIA 2002) set out the desirable structure, content and resourcing for an accredited a university degree in urban and regional planning. A PIA accredited planning qualification provides professional standing for Corporate Membership of the Institute. As well, PIA has a strong commitment to high quality continuing Professional Development (PD) and requires members to demonstrate participation in PD activities on an annual basis.

In recent years PIA has expanded its membership through specialist Chapters that recognise the growing diversity of planning practice and different educational pathways into the planning profession. There are currently chapters relating to urban and regional planning, urban design, environmental planning, economic development, transport planning, social planning and planning law. These changes mean that that PIA’s educational focus must expand beyond its traditional core emphasis on urban and regional planning courses taught at universities.

1.2 Scope of this discussion paper

Planning education includes a diverse range of activities by which people gain and enhance their knowledge about and skills for planning practice. However, in this paper, the emphasis is on what might be called “professional foundation planning education”, particularly university courses of study that equip people for practice. The paper also refers to alternative educational pathways to practice and continuing professional development.

Consistent with the broad components of planning education and potential educational providers, a number of key issues inform the contents of this discussion paper:

- The introduction of a formal, ongoing program of professional certification for Australian planners (the ‘Certified Practising Planner’ program); the development of specialist Chapters within PIA, whose members hold diverse educational qualifications or experiences; and the revision of PIA’s requirements for continuing education (‘professional development’);
- National and international changes to tertiary education delivery models, including the need to impart generic skills and a rounded theoretical and practical education, and distinctions between undergraduate and postgraduate degrees;
- The pressure on traditional planning programs to expand their curricula to include new subject areas as the discipline and practice of planning broadens, and to meet the needs and expectations of increasingly diverse employers;
- Resourcing of university planning programs in the context of broader shifts in the higher education and research sectors; and
- The accreditation of planning courses, the increasing number of universities seeking accreditation for new courses, and the need to ensure that the content of accredited
courses is relevant to the profession, the needs of employers, and the practice of planning.

This paper recognises a broad continuum of planning education – from secondary education through vocational and para-professional training, undergraduate postgraduate and research degrees to continuing professional development.

The paper also acknowledges the distinct categories of educational provider identified by Phil Heywood (2006). These include educational institutions (schools, technical and vocational colleges, universities); community organisations (such as voluntary and special interest groups); professional institutes (who have a policy setting role in tertiary education and continuing professional education); and commercial providers (often involved in the delivery of continuing professional education. As well, employers and senior professionals in government and private consultancy provide a crucial and ongoing contribution to planning education and professional development, through experiential planning project opportunities and through mentoring. Many professionals also play a significant and direct role in planning courses through seminars, tutorials, lectures, assistance with course materials, assessment items and live cases or projects for student involvement. PIA’s education policy should encompass, or at least acknowledge, this spectrum of activity.

This diversity notwithstanding, the paper argues that PIA should affirm a central role for university planning programs in delivering organised planning education, and in furthering knowledge about the theory and practice of planning within its social and political contexts. The focus of the paper is on planning education in and through universities, within the broader context described above.

1.3 Key questions explored in this paper
Within this context, this discussion paper explores the following questions:

1. What are the major pressures and trends affecting planning education internationally and within Australia today?
2. What is the current profile of planning education in Australia (e.g. level of and duration of training, content and structure of curriculum, practice, work experience and research balance; quality assurance and accreditation) and how does this compare internationally?
3. What does planning education in Australia need to deliver, in relation to industry, community, graduate, professional body, and disciplinary expectations?
4. What key interventions may need to be implemented for planning education to meet these expectations?

Available information regarding each of these key questions including empirical data and viewpoints articulated in the academic literature and professional forums are outlined in this paper in order to inform and encourage further deliberation.

1.4 Approach and information sources
In developing this paper, the authors used the following approaches and sources of information:

- A review of published English language academic literature on planning education and training (journal articles, conference papers or books published in the past decade and particularly in the past five years);
- A preliminary review of curricula of all accredited planning courses taught in Australia and a sample of selected courses taught at institutions in New Zealand, Hong Kong, the United Kingdom, and the United States, where planning systems are comparable.
and where educational resources, planning research and literature have evolved along parallel trajectories, with much cross fertilisation\(^1\); 
- Published reviews, policy statements, and accreditation requirements relating to planning education in Australia, New Zealand, the United Kingdom, and the United States; and 
- A series of discussions with practising planners and planning academics through the Australia New Zealand Association of Planning Schools (ANZAPS), and the PIA National Education Committee, and written contributions from the National Young Planners Group and the Indigenous Planning Taskforce.

1.5 **Structure of the paper**

From this introductory chapter, the structure of the paper is as follows:

- Chapter 2 reviews international directions in planning, education, and planning education.

- Chapter 3 asks the question ‘what does planning education need to deliver?’ and presents a series of discussion points regarding professional body, industry, student, and academic perspectives.

- Chapter 4 distinguishes between the different types of planning education ranging from the secondary sector through to tertiary and continuing professional education sectors.

- Chapter 5 outlines current approaches to quality assurance in planning education, from external quality assurance processes within the tertiary education sector through to accreditation of planning courses.

- Chapter 6 considers the likely resources needed to maintain high quality planning education in Australia, from the resource needs of tertiary institutions through to capacity building strategies like greater engagement between planning professionals and the delivery of planning courses.

- The final concluding chapter summarises the discussion themes and proposes a vision for planning education in Australia as a basis for further discussion. It also proposes key recommendations and next steps.

\(^1\) Although our review of planning education literature was not limited, in reviewing course curricula resources were prioritised to focus on the jurisdictions with professional and educational contexts most similar to Australia’s.
Chapter 2: Context: ‘Planning in a climate of change’

There has long been an expectation that planning education must keep pace with the shifts in planning practice and professional demands. For instance, issues like climate change, social polarisation or major economic and demographic transformations, combined with fundamental challenges to planning authority and professional status have clear, if as yet infrequently acknowledged and discussed, implications for the profession and its education and training. This state of flux implies a need to equip new planners (and re-equip existing ones) with the knowledge and skills to respond and adapt to social, economic, and environmental complexities that are still unfolding. Within this context, this chapter reviews international directions in planning education. The focus in this section is on literature and research that has been published over the past five years, although there are some references to earlier works.

2.1 Education in a climate of change

Recent international shifts in approaches to tertiary education have already influenced Australian Universities. The Bologna Process is an intergovernmental European commitment to improve the quality of European higher education. The process, which began at a meeting in Bologna in 1999, aims to establish a common structure of higher education systems across Europe. This common structure is to be based on two main cycles, undergraduate and graduate. The underlying pedagogical concept is for undergraduate degrees to be more generalist in nature, with postgraduate programs providing the focus for professional specialisation. It is worth noting that the Bologna Process has emerged from a different educational context to that of Australia. In many European systems, streaming for vocational or academic education begins at secondary school. Within the academic stream, completing secondary school means that the student has engaged with much broader educational curricula than Australia’s typical five or six subject model.

Australia’s first experiment with the application of the Bologna model is underway at the University of Melbourne. Current approaches to the delivery of post graduate planning education in Australia (discussed in the following chapters) suggest that many planning programs would have little difficulty in adapting the principles of the Bologna model. The approach may address concerns expressed by some academics that under-education of planners is a more significant problem than ‘pipeline’ issues (Angus Witherby, pers. comm., 6 July 2007). However, given the likely delay such a shift would mean in relation to the delivery of qualified planners, any unilateral move in this direction would need to be carefully assessed.

2.2 Planning education in a climate of change

Inculcating the requisite skills and knowledge for effective professional practice is clearly the raison d’etre of planning education. However, there is often a tension between whether students should develop the skills and knowledge needed for competence within a particular system or professional context, or the skills, knowledge, innovation and adaptability to commence practice within any planning system or professional setting. This tension is compounded by the traditional requirement of the universities to contribute in areas such as research and the generation of knowledge, and the need to ensure that students have the capacity to analyse, reflect and innovate.

There is a wider contest between the way in which planning itself is conceived by the academy and by different sectors of industry and the profession, as Jenny Poxon notes:

Although the calls for planning education to change in line with the changing role of the planning profession are strong, there is in fact a great deal of uncertainty over what this role is at the present time and what it is likely to be in the future. (Poxon 2000, p. 563)
Such debates underpin the international literature on planning education reviewed here, particularly ongoing dialogue about the nature of planning itself and whether it is the role of the academy to proactively define this role or simply to respond to industry demands for new professionals (Dalton 2001, 2007).

Within this context, five broad themes emerge from our review of international literature on planning pedagogy:

• The needs of industry and the community to have a sufficient supply of trained planning professionals to facilitate, promote, and manage processes of urban and regional change.
• The need to deliver professionals who meet industry expectations in terms of the knowledge and skill set demanded by planning employers.
• The need to produce new disciplinary knowledge that is relevant and applicable to current industry practice (i.e. solutions to the new and evolving ‘problems’ faced by professionals in practice).
• The need for planning academics and university programs to drive new policy agendas and disciplinary knowledge through rigorous scholarly inquiry, and in relation to the core values of planning; and,
• The need to apply planning research and knowledge to constructive analysis and review of current directions in planning policy and practice, and disseminate this information through scholarly publications and by participating in public debate.

These are discussed in turn.

1. The needs of industry and the community to have a sufficient supply of trained planning professionals to facilitate, promote, and manage processes of urban and regional change.

Planning education is under pressure to produce more graduates from fewer resources. There is an international shortage of urban and regional planners for traditional government and private sector roles as well as for related emerging professional spheres ranging from environmental design to project management.

However, this shortage of planners coincides with reduced funding for planning schools, especially stand-alone and smaller masters programs (Myers and Banerjee 2005, Steiner 2003). In the United States and the United Kingdom there have been several program closures, due to central government resource allocation approaches that favour and reward larger resource intensive institutions, leaving smaller, teaching oriented programs vulnerable (Fainstein 2005). This is a particular issue in the United Kingdom, where the Research Assessment Framework awards funding to institutions based on performance in relation to defined criteria, leading to concern that the focus of programs and individual academics is being driven by an artificial funding formula at the expense of academic collaboration and quality (Thomas 2005). There is a need for programs to identify new resource generating strategies that are aligned with core teaching and research objectives, if they are to continue to produce sufficient numbers of graduate planners (Hambleton 2006, Myers and Banerjee 2005).

2. The need to deliver professionals who meet industry expectations in terms of the knowledge and skill set demanded by planning employers.

The particular knowledge and skill set demanded by planning employers is, understandably, driven by workplace needs rather than the broader educational traditions typically advanced by universities (Grant 1999). When there is a shortage of professional planners within a workplace, the need for new graduates to be ‘job ready’ intensifies. This often generates a tension between the educational values of universities and the expectations of employers:
Practitioners misunderstand both the function of universities and the character of their own profession if they assume that new graduates should be equipped with all the skills to be able to walk straight into day-to-day practice. It is the duty of universities to educate their students, not to produce fully trained planners, and not to provide free training for the professions. It is their primary duty to enhance the intellectual and reflective capacity of their students, and to develop their analytical and critical skills and to develop their capacity for further development. (Grant 1999, p. 7)

Within this model of higher education, we argue that the strongest learning environment for planning students combines theory and practice, or ‘praxis’, in a dynamic way. So it is not a question of either practical skills or pure theory, but a model of learning that extends across core knowledge areas through to the application of this knowledge in practice, and which imparts the key skills – from communication to negotiation or management, for effective professional life.

3. The need to produce new disciplinary knowledge that is relevant and applicable to current industry practice (i.e. solutions to the new and evolving ‘problems’ faced by professionals in practice).

As the range of planning roles expands, and the problems addressed by planners diversify, new knowledge and solutions are needed. An obvious example is the need to devise new forms of urban growth that are resilient to the potential impacts of climate change. Producing such knowledge through research and inquiry is a key function of universities. The research undertaken within universities provides an important reservoir of knowledge as well as supporting their educational functions.

However, there may be a conflict between the research ‘needs’ of industry, which are often related to the application of existing bodies of knowledge to new or different contexts, and the purer forms of inquiry respected by academic or research institutions (Campbell 2005, Durning 2004). While both are important, in the context of declining research funding from traditional government sources there is a tendency to blur the line between commissioned work that meets defined client and research that serves a broader societal need. While the commissioned work may have demonstrated practical application beyond the interest of the original client, research goals and findings are often circumscribed by commercial or political sensitivities (Thomas 2005).

4. The need for planning academics and university programs to drive new policy agendas and disciplinary knowledge through rigorous scholarly inquiry, and in relation to the core values of planning.

Rather than act as a production line for new industry professionals, many commentators argue that planning programs must maintain a proactive role in driving policy agendas and research (Poxon 2000). As Heather Campbell comments:

A long standing tension for planning has been between the merits of research that is concerned with system transformation as against that which is concerned with system maintenance. The former is often construed as an irrelevance to the daily work of planners. In contrast the latter is frowned upon for its lack of critical distance – does it let the side down to criticise government policy (at whatever level)? Such a question has added potency when it is linked to the real and perceived needs of universities to secure ongoing research income from such sources or to fulfil a local community mission (Campbell 2005, p. 236).

Much of the literature on planning education relates to changing definitions of planning and the profession, and how the particular understanding of planning practice – for instance, as a technical activity or a social science, influences expectations about curriculum design (Dalton 2001, Frank 2006). Little is known in the Australian context about the ways in which
University planning schools contribute to innovation in professional practice or influence policy at local, regional, state, national or international scales. There is potential for Australian planning academics to play a much stronger role in advancing community understanding of urban and regional planning and in leading critical policy debates.

5. To apply planning research and knowledge to constructive analysis and review of current directions in planning policy and practice, and disseminate this information through scholarly publications and by participating in public debate.

Balancing the need to promote public awareness for and appreciation of the planning discipline while providing a source of constructive critique and analysis is another important role for planning programs. Publishing in scholarly forums and maintaining a strong voice in public debate about urban and regional policy is a marker of quality in planning programs, and also feeds through to planning practitioners. Poxon argues, “it is the role of planning academics and educators to stand back from these pressures, to research their sources, and then to help to carve out a positive future” (Poxon 2000, p. 578).

On a pragmatic level, higher education funding and evaluation models focus on scholarly performance and it is sometimes difficult for programs with strong professional orientations to demonstrate their research achievement. Such achievement is usually measured through indicators like publication in scholarly journals, although such forms of dissemination may have little impact in the professional arena. At the same time, in comparison to research output, universities typically undervalue teaching accomplishment. Within universities, the research/teaching schism often seems as deep as the related ‘theory/practice’ gulf discussed above.

This tension is not unique to planning research and education. One approach is to separate research and teaching functions within a program or an institution, or even between institutions. Highly regarded urban planning and research centres exist in many Australian universities. For the most part these centres are separated from the core teaching functions associated with accredited degree programs.

Yet ‘research-rich teaching strategies’ are associated with more innovative and cutting edge curricula (Freestone 2004, p. 1). If sometimes difficult to achieve in practice, research led teaching models contribute to more active student learning, encouraging critical inquiry and analysis rather than the passive receipt of knowledge. Robert Freestone describes a “more interconnected conceptualisation of planning knowledge”, where the:

Various worlds of planning can interact more effectively with one another in contributing to and reinforcing the overall societal contribution of progressive planning in theory and practice ... a greater reciprocity of activity by which: research is informed by teaching and practice; teaching is informed by research and practice; and practice is informed by research and teaching (Freestone 2004, pp 2-3).

There are many strategies for achieving greater synergies between research, practice and teaching, including academic placements within industry and practitioners in residence at universities; cooperative research, adjunct appointments and advisory panels, and research colloquia, where industry research and needs are discussed and new research findings presented (Freestone 2004). Research consultancies undertaken by universities for industry or government could provide a useful model by combining both research and application within a problem based learning context. We return to some of these options later in this paper.

2.3 International trends in planning curricula

How have the above debates influenced decisions about the subject areas that form core and optional components of undergraduate and postgraduate planning degrees both in
Provision for an internment, practicum or work experience is a common, but not uniform, component in planning degrees internationally. Studio based learning and field trips (either domestic or international) are other common elements of planning programs but by no means universal. Core planning programs typically focus on two-year Masters programs or four-year undergraduate degrees. However, some institutions offer a 12-month Masters option for graduates of a four-year undergraduate planning qualification or equivalent.

Specialist optional subjects offered within a defined planning program or elsewhere within the university provides the main evidence of a changing knowledge base for new planning professionals. Subjects relating to sustainability, particularly environmental science, ecology, natural resource management and GIS are increasingly offered in conjunction with planning programs. Most planning degrees in New Zealand include an optional or compulsory focus on indigenous (Maori) resource management.

There appears to be a growing internationalisation of planning curricula, with prominent courses including subject areas on international planning, globalisation, or an international field work component (Abramson 2005, Ali and Doan 2006, Goldstein et al. 2006). However, there is also an emerging concern about a perceived United States and United Kingdom hegemony of planning educational approaches. Much of this concern has emerged in response to the introduction of the Bologna Process across European universities (Kunzmann 2004).

### 2.4 Summary of key issues and questions for discussion

In this chapter we have highlighted the creative tensions between the needs and expectations of industry and the broader role of planning education in driving policy agendas and research. These tensions are particularly pertinent in the current climate of rapid societal shifts and significant environmental uncertainty, whereby new skills, new knowledge and new processes or systems are likely to be required. There are also major changes within the educational sector, such as the introduction of the “Bologna model”, of generalist undergraduate education followed by postgraduate specialisation.

We highlight the following questions for further discussion:

- What are the implications of a shift towards the Bologna model for the delivery of planning education in Australia? Is it important to distinguish between broader undergraduate education and more specialist postgraduate education?
- How can the core research or knowledge generation functions of university planning schools be better integrated with their core teaching programs? Or should a division between research and teaching functions be accepted and even embraced?
- How can planning education in Australia, particularly tertiary planning degree programs, better inculcate the ‘theory / practice’ nexus? What are the most effective pedagogical models for this?
- How effective are university planning schools in leading constructive analysis and review of current directions in planning policy and practice and how should this role be supported? Is there a role for other educational providers, particularly PIA through its continuing professional development activities, in supporting members to participate directly in broader policy debates?
- Does planning education in Australia, particularly tertiary and continuing professional development programs, need to equip planners for international practice in the context of globalisation? How should this be done?
Chapter 3: What does planning education in Australia need to deliver?

This chapter asks the question ‘what does planning education need to deliver?’ in relation to tertiary education and continuing professional development or lifelong learning. It presents a series of discussion points regarding professional body, industry, student, and academic perspectives. These discussions may be crudely caricatured along a spectrum whereby the role of planning education is to produce effective professional planners to meet current industry requirements (‘system maintenance’) through to more progressive aspirations that planning education will deliver professionals able to improve and transform the system where necessary (‘system transformation’).

3.1 Professional body and industry perspectives

Professional body expectations for planning education are articulated in PIA’s Educational Policy for Recognition of Australian Planning Qualifications (PIA 2002) and the findings and recommendations of the National Inquiry into Planning Education and Employment (PIA 2004).

*Educational Policy*

The Educational Policy, discussed further in the following chapter, identifies two key objectives for planning education. The first is “to encourage students to develop the skills and professional ethics required by professional planners and to have a well-rounded understanding of the role of planners in society”, and the second is to “encourage students to think creatively, analytically and critically, and be able to communicate effectively” (PIA 2002, p. 2). Rather than specifying a detailed curriculum, the policy outlines broad knowledge areas and a key skills base for planning educators to provide.

The policy encourages programs to have their own focus and specialisations, while encouraging collaboration between planning programs and other disciplines. It is worth noting here that collaboration between planning programs often seems difficult to achieve within the current climate of competition between universities for student enrolments (discussed further in chapter six). However, in our view, the potential for collaboration remains an important goal and we return to the question of how planning programs might complement, rather than compete with one another at the end of this chapter.

*National Inquiry into Planning Education and Employment*

In 2004 the Planning Institute of Australia completed a National Inquiry into Planning Education and Employment. The Inquiry identified a number of key issues significant to planning education:

- A chronic shortage of planners, especially in rural and regional areas;
- Pressures and problems in the work place; and
- Concerns about education and training, including:
  - the need for ongoing or updated training in new systems as legislation changes,
  - increasing development pressures and legal complexity, and the need for planning education to equip graduates to be effective in this context,
  - lack of on the job support or training for recent graduates in new positions,
  - planners moving into new fields requiring new skills and knowledge that are not necessarily standard in planning courses, and
  - higher expectations of planners, particularly from the community and elected representatives.

Among the recommendations of the National Inquiry was the establishment of a National Education Committee. One of the initiatives of this committee has been to commission this
discussion paper as a way of generating additional focus and debate on the key trends, concerns and potential responses to issues affecting planning education in Australia.

A standard range of technical skill expectations for planners of the future were identified through submissions to the National Inquiry: development assessment, strategic planning, environmental planning, urban design, transport planning, regional planning, as well as enhanced capacity for project management, understanding of the private sector, negotiation and communication, planning law, and practical ‘how to’ knowledge (PIA 2004). Assessment of university course options concluded at the time that appropriate skills were being taught, although it was often hard to recruit lecturers with the right qualifications and experience to deliver key practice oriented subjects. The Inquiry found in favour of increasing HECS funded places for planning students across Australia. The Inquiry also found a need for planning education to better service students in regional and remote areas.

The current shortage of qualified planners highlights a need to maintain the current flexibility of university pathways to a planning degree, at undergraduate and postgraduate levels. There is a particular need for postgraduate courses that train university graduates without any prior knowledge of planning. Many graduates of such programs will bring other important forms of knowledge and/or skill to the profession.

A key theme to emerge from the Inquiry is the implication that planning education be conceived broadly, beyond the current confines of university institutions and accredited degree programs (Heywood 2006). The findings of the review suggest that the role of planning education should extend from providing initial para professional training to relieve critical industry shortages through to ongoing continuing education for fully qualified planning professionals. Within this spectrum, the role of more traditional forms of planning education, delivered through universities, likely remains central but may need to expand, to service more students, and more rapidly. These approaches may also need to diversify, to provide more flexible modes of entry, articulation, and delivery.

The anticipated role of existing education providers within a broader conceptualisation and delivery model for professional and basic education in planning is unclear, and the current PIA educational policy focuses entirely on accredited tertiary programs. The introduction of the different PIA chapters, where a diverse range of educational disciplines may now feed into the core membership of the Institute, also suggests a need to expand the educational policy to address these changes. We raise this central issue again at the end of this chapter and in Chapter 7.

In addition to the industry views canvassed as part of the National Inquiry, there have been some attempts to directly understand the expectations and needs of industry in relation to planning education in Australia. A small survey of planning employers based in NSW (Phibbs et al 2002) revealed that skills in practical implementation, verbal and written communication, political knowledge, urban design, finances, and project management were seen to be lacking in recent graduates.

Nationally, the local government sector is facing difficulty in attracting and retaining skilled workers generally and qualified planners in particular. In regional and rural areas the difficulties are even greater, as highlighted recently in the NSW Parliamentary Inquiry into skills shortages in rural and regional NSW (May 2006). Amongst the recommendations of the Inquiry were national consistency in training and competency standards for trades and professions, to facilitate greater workforce mobility. The Inquiry also reiterated the importance of TAFE institutes in ‘responding rapidly and appropriately to the training needs of industry as skills shortages arise’ (NSW Standing Committee on State Development 2006, p. 13).

These broader perspectives reinforce the need for planning education to better service rural and regional areas to address specific pipeline and skill shortages rapidly and in more flexible ways.
3.2 What do students and graduates regard as important in planning education?

In November 2006, the National Young Planners’ Group discussed issues relating to planning courses in Australia and the way in which these courses prepare young planners for the workforce. The National Young Planners’ Group includes students and recent graduates, and plays an active role in contributing to PIA activities and policy development. In a submission for this paper, the group recommended that degree programs should have a good ‘balance and synergy between courses (i.e. subject matter and practical versus theory); and between academic lecturers and industry-based, or guest lecturers’. They recommended that a ‘work experience or work placement component form a compulsory part of the course, supported and monitored by the university/institution’.

Ultimately, the young planners put forward the view that planning courses should ensure graduates are ‘job ready’. They also identified the following list of subjects as ‘mandatory fields of study’ for planning courses:

- Social theory;
- Planning history, including the ‘evolution’ of planning, ‘garden city’ movements etc, urban design, paradigm shifts;
- Planning law and introduction to legislation (undertaken as early as practicable);
- Sustainability
- Project management, including time management, and use of MS Project, Gantt charts;
- Processes in assessing development proposals, from the perspective of both the Council or authority, and the applicant or developer, and equipping students with the skills to deal with different stakeholder interests, political pressures and community involvement;
- Urban design and built form, including applying theory/practice and how design of infrastructure relates to urban design matters;
- Social/economic/environment/infrastructure planning;
- Intensive units that introduce specific environmental legislation and how the legislation interrelates to the planning process;
- Hazard and risk planning (bushfires, floods etc).
- Working with communities and stakeholders (community consultation); and
- Research methods, including demography and consultation methodologies.

The Young Planners recommend that students “be assessed by a range of means, including oral presentations, written reports (as opposed to essays), in-class debating ... and have the opportunity to undertake ‘real life’ projects or case studies” (NYPG 2007). The group argued that courses should “provide a balance between theoretical and practical and that basic planning fundamentals need to be taught early on in the course”.

Strong pedagogical models for achieving this balance between the theoretical and the practical include studio or problem based learning approaches; following ‘live’ case studies; field trip components; interviews or lectures with industry professionals; research based curricula where the research is closely related to an issue of key policy or design concern; and work experience placements that include structured reflection.

Robert Zehner’s comprehensive survey of the skills NSW planners use in their jobs is a useful insight into the attitudes of graduates towards their education and expectations for courses of the future (Zehner 2002). Zehner surveyed planners in private practice, local and state government, revealing some differences in skill and knowledge areas across each sector (a finding consistent with international research, vide Dalton 2007, Guzzetta and Bollens 2003). Overall, the top rated attributes were knowledge of planning law and skills in development control/statutory planning, followed by participation and community liaison, strategic planning, and communication. These skill areas align with those identified in the abovementioned 2004 National Inquiry.
There is likely to be some circularity in student and graduate views regarding the components of a good planning education. Having a planning qualification itself strongly influences the way in which individuals understand or view planning, and flowing from this, their expectations of planning education (Dalton 2007). Views on planning education and the valuation of certain skills and knowledge areas also change as careers progress (Guzzetta and Bollens 2003).

Nevertheless, the views of current students and recent graduates provide a critical insight into the strengths and weaknesses of current approaches to planning education. One study sought to directly uncover the skill and knowledge areas that graduates felt were not properly covered in their planning degree (Phibbs et al 2002). The survey of recent graduates of the University of Sydney found respondents felt unprepared for development assessment and community consultation processes, and would have valued more emphasis on project management, conflict resolution, and verbal or written communication.

While these findings relate to a specific university and degree program, they highlight recurring concerns and also have broader applicability in terms of the skills that planning graduates value highly upon entering the workforce. Continuing professional education programs play an important role in providing ongoing training in specific areas required by particular sectors of the industry and so may address these gaps as they emerge for individuals entering practice.

An issue for further resolution is the role that universities and other education providers should play in delivering continuing professional education programs either through existing course offerings, or by developing specific courses to meet defined industry needs.

3.3 Perspectives of planning academics

Australian planning academics have been active contributors to research and debate on planning education, from the history of planning education in Australia (e.g. Hamnett 1999), to questions about the role of planning programs and the range of skills and knowledge they need to deliver (Freestone 2004, Heywood 2006, Phibbs et al 2002, Zehner 2002), pedagogical approaches to planning, diversity (Gurran and Phibbs 2003, 2004, Thompson and Kwitko 2001), and approaches to specific components of planning programs, such as the value of work placements (Freestone et al. 2006).

The Australian and New Zealand Association of Planning Schools (ANZAPS) provide an important forum for discussion about planning education and research. Overall the views of planning academics in Australia, as expressed in published work and in papers presented to ANZAPS conferences reflect broader trends in higher education teaching and learning, focusing on deeper engagement with key concepts and the development of higher order skills in analysis and critical inquiry (e.g. Ramsden 1992).

However, there can be tension, albeit sometimes more perceived than real, between the immediate needs of industry and expectations of planning students to be "workplace ready" as quickly as possible versus the time needed to develop deeper levels of understanding and higher order intellectual and communicative attributes. Studios, practicums and field trips provide an important bridge between conceptual understanding and applied technical knowledge and skills.

There is convergence between planning academics and the expectations of industry in relation to the importance of high order communication skills as an essential outcome of planning education. For instance, a study by David Hedgcock of local planners in Western Australia found that respondents rated their communication and analytical skills as key to their effectiveness and influence, suggesting “the need for generalised and broad course content to encompass the vocabulary and arguments required to debate and discuss
planning and development issues occurring at a local government level” (Hedgcock 2002, p. 49). Hedgcock concludes that:

The ability to integrate diverse knowledge, apply this knowledge to particular cases and to skilfully present such material in a contested forum should be an educational outcome of planning courses. How to teach (or inculcate) such knowledge and skills is a challenge that needs to be met. (Hedgcock 2002, p. 49)

Academics regard research as fundamental to higher education in general and planning education in particular (Freestone 2004). Research activities generate and renew the body of knowledge needed to inform practice and policy development. Research training through advanced independent study (such as a thesis or dissertation) develops skills in research, inquiry, and information management, critical to so many areas of planning practice. Such training also provides pathways to PhD research and a future academic career.

### 3.4 University perspectives

Beyond the core disciplinary knowledge and technical skills that form the basis of tertiary planning programs, university planning schools are also expected to ensure their graduates acquire broader academic and intellectual attributes. These are in addition to the quality assurance standards and markers of educational and research quality imposed by external bodies (discussed in the following chapter). For instance, the University of Sydney identifies three overarching graduate attributes relating to scholarship, lifelong learning and global citizenship (University of Sydney 2004). In relation to scholarship, the policy states that graduates will “have a scholarly attitude to knowledge and understanding … (and) will be leaders in the production of new knowledge and understanding through inquiry, critique and synthesis” (University of Sydney 2004, p. 4.1.1).

These generic attributes are not inconsistent with the skills and abilities of planning graduates valued by industry. For instance, the University of Sydney policy states further that graduates will be able to “respond effectively to unfamiliar problems in unfamiliar contexts”, “be able to identify processes and strategies to learn and meet new challenges; and be independent learners who take responsibility for their own learning, and are committed to continuous reflection, self evaluation and self improvement” (p. 4.3.3). Generic attributes also extend to “ethical, social and professional understanding”, and graduates are expected to “understand and accept social, cultural, global and environmental responsibilities, be committed to social justice and principles of sustainability, have an appreciation of and respect for diversity, hold a perspective that acknowledges local, national and international concerns”; and “work with, manage and lead others in ways that value their diversity and equality and that facilitate their contribution to the organisation and the wider community” (p. 4.3.4).

The University of Melbourne aims to “produce exceptionally graduates with specialised knowledge and understanding across a broad range of disciplines.” (University of Melbourne 2007). The generic attributes of the “Melbourne graduate” include academic excellence, including “intellectual integrity”; “in-depth knowledge of their specialist discipline(s)”, a “high level of achievement in writing, generic research activities, problem-solving and communication”, “critical and creative” thinking, “with an aptitude for continued self-directed learning”. (University of Melbourne 2007, p. 1). Knowledge is to extend across disciplines, enabling graduates to “examine critically, synthesise and evaluate knowledge”; and, “have a set of flexible and transferable skills for different types of employment”. As “leaders in communities”, Melbourne graduates are expected to “engage in meaningful public discourse, with a profound awareness of community needs”; have an “understanding of the social and cultural diversity in our community”, and “respect indigenous knowledge, cultures and values” (University of Melbourne, 2007, p. 1). As “global citizens”, graduates should “be advocates for improving the sustainability of the environment”, and “have a broad global understanding, with a high regard for human rights, equity and ethics” (University of Melbourne 2007, p.1).
These broader university expectations about graduate attributes add an additional set of criteria for planning schools to achieve. However, the high degree of consistency between these higher order educational outcomes and the expectations of industry and PIA itself underpin the central role of universities in planning education, albeit within a broader educational framework spanning secondary schooling through professional or vocational training and continuing professional development.

3.5 Community needs and perspectives

There is potential to better understand the ways in which Australian planning education engages with and contributes to community needs and perspectives. The planning profession in general and planners and planning education in particular could lead the way in precipitating necessary cultural shifts in attitudes and approaches towards land, the environment, social and spatial disadvantage, community engagement, and critically, indigenous rights.

Fundamental changes to the way in which Australian planning education addresses indigenous perspectives and interests were proposed by the Indigenous Planning Taskforce in a submission to this paper (Wensing 2007). A key challenge is to alert planners to the: … perceptual limitations of their own discipline and the particular discourse of our own craft. The rational technocratic focus of much land use planning … often precludes appropriate and meaningful consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. Planners also need to be aware of the norms of Anglo-Australian culture with its emphasis on liberalist ideas of individual property ownership, the rights of the individual, materialism, free enterprise, competition, nuclear families and written sources of history and law. These are in stark contrast to the non-competitive, communal and extended families, and a dependency on oral traditions and customary laws of Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islander societies” (Wensing 1999, quoted in Wensing 2007, p. 2).

As well as reviewing the content of planning curricula to ensure that programs lead the way in changing approaches towards the environment or social justice, tangible community outreach activities should become a much stronger feature of planning education in Australia. Examples include the long tradition of University of New South Wales student involvement in the redesign and community renewal activities surrounding public housing estates in Sydney. Community outreach activities are consistent with the broader social and ethical goals of the planning profession and could become a much stronger feature of planning education in Australia.

3.6 Summary of key issues and points for discussion

In summary, there are many points of convergence across stakeholders about the knowledge areas and skill sets that planning education needs to deliver. However, there are also perceived tensions between the expectations of industry and planning students for their university education to equip them directly for the workplace and the broader aspirations of planning academics, universities and the community, for planning graduates to develop a deeper understanding of societal issues and the higher order skills in critical analysis, research or communication.

As suggested at the beginning of this chapter, potential tensions may be resolved if the role of planning education is explicitly understood to provide both for ‘system maintenance’ – supporting effective professional practice (predominantly through strong involvement of active practitioners and professionals in the teaching program, and by incorporating practicums or work placements); and, ‘system transformation’ – leading the more fundamental shifts required to respond to environmental and societal change (largely through research led teaching by planning academics).

We propose the following key questions for further discussion.
• To what extent should PIA’s educational policy dictate clear roles for the different sectors now involved in planning education and what should these roles be? As a starting point, we propose that:
  o University planning schools should provide core planning education, recognising different undergraduate and postgraduate levels of study, and research training;
  o Vocational training (TAFE and workplace training or cadetships) should be designed to address immediate workplace requirements and priorities;
  o Continuing Professional Development (CPD) should focus solely on post university, and professional training needs, but that university planning schools be encouraged to support or contribute to CPD activities.
• How should PIA’s educational policy extend to recognise the different PIA chapters and their foundational educational disciplines? Is it necessary or feasible to scrutinise or audit these wider qualifications and if so how should this be done?
• To what extent do planning programs currently complement each other and what is the potential to enhance collaboration? Should PIA continue to encourage programs to complement one another or is this contrary to the reality of universities competing for students and resources?
• What potential is there to better involve universities as providers of Continuing Professional Development, either through current course offerings or new purpose designed programs?
• How should indigenous interests in land and environmental management be incorporated and addressed through planning education in Australia?
• To what extent are Australian planning programs currently involved in community engagement and outreach activities and to what extent should such engagement be enhanced?
Chapter 4: State of planning education in Australia

This chapter distinguishes between the different types of planning education currently provided in Australia. While there is a focus here on core tertiary level accredited planning programs, we also outline and recognise the important contributions of secondary schooling, vocational programs offered through TAFE, workplace education like traineeships and cadetships, and continuing professional development.

4.1 The tertiary sector: Accredited planning qualifications

Comprehensive and up to date information on planning school enrolments is lacking in Australia. The PIA National Inquiry into Planning Education and Employment found that enrolments in planning programs increased by 23 per cent between 1993 and 2000 (PIA 2004). The majority of planning students (70 per cent) were enrolled in undergraduate programs in the year 2000, with the remaining 30 per cent in postgraduate courses. By 2003, there were around 1200 undergraduate planning students overall. A systematic monitoring process is needed to accurately track trends in planning school enrolments and outcome. For instance, by level (ie. undergraduate versus postgraduate), region, diversity (gender, ethnicity, international / local), and outcome (graduation, further study, or failure to complete).

Currently, accredited tertiary sector programs at undergraduate and masters level provide the only option for a professionally recognised planning qualification in Australia. Seventeen universities in Australia deliver accredited planning programs, across all of the Australian states (Table one). There are no programs offered in any of the Territories. Most universities are based in capital cities; however there are planning qualifications offered at the University of New England in Armidale NSW, James Cook University in Cairns and Townsville, Queensland and La Trobe University in Bendigo, Victoria, and a growing interest in programs in near-metropolitan areas, such as Queensland’s Gold Coast.

Twelve Bachelor and combined degree programs are offered and 15 Masters programs, plus combined courses of study (eg. Urban Design / Planning or Transportation / Planning). Nine accredited graduate diploma programs are available (Table one).

Consistent with international trends, there have been some program closures over the past decade. Victoria University offered planning programs until 2000, and the Northern Territory University’s Graduate Diploma in Regional and Urban Planning ceased in 1999. The University of Western Sydney is no longer admitting candidates to fully accredited planning degree programs although planning subjects are still offered at undergraduate level.
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Source: PIA Accredited University planning courses 2007
4.1.2 Undergraduate education in planning

There is a strong consistency in the core requirements of undergraduate planning programs, reflecting PIA’s current educational policy. A preliminary comparison of core program curricula suggests that planning law and environmental processes are central across all Australian undergraduate programs. Urban design, urban economics, social planning, GIS, and theory form central components in many, but not all, undergraduate programs. About half of the accredited undergraduate programs have clear requirements for a research report or thesis but less than half require a work placement as part of the degree.

The core requirements of undergraduate planning degrees should be revisited in discussion following this paper and in relation to any subsequent review of PIA’s educational policy and accreditation requirements (discussed in the following chapter). Such discussion would be best informed by a systematic comparative analysis of the different core requirements in accredited Australian undergraduate planning degrees.

Distinctive elements of the different programs include a focus on regional development, rural planning and resource management (UNE), environmental processes and management, and economics and property (UQ), environmental economics, science and planning (Griffith and UWA), disaster and natural hazard planning (James Cook); indigenous interests and land management (James Cook, Griffith and UWA).

Most undergraduate programs are four years in length. Exceptions include the University of NSW Bachelor of Planning, which is undertaken over five years with the fourth year a compulsory paid work experience placement. Some universities (eg. QUT) offer a three-year undergraduate planning degree paired with a one-year graduate diploma to achieve an accredited qualification.

4.1.3 Post graduate planning education

Post-graduate planning education has developed significantly over the last ten years and since the last review of the PIA education policy (completed in 2002). There are basically two types of postgraduate qualifications in planning – those for students with no prior qualification in planning and those for which an undergraduate planning or related qualification is an entry requirement. The latter provide an opportunity for professional specialisation while the former requires that the curriculum introduces the more generalist knowledge and skills required for professional planning practice.

There are more postgraduate offerings than undergraduate with 14 accredited Master degrees. The majority of universities offer graduate certificates or diplomas which can act as pathways to an accredited Masters qualification. Similarly coursework Masters programs can offer a progression to further research for some students.

Accredited masters programs vary in the minimum length of time needed to complete them. The University of Technology offers a Master of Planning that can be completed in one year. Other Masters programs (such as those of the University of Sydney) allow fast track options with a minimum length of candidature of 18 months (or three semesters). In reality it is difficult to complete the degree in this time frame and following the first semester, many students switch to part time mode while working in the industry full time.

There is pressure to offer Masters programs in relatively short time frames to attract students. However, when the Masters is an initial accredited qualification (ie. not linked to a prerequisite undergraduate planning degree) it is likely that a longer time will be needed to cover the range of core knowledge and skills needed for competent practice.

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2 This has recently occurred in the UK, with one year now the minimum for accredited masters programs in planning. Shorter Masters are also being considered in New Zealand.
Our preliminary comparative curriculum review suggests some variation in the core curriculum requirements of Australian postgraduate planning programs, and significant variation in the elective subjects available to students. This diversity is consistent with PIA’s education policy that encourages each planning program to develop its own specialisation.

All programs require grounding in planning law or processes, while environmental processes and planning theory feature in the core of most degrees, consistent with accreditation requirements. Many programs have a clear requirement for students to complete an advanced program of independent research, and only three degrees require GIS. Work placements feature in few programs as compulsory elements, perhaps reflecting the reality that many post graduate students are either studying part time making a placement difficult to arrange or already employed in the sector.

Again, it would be helpful to undertake a more formal comparative analysis of the core content areas of PIA accredited masters programs, to inform any review of PIA’s educational policy and accreditation requirements.

Different specialisations are offered across the Australian universities, often drawing on research or teaching strengths of their broader faculty. For instance, specialisations in urban governance and management, sustainability, urban design or urban modelling are available at the UNSW. UTS is known for its particular pedagogical approach involving intense problem based learning, with a strong emphasis on core planning skills in analysis, visioning, implementation, and problem solving. The University of Sydney has three distinct, research driven foci in housing, urban design and heritage. Macquarie University has developed strengths in environmental management, as has UQ and the University of Tasmania. Griffith’s masters program includes a focus on urban and regional economics and analysis, while the University of South Australia emphasises transport planning and sustainable urban design. At RMIT students can develop a clear specialisation in globalisation and development planning. This rich program diversity offers choice for planning students although most Australian students do tend to be limited by geography in their selection of programs.

4.1.4 Non accredited planning programs

A significant and growing number of universities around Australia offer undergraduate and postgraduate courses in areas relevant to aspects of planning, but which are not accredited by PIA. This includes planning-oriented courses that have not sought accreditation because, for example, they are too short in duration or do not offer the full range of skills and knowledge required of accredited courses.

Many other undergraduate and post graduate degree programs provide direct or indirect pathways into planning practice – from disciplines like geography, social sciences, communications, architecture and engineering. The introduction of Chapters within PIA recognises these different educational trajectories. For all Chapters, there are qualification requirements as well as experience and competence levels that must be reached to ensure that professional entrance standards are maintained. For instance, those who have a non-accredited or related non–planning degree and are practising in urban or regional planning must work for longer (five years instead of the usual two) to be eligible to join a Chapter.

4.1.5 Research and planning education

As well as coursework programs, many planning schools offer research degrees, such as the Master or Doctor of Philosophy, both of which involve original research published as a thesis. These higher degree programs provide the main form of research training for Australian planning academics.

It is important to consider research on planning and urbanisation as integral not peripheral to planning education. This point extends beyond the academic conventional wisdom that an active research program is needed to maintain effective teaching, both at the individual and
aggregate (e.g., planning school) levels. The research undertaken in planning schools and in urban research centres, if functioning well, provides a continuous source of intellectual nourishment and professional development opportunities for the profession in general. An increasing number of planning professionals have shown interest in recent years in undertaking doctoral research; not all of who are driven by a desire to enter full time planning education.

Doctoral research is often in applied areas and thus directly informs planning policy and practice. Examples are two doctoral research projects presently hosted by QUT and Griffith, with state planning department support, that are examining aspects of performance based assessment. In this sense, doctoral research strengthens in a modest but not insignificant way the calibre and insightfulness of planning debate, practice and policy. It is a source of strengthening that the PIA should embrace and encourage.

Some universities may consider the introduction of a professional doctorate in planning. Professional Doctorates recognise advanced professional achievement and could provide a form of synoptic education for planners who wish to make an advanced contribution to the field while remaining in practice. PIA might play a role in setting national standards for establishing topics for professional doctorate research and criteria for assessment.

Overall, PIA could do much to advance doctoral training in planning by:

1. Promoting wider industry and professional awareness of the benefits of doctoral training and of the means for entering PhD programs and accessing support, including promoting better understanding of the cost effectiveness of these training support forms;
2. Helping to broker and generally encourage industry financing of doctoral scholarships; and
3. In some instances, directly assisting funding doctoral projects via the ARC’s Linkage scheme on topics of importance for the profession, ensuring that any such support is shared out evenly over time amongst the planning school sector.

4.2 Continuing professional education

Continuing professional education for planners has received considerable attention both in Australia as well as the United Kingdom and the United States. In Australia, PIA accommodates a wide range of such ongoing education as ‘professional development’ (PD)

Corporate members of PIA are required to participate and record professional development activities. Professional development activities relate largely to engagement in forms of continuing professional education, from defined short courses through to attendance at conferences, and seminars.

PIA’s ‘Certified Practising Planner’ scheme was introduced partly in response to the broadening dimensions of the professions and the development of different chapters within PIA and partly in response to rapidly growing industry. The CPP scheme formalises requirements for planners to participate in a range of continuing professional development activities. The scheme is still in its early phases and is probably too young to seriously review at this stage. However uptake of the program by existing members has been strong and the test will be what proportion of practising planners engage in the PD program over time. Industry and employer demand for PD will also have a significant influence.

Universities currently have no involvement in the provision of continuing professional development programs for the CPP scheme (which are currently delivered by a private provider). However, there may be potential for more involvement in the future, perhaps in relation to curriculum evaluation or quality assurance.
4.3 Secondary and community education

The consideration of planning education at a secondary-school-level is typically concerned with references to human geography, settlements and development in the curriculum of a social studies or geography subject. It also includes the role of secondary education in providing exposure to planning as a profession through career and guidance systems. In general, the active engagement of the profession (including the Institute) in shaping and providing guidance to secondary educators in either field has been somewhat ad hoc.

Beyond their role in funnelling students into an undergraduate planning degree, Phil Heywood notes that schools have a critical role in shaping “the broader consciousness on which professional programs are ultimately based” (Heywood 2006, p. 1). He points to the contribution of geography, social studies, art, and civics courses in promoting public awareness of the need for wise environmental management, and which leads to a societal demand for a supply of trained planners.

Heywood also recognises the broader educational roles undertaken by community, volunteer, and advocacy groups as well as the citizen education activities undertaken by professional institutes. Examples include the research and training activities undertaken by Australian groups such as the Australian Conservation Foundation (on the environment) and National Shelter (on housing). While too diffuse to capture here or to scrutinise in the context of PIA’s educational policy, Heywood argues that the contribution of such groups is “of vital importance in sustaining its energy, purpose and relevance” (Heywood 2006, p. 2).

Some PIA state divisions in some states, by actively promote planning to high school students are forging clearer and stronger pathways between secondary education and a planning career. Some universities also offer bonus points to facilitate student entry into planning degrees, depending on the mix of high school course studies undertaken.

There is potential to consider ways for PIA at a national level, and for state PIA divisions and university planning schools to have a more active involvement with the school curriculum.

4.4 TAFE

The development and implementation of a vocational planning course has been mooted for some time and was raised in the PIA National Inquiry into Planning Education and Employment. Very little progress has occurred in Australia and overseas in countries with similar planning frameworks and education systems such as Canada, the United Kingdom, the US and New Zealand.

The Certificate IV in Local Government (Planning) offered by Swinburne University is an initial foray into the area. Some graduates of this program have since progressed to an undergraduate degree at RMIT University.

There are four critical factors to be addressed in relation to a TAFE planning certificate:

- The extent to which the profession and PIA actively support this initiative including recognising it in the PIA Education Policy;
- The demand for a TAFE certificate by prospective students;
- The response by local government in recognising and employing such graduates. This will decide whether programs will attract enough students to remain viable; and
- The status of “para” professionals vis-a-vis full or “true” planning professionals, as well as the need to maintain the status of the profession through appropriate entry standards.

TAFEs appear to offer a means of delivering planning education to regional centres that will probably never have their own universities. These smaller centres and their surrounding areas are generally very short of qualified planning staff, but the practical problems for, say,
local government staff, to obtain qualifications while holding down a job are often insurmountable. With the exception of UNE in NSW and RMIT in Victoria, universities have largely failed to deliver distance education in a practical way to students situated in regional Australia. TAFEs, in collaboration with universities could become venues for facilitating planning education in regional areas through intensive or distance modes (John Vandenberg, pers comm, 29/09/07).

It is important to assess demand for and derive a clear definition of the role of certificate planners. The views of the Australian Local Government Association (ALGA) should be sought on this. For a Certificate IV to succeed in the long term, PIA will need to accredit and promote the role of a ‘certificate’ planner and present a career pathway forward to prospective students.

There appears to be a significant gap in knowledge of this sector and its potential in relation to training urban planners. The Planning Institute of Australia needs to more seriously recognise its role and potential contribution especially in relation to articulated courses with the university sector.

4.5 E learning

There is much potential to use Information Technology resources to expand the range of tertiary level subject offerings available to planning students throughout Australia. It is particularly important for postgraduate students to mix and match from different offerings, with universities offering complementary units in line with Faculty strengths. These offerings could be provided wholly online or through online and residential or intensive delivery modes.

An online reservoir of selected course materials, and shared student blog sites or discussion boards, accessible to instructors and planning students (perhaps with varying levels of access), would significantly expand the range of educational resources available for planning scholars in Australia. The Australian and New Zealand Association of Planning Schools might facilitate the establishment of such a resource, subject to funding constraints and the interest of the planning schools and individual academics.

4.6 Summary of key issues and points for discussion

This chapter has outlined the range of PIA accredited graduate and undergraduate planning programs in Australia, offered at universities in all States but mainly in the capital cities. There are similarities and differences in the length of planning degrees as well as the core and optional content they cover. Increasingly, continuing professional education and the TAFE sector may have important roles in providing initial professional training or in updating skills and knowledge in response to industry needs. Connections between PIA, university planning schools, and secondary education could also be strengthened in the future. There is potential to enhance access to planning education and increase choice through greater use of distance education and online learning.

Over the last decade, single planning schools within universities have gradually disappeared to the point now where there is no planning department in its own right remaining in any Australian University. This in itself may not be problem but experience by planning program leaders has generally been that their programs have been placed under considerable pressure within larger faculties to provide savings and efficiencies and more importantly to modify curriculum offerings to meld within the larger faculty requirements i.e. ‘we can no longer afford small specialised classes’ directives. PIA can play an important and instrumental role with universities during significant change within the sector. These issues are discussed further in chapter six.

In summary, key questions for discussion include:
• What should be the core foundations of undergraduate planning education in Australia? Is there a need for more, or less, standardisation in the content and length of undergraduate planning degrees?

• Should PIA encourage the current proliferation of postgraduate planning programs at the Master and Graduate Diploma level? To what extent should basic requirements about degree length and status be standardised?

• What is the real level of industry and local government demand for a TAFE certificate IV, and to what extent should PIA foster and embrace such a qualification?

• How should rural and regional access to planning education be better facilitated?

• What connections between university education and continuing professional development programs are needed?

• What are the potential and emerging roles of internet-based learning in Australian planning education and how might these be best fostered? Is there potential to promote greater collaboration across the planning programs and different educational providers?

• How should information about planning program enrolment trends be reported and monitored?
Chapter 5: Quality assurance and accreditation in Higher Education

This chapter outlines current approaches to quality assurance and accreditation in planning education. Quality assurance refers to processes for systematically monitoring and ensuring value in the delivery of a particular service or good. The quality of higher educational institutions in Australia is externally regulated by the Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) and by the Research Quality Framework.

Professional industry accreditation of particular degree programs, such as the accreditation of planning degrees by PIA, provides a different type of quality assurance. Accreditation signals that the degree program covers the necessary disciplinary knowledge areas and technical skills for effective professional planning practice, within an appropriate teaching and learning environment.

There are significant resource implications of approaches to assuring quality in planning education programs and research:

- Program funding and resources increasingly depend on institutions being able to demonstrate a level of performance in relation to defined measures (typically concerning research output and student satisfaction);
- External and internal processes of quality assurance and auditing come with significant administrative and resource costs in and of themselves, with particular impacts for smaller programs; and,
- In planning, there is potential for duplication in meeting quality assurance reporting requirements and the reporting criteria needed for program accreditation.

It is important to understand the pressures facing planning programs, particularly smaller programs, in meeting quality assurance and accreditation requirements in Australia, and these pressures are outlined below. But while the following sections highlight the difficulties some programs may face in demonstrating quality research and teaching performance, we also advocate in favour of articulating indicators of planning program quality in Australia. These indicators should align with international markers of high planning program performance, as well as Australian accreditation requirements and expectations.

5.1 Quality assurance in Higher Education

Internationally there is an increasing trend towards measuring ‘quality assurance’ in the teaching and research performance of higher education providers (Hambleton 2006). These trends mirror shifts towards greater auditing and accountability for the public sector generally and for publicly funded activities. In higher education, they have been experienced more keenly in nations like the United Kingdom and Australia where government funding accounts for a significant proportion of funds for teaching and research. In the United States the trend is towards performance measurement of higher education institutions, although to date planning schools have resisted external performance measure approaches such as that imposed by the United Kingdom’s Research Assessment Exercise (Stiftel et al 2004). The implications for planning schools of needing to demonstrate competitive research performance in relation to these external measures as a basis for funding and for university recognition are outlined further below.

5.1.1 Quality assurance processes in Australian higher education

The Australian Higher Education Quality Assurance Framework establishes a role for the Commonwealth, States and Territories, and the Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) in quality assurance in Australian higher education. There are 43 self-accrediting higher education institutions in Australia, 39 of which are universities. Universities are self-accrediting but must have appropriate quality assurance processes in place. These include processes for peer assessment of research output, external examiners for the award of...
higher degrees, and involving professional bodies in the accrediting professional courses (DEST 2007). The Australian Universities Quality Agency (AUQA) was established in 2000 to undertake an independent auditing role in relation to the higher education sector.

National protocols provide consistent standards for educational quality in Australia. All tertiary institutions funded on a three-year basis are required to submit an annual institutional Quality Assurance and Improvement Plan, including data from two national surveys – the Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ), which assesses graduate perceptions of teaching received at university, and the Graduate Destination Survey, which assesses employment success of recent graduates.

In May 2004, the Howard Government introduced a ‘Research Quality Framework’ evaluation process. The RQF was broadly modelled on the British Government’s Research Assessment Exercise (RAE). The 20-year RAE process has been marked by deep criticism of purpose and process within the British academic community. The union representing the British academic community comments thus:

The RAE has had a disastrous impact on the UK higher education system, leading to the closure of departments with strong research profiles and healthy student recruitment. It has been responsible for job losses, discriminatory practices, widespread demoralisation of staff, the narrowing of research opportunities through the over-concentration of funding and the undermining of the relationship between teaching and research (University and College Union 2008).

The Australian RQF was to assess both research quality and research impact, with impact defined as “the social, economic, environmental, and/or cultural benefit of research to end-users in the wider community regionally, nationally and/or internationally”. The RQF had major resource implications, as it was to be the new competitive basis for deciding the allocation of Commonwealth research funding to universities.

Unlike the RAE, the Australian RQF embraced consideration of policy and end user impact; not simply confined to traditional academic markers of quality. In the context of a tough, competitive national evaluation of research quality, this feature was likely to advantage planning and other professional and policy-focused disciplines. In an evaluation frame based only on traditional indicators, such as journal ranking and citation indexes, planning would likely perform poorly against non-applied cognate disciplines, such as geography. This is partly because planning educative endeavour necessitates the constant application of knowledge to professional practice. Planning education also carries heavy expectation of engagement by educators with industry, government and the profession. These features enrich the planning education task, but also leave less time for traditional ‘blue sky’ research on planning issues. This in turn diminishes the ability of planning educators to produce the streams of high quality publications typical, or at least expected, in other social and environmental scientific fields.

Planning is also a highly integrative, multi-disciplinary field, meaning that its educators may disperse their publications across a wider than normal range of journals and books (Webster 2006). All this makes planning a field that is resistant to conventional research quality assessment. The UK based scholar, Deborah Peel, summarises the dilemma facing many planning educators in an era of ever tightening evaluation of quality and output: “one of the implications of this variegated context is the difficulty of building up a visible (and measurable?) head of steam, and establishing a core of educational research” (Peel 2006, p. 42). Any attempt to apply traditional or conventional assessment frames to planning will likely produce a misleading and inappropriate evaluation of its overall quality. In a context of increasingly hard driven assessment based funding, this would have potentially serious implications for the resourcing of planning research.
The new Rudd Government scrapped the RQF in early 2008, but committed itself to an alternative research assessment exercise. Its new model is yet to be announced but the Commonwealth has stated that it will not measure impact as part of the exercise. The clear implication is that the traditional quality markers mentioned above will be the exclusive basis for quality assessment and hence distribution of research funding. This is very concerning for the planning education field, which will struggle in this context to compete against cognate fields. The implications extend beyond cash resourcing for research: as with the UK experience, the universities are unlikely to want to maintain poorly rated programs or fields. The planning education sector would benefit from PIA support and advocacy as the Commonwealth finalises its new research assessment model.

5.1.2 International trends in quality assurance and performance management in higher education and planning pedagogy

Recent changes in the systems of quality assurance and performance management in the United Kingdom and in the United States may provide a useful reference, and inform discussion, about prospective changes to Australian Higher Education (and planning education in particular). In the United Kingdom the key vehicles for quality assurance in higher education are the ‘Research Assessment Exercise’ and the ‘Teaching Quality Assessment’. Both processes represent a highly centralised approach to measuring performance and allocating rankings and funds to educational institutions on the basis for this assessment.

Teaching Quality Assessments are conducted in the UK to “ensure that higher education institutions provide value for money, are rewarded for teaching excellence, and are accountable to their major stakeholders” (Derounian 1999 p. 237). The process is based on self-assessment of a subject area, then an independent assessment by a team of peers who considers this material, and makes a final public report and score. The ‘Self Assessment Document’ covers six areas – curriculum design, content and organisation, teaching, learning and assessment, student progression and achievement, student support and guidance, learning resources, quality assurance and enhancement.

A review of the impacts of the Teaching Quality Assessment Process and Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) accreditation processes on the performance of teaching programs considered whether the reflective activities for assessment purposes might produce improvements to courses, or at least solidarity as “colleagues confront a common ‘enemy’/work towards a common goal” (Derounian 1999, p. 239). However, it was found that self-assessments rarely contained honest or reflective appraisals, and participants reported time wasted in preparation, high levels of stress and distraction from other opportunities. The possibility of combining both quality assurance and accreditation processes was unpopular with respondents who regarded a joint process likely to be far more stressful an experience.

There is no equivalent of these teaching and research quality assessment processes in the United States. The US National Research Council (NRC) undertakes performance reviews of university programs. However, to date planning programs have not been subject to formal NRC reviews. Nonetheless, in an environment of scarce resources, it has been argued that internal university support is more likely to flow to programs able to demonstrate high performance according to externally recognised NRC criteria.

In 2004 academics from Florida State University attempted to review US planning programs according to NRC approaches (Stiftel et al. 2004). The criteria applied are likely relevant measures of quality planning programs in Australian universities. They relate to:

1. Reputation – scholarly quality of program faculty and effectiveness in educating research scholars;
2. Staffing - total number of Faculty, percentage of new professors, percentage of full professors, percentage of faculty with research support over five years, percentage of faculty publishing in academic journals and density of publications and citations;
3. Students - variables include numbers of full and part time grad students, percentages that are female, percentages of PhDs awarded by diversity statistics, and percentage of PhDs with research assistantships as main means of support.

Alternative approaches to performance measurements of programs, including surveys of employers, surveys of graduates, or both, are also proposed.

5.2 Professional Accreditation

Professional bodies – both within the built environment fields and across other disciplines, from medicine to law – have direct involvement in ensuring the quality of educational programs. Accreditation provides a form of external review of educational programs to ensure that standards (set by the professional body) are being met, and that the qualification provides a basis for competent practice.

5.2.1 Accreditation of planning education programs

Planning education policy and approaches to accreditation of planning programs have been the subject of reviews in the United Kingdom, United States, New Zealand and Australia over the last five years. The Royal Town Planning Institute Education Commission reviewed the Institute’s policies, practices and requirements relating to the education, training and qualification of planners resulting in a new Policy Statement on Initial Planning Education (RTPI 2004), and a new approach to the ongoing accreditation process for established programs. Similarly the Planning Accreditation Board of the American Planning Association has produced a new set of Criteria and Procedures for Planning Accreditation. One of the drivers for the new criteria is to strengthen the “links between professional and educational practice” (PAB 2007, p. 5).

5.2.2 Planning program accreditation in Australia

In Australia, the Planning Institute of Australia informs the delivery of undergraduate and postgraduate planning education in Australia by offering course accreditation in line with the ‘Education Policy for Recognition of Australian Planning Qualifications’ (PIA 2002). The purpose of accreditation is to formally recognise programs that give graduates sufficient grounding for effective professional practice. PIA’s Education Policy outlines:

- The aims of recognising Australian Planning Qualifications
- Criteria for recognising Australian Planning Qualifications
- The core curriculum for planning and
- The procedures for a visiting planning accreditation board.

The core curriculum in planning outlined by PIA is extensive (PIA 2002):

**Knowledge of:**
- The purpose and methods of planning
- The natural and cultural environment, principles of ecologically sustainable development, methods of evaluating, improving, building and managing the environments,
- The political, legal and institutional contexts of planning including the influence of native title on land tenure,
- Relevant social, economic and environmental principles and
- Indigenous Australian cultures, including relationships between their physical environment and associated social and economic systems.

**Skills in:**
- Problem definition and objectives formulation for development and conservation
- Understanding policy formulation, evaluation and implementation
- Plan making and the use of planning instruments
- Understanding urban design principles
- Understanding urban and regional economies
- Understanding strategic dimensions and their implications;
- Strategic planning related to economic climate, social change and environmental sustainability;
- Development control and its relationship with its environment and with strategic plans;
- Mediation and conflict resolution
- Research methods including quantitative and qualitative analysis
- Verbal written and graphic communication;
- The use of technology
- Knowledge synthesis and application in planning practice
- Understanding and responding to cultural diversity and difference

Adoption of professional ethics:
- Integrate value issues in practice, ranging from professional ethics of consideration of future generations, to respect for diversity and the importance of social equity
- Assess critically the use of professional knowledge, skills and communication.

The policy also incorporates requirements and recommendations about course duration and structure, as well as about institutional leadership, staffing, facilities and resources.

The focus of the educational policy is on outcomes, with no explicit distinction between TAFE, undergraduate and post-graduate programs. However, PIA only accredits university planning degrees as the qualifications needed for admission to the profession. Unlike professional planning institutions in the United States (the American Institute of Certified Planners), and the United Kingdom (the Royal Town Planning Institute), PIA does not require a separate exam to gain membership to the institute³. Traditionally, the approach has been to accredit the qualifications rather than individuals. This has been a deliberate decision but may need to be revisited in light of the introduction of many new university programs and other related planning qualifications.

The accreditation process itself occurs approximately every five years. It involves a self-assessment exercise, and the appointment of an accreditation team of peers, who visit the Faculty seeking accreditation, examine evidence of performance in teaching and research, and meet with students. As outlined below, this process is not inconsistent with the approach undertaken in the United States and currently in New Zealand.

There are a number of potential issues with the current accreditation process. The process is resource intensive, both for the programs seeking accreditation and for the visiting accreditation team. It is not clear that the process contributes to or supports the strategic planning cycles of the program so represents an additional administrative and reporting burden on Faculty members who already have high teaching and research loads. The five-year pause between accreditation visits may be too long to ensure that professional institute expectations of curricula content and quality are being met or able to be maintained over time. The curricula expectations as expressed in the current PIA educational policy may also require review or refinement in the light of the issues identified in this paper and in relation to continuing changes in the needs of the profession.

³ Note that in the absence of such an exam, PIA’s Certified Practicing Planner stream of membership provides a form of quality assurance regarding core professional skills and knowledge of certified members.
5.2.3 International trends and requirements in planning program accreditation

Accreditation requirements of planning degrees in the United Kingdom and the United States are of particular interest in Australia as these large jurisdictions inform much of our system and thinking. In addition, many graduates wish to practice in other English speaking jurisdictions, so connections with both the UK and US, as well as New Zealand and Canada (with which PIA has reciprocal education and membership recognition) are of relevance. Where planning qualifications are comparable it is easier for Australian graduates to practice internationally and even achieve membership of another professional institute, such as the Royal Town Planning Institute in the United Kingdom, or the American Institute of Certified Planners. International trends in planning program accreditation requirements also provide a basis for insightful comparisons with Australian approaches, as many of the objectives and requirements of professional practice are similar in other English speaking jurisdictions.

Accreditation in the United Kingdom

In the United Kingdom, the current Royal Town Planning Institute (RTPI) education policy statement (2004) states that “planning education should seek to promote critical thinking about space and place as the basis for action or intervention” (RTPI 2004, p. 1.4). Accordingly, accredited planning curricula should provide a broad understanding of the main principles for place and sustainability. The policy recognizes both generalist (called “spatial”), “specialist” and “combined” planning programs. “Generalist” programs should “avoid simplistic or shallow coverage of too wide a range of topics and should instead promote integrated understanding of relevant knowledge, skills and values and of their application in practice” (RTPI 2004 p. 2.4). “Specialist” programs should focus on specific issues, like “regeneration, environmental management, urban design, transport management or planning research” leading to achievement of “relevant learning outcomes”. “Combined” planning programs offer the opportunity to undertake both a spatial planning degree plus a specialisation (RTPI 2004 p. 2.4).

The RTPI policy argues strongly in favour of a diversity of specialist, spatial and combined planning programs, as well as the need for a variety of study opportunities, including part time, full time, distance learning, or mixed mode, in-service and block time courses. There are requirements about the proportion of time dedicated to generalist and specialist planning components of undergraduate and postgraduate degrees.

‘Effective’ planning schools should combine a “flourishing academic community within the planning subject area (and allied areas) and a supportive institutional context within which initial planning education can flourish” (RTPI 2004, p. 6). As part of the accreditation process, they should demonstrate:

- A clear planning focus, with a statement of educational philosophy establishing the “distinctive contribution the school makes to planning education” and demonstrating “how its programs promote critical thinking about space and place as the basis for action or intervention and how its students are prepared for entry into the profession”.
- Institutional support, including consultation with stakeholders and partners, students and practitioners, staff development policies, active relationships with planning practice, and “clear leadership of the school’s planning programs”.
- Achievements “in the quality of its research, teaching and links with practice”.
- Stakeholder involvement - “the school should have links with planning practice and with other allied professions working in the planning field”.
- Professional involvement - a significant proportion of staff should normally be RTPI members and this would normally include the Head of School and Course/Programme Director / leader).
- External examiners.
- Resources – numbers and staff/student ratios should be commensurate with the programs being delivered; support staff, learning resources / support; accommodation.
• Equality and diversity – “the school should demonstrate how it is seeking to achieve diversity of student intake and how the programmes are designed to reflect the diversity within communities”.

Each program’s statement of educational philosophy “should be drafted as a paper that fully explains and justifies the educational approach taken in the particular programs in relation to a critical evaluation of past, present, and likely future directions in planning theory and practice”. It should reference the relationships between spatial planning and specialist elements of planning education; teaching content and research strengths in the school, practice relationships and relationships with the planning profession.

The policy emphasises that planning curricula should provide a platform of understanding of the broad principles that govern planning operations, rather than meet an ever widening set of specific requirements. Opportunities for planners to seek additional qualifications in an area of specialisation later in their career are to be encouraged.

The process for maintaining accreditation of planning programs in the United Kingdom has shifted towards a more flexible and collaborative approach through the establishment of “Partnership Boards”. Once a planning school has established one or more accredited degrees that have been operating successfully for at least five years, the school is usually invited to establish a Partnership Board (Ward 2007, p. 1). Partnership Boards include representatives from the Planning School, local practitioners nominated by the school, and RTPI representatives. They meet annually to provide continual monitoring and development of currently accredited courses.

*The American Planning Accreditation Board*

In the United States, the recently revised Planning Accreditation Board requirements for planning programs are comprehensive (PAB 2007). Criteria include school size, staffing arrangements, curriculum content and structure and graduate competencies.

Program accreditation expectations in the United States include a guideline for degree programs to have five faculty members with a 10:1 student faculty ratio. Programs must have a minimum of 25 students for accreditation. Undergraduate degrees are to be a minimum of four academic years, and graduate degrees with no undergraduate requirements in planning need two years equivalent.

Accreditation requirements also imply at least one professorial appointment and department secretary but it has been noted that a program of even 50 students is not sufficient to support staff or administrative support at this level (Steiner 2003). Common strategies for increasing capacity and resources of planning programs in the US are to: increase the number of doctoral students; better exploit mainstream funding formulae; and boost research performance. This strategy has resonance for planning programs in Australian universities, as discussed in the following chapter. However, the approach may distance academia from practice, as PhD research differs significantly from professional training at the master’s level. One approach is to balance this academic focus by inviting practicing planners to be strongly involved in curriculum teaching and delivery, in an honorary or part time capacity.

Basic knowledge and skill requirements for accredited degrees include: “structure and function of urban settlements”; “history and theory of planning processes”; “administrative, legal and political aspects of plan making and policy”; and familiarity with at least one area of specialised knowledge such as housing, land use, economic development, urban design, the environment, and transportation (PAB 2007 pp. 17-19). Skills components relate to research and data collection, quantitative analysis and computers, “written, oral and graphic communication”, “collaborative problem solving, plan making, and program design”, and “synthesis and application of knowledge to practice”.

The accreditation document for the US also identifies planning program values to ensure that students are able to become ‘ethical practitioners’. These values relate to equity, social
justice, economic welfare, citizen participation, respect for diversity, the conservation of natural resources, and the ethics of professional practice.

The process for maintaining accreditation in the United States involves the preparation of a self-study report, outlining the ways in which the program meets the accreditation requirements, as well as a site visit. The site visit team must include two planning educators and practitioners. Accreditation terms may last for a maximum of seven years, depending on the extent to which a program demonstrates compliance with accreditation requirements and expectations for this to continue. There are provisions for an interim progress report to be made on particular areas of compliance.

Accreditation in New Zealand

The current process for program accreditation in New Zealand is similar to that of Australia, with five yearly intensive reviews undertaken by a panel appointed by the New Zealand Planning Institute. The panel includes two practising planners (from the public and private sector), a Maori representative and an international academic (Education Review Working Group 2007, p. 5). This process is being reconsidered in the light of a wider education policy review. Issues highlighted to date include the adequacy of a five yearly review and the pressures associated with the process for the planning school and visiting panel. The institute is seeking to develop “more supportive, collegial, open and ongoing ways of ensuring that professional standards in planning education are maintained, whilst also providing the assistance that the planning schools are providing relevant contemporary education” (Education Review Working Group 2007, p. 5).

5.3 Summary of key issues and questions for discussion

This chapter has outlined the ways in which university planning programs are reviewed for educational quality and adherence to professional standards. The opportunity is to use higher education quality assurance processes and PIA accreditation requirements as strategic planning and performance monitoring tools for individual programs. However, in practice there is a need for far greater streamlining and convergence if university quality assurance requirements are to align with, and complement, overall program planning and accreditation processes.

Key questions for discussion include:

- Should PIA seek to support Australian planning programs in external quality assurance and research performance assessment exercises? If so, how?
- What are the discipline specific markers of quality and high performance in planning education and research, as a basis for external assessment and review?
- What are the likely implications of the Commonwealth’s new research assessment exercise for planning schools and educators?
- What are the indicators of planning program quality in Australia, as a basis for PIA accreditation?
- Are the current PIA accreditation requirements for programs appropriate and adequate?
- Should the current PIA accreditation process be reviewed? Would more frequent monitoring and evaluation be preferable? How might this be done?
- Is it possible or desirable to maximise convergence between university quality assurance processes and PIA accreditation reporting requirements?
Chapter 6: Resourcing planning education
This chapter considers the resources needed to maintain high quality planning education in Australia. It focuses on the university sector, which has been experiencing mounting resource pressures. Planning education has heightened exposure to these trends. The chapter considers the need for PIA to adopt an explicit and ongoing interest in the resource context of university planning education and, as part of this, to identify, even codify, the core teaching and professional engagement capacities of an accredited degree program.

6.1 Resource needs of tertiary institutions
The distinct quantitative and qualitative dimensions of resource needs for planning education are not always well understood in the university environment. Studios, practicums, field trips and the need for (often remunerated) professional input mean that planning is a more intensive educational enterprise than many of the degree programs with which it might be collocated. Even kindred social science programs, such as Human Geography, are less resource intensive and do not have the demanding professional engagement expectations of planning education. Professional engagement obligations carried by planning teaching staff are not always fully comprehended within the university environment, where the ‘service’ component of individual workload is often taken to mean contribution to internal university committees and administrative processes.

Most planning programs are no longer free standing – i.e., as independent university teaching and administrative entities. They are frequently situated within larger administrative structures that contain programs – notably Architecture and Engineering – which often possess more institutional power, especially over budgets. In these contexts, planning programs risk ‘institutional sidelining’, with deleterious consequences for resourcing and administrative status. It is important that planning programs, as subsidiary elements in larger administrative and teaching units, maintain clear professional and industry links, for example through a dedicated external advisory board. Planning programs may not, however, be individually resourced to do this.

Consider also the general resource pressures the Australian university sector has had to endure including increasingly straitened finances over the past decade (or more). Virtually all degree programs have had to accommodate major and sudden productivity increases, measured in a long run decline in staff: student ratios. Australian universities now rely increasingly on discretionary government and non-government funding, adding to a climate of fiscal conservatism and uncertainty. Universities are now marked by fierce internal competition for resources. One principal means for raising extra revenue in this context, the recruitment of fee paying overseas students, is not as available to planning as it is to other programs, including Architecture, Business and Economics. Unlike these programs, planning simply doesn’t generate strong and consistent international demand for fee-paying students. In the context of a national shortage of planning professionals, the relative insignificance of the overseas student stream into planning bears critical consideration. It may be that if universities had stronger awareness of the national shortage of planners, there might be more resources dedicated to the recruitment and retention of overseas planning students.

In planning programs, the relentless march of resource constraints is measured in the decline of casual teaching budgets (reducing the prospects for external professional input), and limits to supporting pedagogical streams such as tutorials, laboratories, workshops and fieldtrips. A particular concern is the reduced and declining prospects for fieldwork in planning programs. Arguably, urban fieldwork is critical to planning pedagogy, if relatively resource expensive in terms of cost and increasing bureaucratic administrative effort and onerous duty of care obligations. The decline of fieldwork in planning marks a withdrawing tide of resourcing in the university sector. It is especially important for pedagogical purposes that planning students experience firsthand the planning and urban development
environments that lie within and beyond their immediate city or jurisdiction. This demand is hard to meet in the current resourcing environment.

There are other resourcing costs integral to successful planning programs that are not well appreciated in a university context marked by resource constraints. These include the need to maintain:

- An external advisory board;
- Industry liaison and engagement program (i.e., PIA CPD and CPP functions);
- Resources to support accreditation processes (including senior staff for ‘loan’ to accreditation processes for other programs);
- An alumni program;
- Up to date teaching and meeting facilities, especially studios and GIS laboratories;
- Bursaries, placement programs;
- Attendance of staff at costly (for academics) PIA state and national, and related, conferences.

The latter point bears underlining. Planning teaching staff find it extremely difficult to pay the registration and attendance costs for PIA events, especially divisional and national conferences. University support for conference attendance for academic staff is extremely limited. The PIA should consider some form of discounted conference and event charging for planning educators, as is currently offered to students. Inviting academics to present at such events and to chair sessions provides a way of strengthening the connections between the academy and the profession. Academic attendance at PIA conferences might be further supported through accreditation requirements. These should explicitly emphasise the importance of planning program faculty maintaining active participation in institute activities such as the national congress.

6.2 Scholarships and Student Support

There is a view that bursaries – top up or incentive funds – are not an effective means for attracting and retaining undergraduate planning students. In a context of mounting degree fee pressure, bursaries are likely to be seen by students as marginal, at worst inconsequential, supports.

There is clearly a role for industry funded scholarships and cadetships in offering stronger inducements for undergraduate students to enter and remain within planning programs. At a time of labour shortages within the planning field generally, there is likely to be strong potential industry interest in such schemes, which both boost planning school enrolments and supply a stream of graduate professionals to supporting employers. The PIA could take a leading national role in conceiving and promoting scholarship and cadetship models.

PhD scholarships are a highly cost effective means of promoting doctoral research that will both train the next generations of planning educators and nurture and strengthen the profession and policy. Scholarships currently pay around $25,000 p.a. to the holder and are tax-free. They can be supported directly by industry, and paid through the university to take advantage of the tax-free provisions. Another, even more cost effective means for supporting PhD scholarships is through the Commonwealth’s Australian Research Council (ARC) Linkage Grant scheme. For as little as $6,000 p.a. over three years an industry partner can support a university’s application for Linkage funding of an entire PhD scholarship (Australian Postgraduate Award – Industry). The ARC pays the balance if the application is successful. The Queensland state planning department is currently supporting two planning doctorates at QUT and Griffith University (mentioned in chapter four) through an ARC competitive Linkage grant of this kind.
6.3 Access and equity
Across the university sector there exists a substantial variety of approaches towards equity in degree program participation for minority or under-represented social groupings. The strong historical gender imbalance in planning programs appears to have largely eased. In 2003, there was approximately 15 per cent higher representation of males over female students enrolled in Australian planning degrees (PIA 2004). That this has not yet translated to a better gender balance in senior ranks of the profession is a question for another discussion – although pondered in the National Inquiry into Planning Education and Employment.

There remain important equity deficits in planning education; notably an under-representation of students from Indigenous, disabled, regional and low social economic status backgrounds. There were only two identified indigenous students enrolled in planning programs in 2003. There is also doubtless much room for improvement in the equity profile of planning teaching staff, with Indigenous education an area of marked professional under-representation. That these backgrounds are frequently the social backdrops for key mainstream planning issues – Native Title, access and poverty – further underlines the need for improvement in access and equity in planning education.

6.4 Industry Funded Placements
"Industry Funded Placements" or work experience opportunities embed professional experience within a planning degree either as a core requirement or as an optional elective. Arguably, such placements are an integral component of a quality planning education experience, particularly at the undergraduate level. The effort required, however, to maintain placement programs is considerable and not well appreciated in the university sector (though individual institutions differ on this score). Professional placements are demanding of staff time and reliant upon industry interest and support. Again there appears to be a clear role for the PIA to play in devising and promoting a consistent work experience model across state and territory divisions. This is considered a high priority issue for the profession in terms of its interests in the quality and success of planning education.

We recognise that many planning programs, for various reasons, including resource constraints, do not currently require an industry placement to qualify for a planning degree. Fundamentally, we believe it is critical to ensure that students engage with some form of meaningful professional experience and have the opportunity to reflect on this experience during the course of their planning degree. Alternative models to structure this experience deserve further discussion and debate, in the context of PIA’s educational policy and accreditation requirements.

6.5 Renewing the Planning Academy
Many academics in Australian universities are reaching retirement age and there is likely to be a significant shortage of new generation scholars to replace them (Hugo 2005). If universities are to remain core providers of planning education, strategies are needed to renew the Australian planning academy. University lecturers require a specific set of academic qualifications (usually a PhD or equivalent for employment within Australian universities), as well as professional training and experience. Given the overall shortage of qualified planners in practice, there is a particular need to ensure that a generation of new planning academics are encouraged and supported in establishing a research and teaching career. To progress their careers, planning academics within an Australian university must meet the scholarly expectations of their universities in relation to research performance and publication output, while also maintaining currency in their area of professional practice.

There is an increasing emphasis on pedagogical quality within Australian universities, and many planning academics are now required to obtain post graduate teaching qualifications in addition to their professional and research degrees. These developments are welcome because they will significantly enhance the quality of teaching in university planning.
programs. However they also mean that planning academics must now meet an extremely demanding set of criteria for appointment and ongoing career progression.

However, as a result, it is likely that Australian planning programs will find it difficult to fill teaching vacancies at all levels – from junior lecturer through to senior professorial appointments. It will be necessary to appoint academics from related disciplinary fields (from architecture through to human geography or economics), and from overseas. A broad range of disciplinary and international perspectives reflect the profile of the profession overall and enhance the intellectual rigor and research capacity of planning programs. However, there is a risk that planning programs will suffer a reduction in the number of staff holding planning qualifications and experience, with implications for the delivery of professionally relevant programs.

There are a number of ways in which PIA might address these issues and support the enhancement and renewal of the Australian planning academy. Many have already been raised in this paper, or are already undertaken to some degree by PIA. They include dedicating funds for planning research to be undertaken by university researchers, providing outlets for publication and dissemination of research findings (for instance, maintaining a vibrant research and teaching focused stream in key PIA publications (Australian Planner and divisional equivalents). Other options include facilitating research projects through direct collaboration or by providing access to information, and providing opportunities for academics, particularly junior academics, to contribute to policy development processes.

The establishment of a Planning Research Institute as a focus for research projects and commissions, undertaken on behalf of PIA or the industry could make a significant contribution to the future of the Australian planning academy. At the same time such a model provides an opportunity to maximise the value gained from expenditure on research.

Universities are increasingly attuned to the societal impact of research activities, so there is an opportunity to reinforce the status of planning schools and planning research by recognising work that is influential for urban policy and practice. The national awards processes provide important recognition for planning scholarship and there may be opportunities to establish other forms of acknowledgement for work that makes a significant contribution to practice.

6.6 ‘Closing the loop’ – industry engagement and planning education

Industry engagement and professional issues are central, not peripheral, to planning pedagogy. The importance of industry engagement tends to be submerged in university contexts when planning is co-located with non-professional degree programs. A number of issues and imperatives merge when considering the need to ‘close the loop’ of planning education by adding the critical industry and professional segments. As part of the more rigorously defined approach to minimum resource and capacity needs advocated, the PIA should codify these imperatives as a set of engagement requirements for all accredited planning programs. This codification would be accompanied by the responsibility for PIA to devise workable and consistent engagement models and to help promote these consistently across the divisional landscape. It should be a condition of PIA membership and good professional citizenry that industry leaders strive to find ways to support the engagement needs of planning education programs.

For instance, an important strategy for ensuring that planning schools offer teaching programs that are attuned to the latest developments in practice is to formalise the involvement of professionals in planning degrees. Delivering a module or a series of lectures within a planning program provides a tremendous professional development opportunity for practitioners, particularly those in mid career and at senior levels. Assisting in the design and marking of assessment items, particularly in relation to ‘live projects’ can prove extremely beneficial for both students and practitioners. Entry-level practitioners could also make a significant contribution to planning programs as tutors and mentors. Senior
practitioners can play an important role in supervising PhD or M. Phil degrees in planning programs, and even in collaborating in industry linkage schemes funded by the Australian Research Council.

Given resource constraints, it is unlikely that planning schools will be able to fund professional teachers to a significant level. However, PIA could increase the recognition made for teaching contributions in the awarding professional development “points”. PIA might also encourage public and private sector planning employers to actively encourage staff to contribute to university planning programs as a form of community service or outreach.

In short, we see the following activities as the core of an effective industry engagement stream for planning education programs:

- An active Professional Advisory Board;
- An active and well supported Industry Funded Placement program or equivalent opportunity for professional engagement and reflection;
- A continuous stream of opportunities for professional input into planning courses and research supervision; recognising, however, that there exist institutional and financial constraints to the appointment of external advisors;
- Active staff commitment to PIA and more general engagement opportunities.

For its part, the PIA should ensure:

- The presence of an active and well supported divisional Education Committee;
- An active and well supported national accreditation and education policy support program;
- Effective means and supports for involving planning education staff in PIA activities including reduced conference attendance fees and the maintenance of a vibrant research and teaching focused stream in key PIA publications.

### 6.7 Summary of key issues and questions for discussion

This chapter has outlined the range of resource issues affecting planning education, particularly within the tertiary sector where formal, accredited planning accreditation is provided. It raises access and equity in planning education, the role of industry funded placements, forms of scholarships and student support, and the need to attract and support new planning scholars and educators as senior academics in planning schools retire. The chapter concludes by identifying opportunities for “closing the loop” between research, teaching and professional practice through much stronger practitioner engagement in the provision of planning education, particularly through courses delivered by university planning schools. Arguably, the university sector poorly comprehends the unique, and often extensive, engagement and pedagogical demands faced by planning schools. In the context of growing resource scarcity and relentless managerial concern with costs, planning schools find it increasingly difficult to maintain the core capacities and activities needed to meet accreditation and broader pedagogical expectations.

Key questions for discussion include:

- How can PIA best identify, monitor and support the resource needs of tertiary institutions in Australia, through the accreditation process and or other advocacy activities?
- How can PIA, universities, and the profession, improve access to planning education for those of lower socio economic backgrounds, people with a disability, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, and those from regional and rural areas?
- How can PIA better encourage and support planning educator engagement in key PIA events and forums?
- Should industry-funded placements or work experience placements form a compulsory requirement of accredited planning qualifications, at undergraduate and postgraduate level? What are the best models for structuring work experience and professional reflection through planning education in Australia?
• How can PIA and the profession more broadly, support the needs of planning students, for instance through industry placements, scholarships, and cadetships?
• How can planning schools attract and retain educators with the appropriate academic qualifications and professional knowledge as senior academics retire?
• What strategies can best encourage new planning academics to establish a research and teaching career while maintaining connection to professional practice? How can PIA best support the research activities and profiles of Australian planning academics?
• How should PIA and the planning schools support industry engagement in the delivery of planning programs?
Chapter 7: The future agenda for planning education

At the start of this paper, we identified the following questions for exploration and discussion:

1. What are the major pressures and trends affecting planning education internationally and within Australia today?

2. What is the current profile of planning education in Australia and how does this compare internationally?

3. What does planning education in Australia need to deliver, in relation to industry, community, graduate, professional body, and disciplinary expectations?

4. What key interventions may need to be implemented for planning education to meet these expectations?

In this concluding chapter, we summarise the perspectives presented in this report, in relation to each of these questions.

7.1 Pressures and trends affecting planning education

Planning education is situated within broader educational and societal settings, both of which are experiencing significant transformation. Globally, major social, economic, demographic, environmental and technological shifts bring new demands for trained professionals to respond and lead effective processes of change. University planning schools, the traditional providers of planning education, are positioned between industry expectations for trained, workplace ready professionals and their broader role in researching, producing and disseminating the academic foundations of the discipline. Fundamental shifts in higher education, including changes to the evaluation and funding of research and teaching performance have implications for the way in which planning schools operate within their larger Faculties and universities.

There is a need to clearly recognise and support different sectors of planning education, ranging from secondary schooling through vocational training, planning degrees, research programs, and continuing professional development, although not all sectors require the same degree of active support from PIA. Similarly, it is important to ensure that the different segments of planning education in Australia have distinct and complementary roles.

Resource constraints are a major issue for maintaining high quality planning education in Australia. The delivery of strong university planning programs, including studios, field trips, practicums, and professional input requires a sustained level of funding but most planning schools report diminishing and uncertain budgets and reduced staff: student ratios.

Planning schools must maintain strong research output to ensure funding and reputation within the broader tertiary sector, and to continue to attract academic teaching staff. Pressures on existing planning school staff are high and it will be more difficult to attract and retain high calibre planning academics in the future. There is a need to better engage industry in teaching and research activities of planning university and vocational programs, while supporting academic participation and contribution to professional development and other PIA activities. This approach provides a model for better integrating research, teaching and practice, while overcoming some of the major resource constraints affecting planning education.

7.2 Profile of Australian planning education and the international context

Accredited tertiary sector programs at undergraduate and masters level provide the only option for a professionally recognised planning qualification in Australia. This is largely
consistent with the other international jurisdictions considered here. Accredited planning programs are delivered across all of the Australian states, but predominantly in capital cities. The core curriculum and elective offerings of these programs differ slightly but are broadly consistent with planning programs offered internationally in terms of content and duration. Further detailed examination and discussion of Australian planning curricula is warranted as part of any review of accreditation requirements, although the basic elements of the current accreditation policy are consistent with international expectations and those expressed by Australian planning academics and industry.

While there have been some moves to establish vocational and para-professional qualifications in planning through TAFE and some university providers, there is clearly potential for further work in this area. PIA must take a lead coordinating role in this process if there is a commitment to its continuation. There is potential to combine teaching in the TAFE sector with strategies for distance education such as through E-Learning.

The Certified Practicing Planner process and associated Continuing Professional Development curriculum provides a formal basis for ensuring that practitioners are engaged in quality lifelong learning. There is a need to reflect on the delivery of this curriculum and the potential relationships to university education planning programs, if any.

7.3 Expectations for Australian planning education

There is both convergence and divergence in views about what Australian planning education needs to deliver, from the perspectives of industry, students and graduates, academics, and universities more broadly. A fundamental expectation and requirement by industry is for a sufficient supply of skilled planners, and to achieve this it is argued that the scope of planning education must extend beyond traditional university planning degrees to para-professional training, vocational and continuing professional development. Existing approaches will need to diversify, provide more flexible modes of entry, articulation, and delivery. The need for rural and regional areas to have better access to planning education is emphasised.

There is commonality in the core areas of knowledge and skill regarded by students, practitioners and employers to be important outcomes of a planning education. Skills in oral and written communication and project management, as well as knowledge of planning law and urban design are emphasised. These core skills and knowledge align well with the generic attributes universities promote as part of their broader educational agenda. There is a need for planning education to promote critical reflection of the planning system and key knowledge underpinnings, including those that have precluded meaningful consultation and engagement with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people.

There is a need to review accreditation arrangements to ensure that courses are meeting the expectations of industry, students, graduates and the planning academy. There is potential for the accreditation process itself to be undertaken in a more constructive, flexible, and collegial way. Ideally, the process would complement or draw on material prepared for other formal quality assurance requirements affecting planning schools.

It is important to articulate clear indicators of planning program quality as a basis for accreditation as well as for reference by universities and planning programs themselves. We propose the following indicators of planning program quality in Australia:

- A clear statement of program objectives and values, consistent with a spatial planning orientation and broader goals of diversity, ethical practice and sustainability;
- A properly resourced program faculty with a clear program leader, or leaders, at professorial or associate professor level and several research active teachers; including at least one member of staff who is a qualified member of PIA.
• A commitment to leading public understanding and debate on urban, regional, environmental, or design policy, and in providing constructive analysis or critique on aspects of policy or practice;
• Regular participation in national and international forums on planning education and research, including PIA congresses, ANZAPS and other planning school conferences;
• Effective processes for the involvement of students, graduates, industry, and PIA in contributing to program objectives, values, curriculum design, and research dissemination;
• A strong commitment to research training and research through PhD and MPhil programs;
• Engagement with the local or regional community through outreach or pro bono activities.

7.4 A vision for planning education in Australia

In chapter one, we established the need to formulate a vision for planning education in Australia and for this vision to be supported by a clear articulation of the role for planning education as well as a set of more detailed objectives. Drawing on the issues outlined in the previous chapters, we propose the following vision of planning education in Australia as a focus for further discussion and refinement.

Australian planning education supports the profession in facilitating, promoting, and responding to processes of urban and regional change. A spectrum of distinct learning opportunities, ranging through secondary, vocational, tertiary, and continuing professional development engages students, practitioners, researchers, and members of the community in sharing and generating knowledge about spatial processes and governance. Dynamic learning environments emphasise the nexus between theory and practice, fostering capacity for Australian planners to lead public policy and discourse for sustainability and social equity, in a climate of rapid societal change.

Consistent with this overall vision, we propose that the role of planning education in Australia is to shape the profession of the future by:

• Generating and disseminating knowledge about planning policy and practice across all educational scales (from secondary education through to continuing professional development) and in relation to the triple bottom line goals of sustainability
• Grounding future planning professionals in the fundamental cognate disciplinary areas of planning, and contributing to these bodies of knowledge
• Leading and contributing to public awareness and constructive debate about planning policy and decisions across Australia’s cities and regions.

In our view, the objectives for planning education in Australia are to:

• Attract and support high quality secondary, tertiary and mid career students from a diversity of cultural and educational backgrounds;
• Engage students in their planning education and instil a capacity for lifelong learning and an ongoing commitment to and connection with the profession;
• Deliver planning curricula that are conscious of international directions in planning knowledge, skills and modes of learning while reflecting Australian circumstances, and contribute to the development of generic competencies from written and oral communication skills to critical thinking and analysis, adaptability, and sensitivity to different social and cultural contexts;
• Offer a choice in learning modes and specialisations appropriate to the needs of planning students, industry, and educational level and supportive of the core values of the profession;
• Be grounded within a strong and collegiate research culture dedicated to generating and disseminating planning knowledge of high theoretical and applied value;
• Maximise opportunities for lifelong engagement in planning learning and research across traditional educational sectors as well as across industry and the broader community;
• Deliver a range of training opportunities in key competencies required for effective professional planning practice and to continuously review and adapt these opportunities in response to societal changes and the needs of industry.

7.5 Recommendations and next steps

This paper has raised many issues and questions for discussion. Deliberation on these issues will have significant implications for planning education in Australia, including a revision of the current education policy, approaches to accreditation and processes for communication, support and engagement between planning educators and the profession, as represented by the PIA.

The following recommendations outline processes and measures to progress the proposals contained in this report and future discussions arising from it.

Review of PIA Educational Policy and Accreditation requirements

1. It is time to review the PIA educational policy to recognise the specific roles of different educational sectors and providers, and reiterate the core role of University planning schools in providing initial planning education through to the production of future planning educators.

2. It is also timely to review the PIA accreditation requirements and processes in the light of existing quality assurance reporting requirements, as well as the indicators of planning school quality proposed above.

Increasing access to planning education

3. Increased access to planning education in rural and regional areas is a priority. There is also a need to maximise choice in course offerings for planning students, beyond the range able to be offered within any single planning school. PIA and the Educational Committee should encourage course providers to collaborate with TAFEs in the provision of distance education, including internet-based learning opportunities. Resources should be sought to establish a common pool of online post graduate (and potentially undergraduate) course materials, perhaps hosted by the Australia and New Zealand Association of Planning Schools (ANZAPS).

Enhancing industry engagement

4. More consistent and structured industry engagement in the provision of university planning programs (teaching, assessment, research supervision, tutoring, and mentoring, as well as industry support for work placements, scholarships, cadets, and relevant research commissions) would benefit planning programs and participating professionals. The planning schools and the PIA should foster stronger models for industry engagement.

Supporting planning research and scholarship

5. A dedicated planning research agenda and research body is needed to generate independent, high quality research delivered through a competitive process by Australian academics. One stream of this Planning Research Institute could invite universities to tender for specific research consultancies, or provide a clearing house for industry based work including an innovative or research element. PIA should take the lead in establishing such an Institute.

6. PIA and the planning schools should continue to support and reinforce the key role of planning research and pedagogy, through its own and related congresses, through
the dissemination of research through its own and affiliated publications, and by recognising significant contributions to planning scholarship and education.

**Advocacy**

7. We have argued that the PIA needs to develop a more explicit and ongoing awareness of the resource issues facing planning education and to commit itself to identifying ways of assisting planning schools to maintain capacity and quality. One broad means for doing this would be for the PIA to identify, codify and promote awareness of the resource and capacity needs of planning education within the university sector, through its accreditation requirements. Advocacy might also target the university hierarchies that manage teaching functions, typically a Deputy Vice Chancellor with designated responsibilities for ‘Education’, ‘Learning’, ‘Students’ or ‘Academic Affairs’.

The next step in this process will be a period of discussion, through circulation of this paper and meetings with key stakeholders from PIA members and education providers.
References


University of Sydney (2004), Generic Attributes of Graduates of the University of Sydney, University of Sydney Academic Board, 8/12/04


SUBMISSIONS

Comments on this document are welcome. Submissions should be made to:

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