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The PIA exists because planning makes a difference. The profession has a large role to uphold in making our communities liveable, cities viable, world accessible and environment balanced. This responsibility requires support, and that’s where PIA steps in. PIA helps to develop great planners through supporting professional development, and advising decision makers of best practice through policy and submissions. All of this would of course not be possible without the dedication and commitment of our members.

This isn’t a membership drive article but a member recognition opportunity. Saying this, if you do know anyone who isn’t a member who should be, please shoot me an email. Apart from PIA’s backbone being solidly held up by volunteers, our members are out in the profession every day making a significant difference. One of the best ways I think PIA acknowledges our members is through our honorific titles of Fellow and Life Fellow.

PIA is now seeking nominations for Fellows and Life Fellows and I would implore you to spend some time thinking about who amongst your peers deserves this recognition. Nominations must meet the following requirements;

• minimum ten years membership of PIA as a Full Member (not necessarily consecutive);
• minimum of three years in a senior professional or senior academic position; and
• demonstrated significant commitment to the profession of planning beyond normal employment requirements, having shown leadership within industry or profession beyond their individual organisation’s interests.

The ultimate decision on elevation to Fellow or Life Fellow is made by the PIA Board, which is the national governing body. The NSW Divisional Committee representatives are however very keen to ensure that all suitable candidates are recognised and put forward for elevation.

So please give some thought as to who you think is worthy of this important recognition. Please send your nomination(s) together with a brief curriculum vitae and a written response to the essential criteria to the NSW Office nswmanager@planning.org.au by 30 June 2016.

And back to planning making a difference, spend some time remembering your instrumental role in this - creating places for people to successfully live, work and play, supported by infrastructure provision to enable places to function well.

As our cities continue to grow and our regions respond to changing circumstances, the recognition of the value of planning becomes essential. Whilst you continue to play these vital roles, we will work on ensuring the value of the profession becomes better understood by the broader community.

As I stepped into my new role as NSW EO in mid-March, it fired up the age old question for me of why does PIA exist? Of course my employment is, personally, a great reason but my own job satisfaction requires it to be more than this and of course, as PIA members you need it to be more than this too.
Planning and planners play an increasingly vital role in facilitating and managing growth, the delivery of related infrastructure, and successful land-use patterns. It is timely to promote the value of planning in NSW, recognising the value it brings to the economy, environment and society.

The link between planning and people is something we need to work on. People in many communities see planning as perhaps not as enabling as it should be. The acid test would be to theoretically take planning out of the equation and for those communities to understand what would happen if that were the case.

I would like to claim these words as my own but they are in fact from the 2016 Royal Town Planning Institute’s President, Phil Williams. It seems that Australian planners have much in common with our British counterparts – the often poor public perception of planning, providing housing in the right places to avoid long commutes to work, providing sustainable, affordable and efficient transport and addressing the ‘infrastructure deficit’ such as schools, open space etc.

I would also like to think that PIA is well placed to sit at the centre of the urban renewal and the housing debate, as well as involvement in regional development. By the time this article is published a ‘Value of Planning’ workshop will have been held with key stakeholders across the planning industry to develop a framework to promote planning and planners in NSW and to hopefully partner with government agencies and industry groups to tell a united story.

This will include publicising the good initiatives that are taking place, such as the Greater Sydney Commission and to keep open the debate of simplifying processes and getting the right decisions made at the right time. It will also involve how we can get communities and individuals to positively engage with the planning system.

The RTPI are extremely active in this area and in 2012 published a report named the ‘Value of Planning’, written by Professor David Adams, University of Glasgow and Professor Craig Watkins University of Sheffield. The Executive Summary begins by stating:

*Any assessment of the economic value of planning needs to be clear about what is meant by ‘planning’ and ‘value’. Planning is a much broader activity than the narrow regulatory role to which it is relegated by many economists and some politicians. Planning helps to create the kinds of places where people want to live, work, relax and invest – often termed ‘shaping places’. Planning is about improving places by helping them to function better economically as well as socially and environmentally. Planning is then about outcomes, not just processes.*

To me, this paragraph succinctly articulates the point of promoting planning – it’s about creating places for people to successfully live, work and play, supported by infrastructure provision to allow places to function well. Good planning does not hinder economic growth but is in fact a major and essential contributor to economic growth.

On a completely different topic but perhaps just as important, I’d like to take this opportunity to encourage as many of you as possible to attend the State Conference, in Newcastle, on the 13th and 14th of October. There will be a number of great speakers, opportunities to participate in topical debates and not forgetting the great opportunity to network and socialise with fellow planners. Hope to see you there!
The NSW Government considers active leadership in strategic regional planning to be a fundamental element in encouraging investment and sustainable growth over the longer term. Regional NSW has long been the quiet achiever in our state, but it’s time to shine a light on our regions’ achievements and start planning for an even brighter future.

In population terms, the regions outside of Sydney are home to 40 per cent of the state’s population and will grow to just over 3 million people this year. Regions outside of the Lower Hunter, Central Coast and the Illawarra still represent over 1.7 million people, or 22 per cent of the State’s population.

NSW currently leads the nation in economic performance and our regional areas are a big part of that success story, contributing around $138 billion or one third of total Gross State Product per annum. Regional NSW has also created more than 58,600 new jobs over the past 12 months, representing 40 per cent of new jobs throughout the State and a 4.9 per cent increase on the previous year.

With an impact like that, it’s time we paid attention to the strategic planning and development reform needs of regional NSW.

Recently, a new draft code to fast track straightforward developments in regional areas has been put out on consultation. This will make it easier for families, farmers and businesses to build detached homes and ancillary buildings in regional areas. By clearing away the red tape and making it faster, simpler and cheaper to build in the bush, we can help stimulate growth in regional communities by encouraging building and investment.

Regional plans are another method for stimulating strategic growth across NSW. We have already released a final plan for the Illawarra Shoalhaven, draft plans for the Central Coast, Hunter, the North Coast, Central West and Orana, and Riverina and the Murray. There are more plans to be released in coming months, including New England North West, as well as the South East and Tablelands. By the end of 2016 and for the first time in NSW’s history, we will have regional plans released which cover the entire State.

Planning is not just about building more houses in our cities; our focus is to help foster equity of opportunity and promote sustainable development across the State. The Hunter region, for example, is the largest regional contributor to Gross State Product in Australia. It has the biggest regional population and largest share of regional employment. With an expected annual growth of 2.4 per cent over the next 20 years, it’s critical we get the strategic planning right.

The draft Hunter Regional Plan is focused on expanding the Hunter City (including Lake Macquarie, Newcastle and Maitland) as a regional centre with more affordable housing and investment in infrastructure. The completion of the Newcastle Bypass and upgrade to John Hunter Hospital services will also help increase transport access, employment opportunities and community services in the region.
The Illawarra Shoalhaven is another fast growing region home to leading tertiary education providers and a diverse natural environment, delivering $16.2 billion in annual economic output in 2013 alone. Through consultation with the Wollongong residents and the wider regional community, ecologically sustainable development and a strong diversified economy are the cornerstones of this area’s Regional Plan.

By contrast, the Central Coast Regional Plan prioritises infrastructure and investment in two newly identified regional employment corridors from Somersby to Erina and Tuggerah to Warnervale. This plan also identifies Gosford as a regional city with major centres at Tuggerah, Wyong and Erina. These investments will help deliver social benefits like new jobs, services and business opportunities for the area.

The Draft North Coast Plan outlines strategic choices to accommodate the ageing population in that region, such as the housing required to cater for different needs during every stage of life. This plan recognises the importance of the area’s $3.4 billion tourism sector and identifies opportunities to expand nature-based events and cultural tourism experiences.

As part of this plan Port Macquarie, Coffs Harbour and Tweed Heads are recognised as regional cities for the first time. With this recognition comes the understanding that the Government will work with councils to provide greater housing choice and increase jobs in health, education and aviation services to allow these cities to grow sustainably.

The draft Central West and Orana regional plan envisages a future based around advanced manufacturing in food processing, to service growing national and international markets, a more diverse mining sector and a growing visitor economy. Further south, the Riverina and the Murray draft regional plan provides a narrative to guide the growth of one of the most important agricultural areas in the Asia-Pacific.

Through effective strategic planning the NSW Government is working to build enduring prosperity in every region of this state.

Endnotes

1 See: www.planning.nsw.gov.au/Plans-for-Your-Area/Regional-Plans
The Regional Capitals Australia (RCA) Conference was held in Wodonga recently and I was invited to attend as a closing panel guest on behalf of PIA. RCA was formed a few years ago with the aim of representing the largest 50 regional cities in Australia and promoting their sustainable growth.

National Population Growth
The Australian Bureau of Statistics released population estimates in March 2016 which shows that Australia has grown by around 320,000 people in 2015. Nationally dwelling approvals were up to 225,000 in 2015 which is the highest it has been in the last 20 years. Annual net migration in 2015 was down to around 170,000 which is the lowest it has been in the last decade.

About 25% of this growth takes place outside the state capital cities although this does vary widely from state to state with 89% of Victoria’s growth between 2010 and 2015 taking place in Melbourne and 54% of Queensland’s growth occurring in Brisbane. In NSW, around 77% of the state’s growth occurred in Sydney.

Regional Capitals Share of Population Growth
Population growth in the regional capitals has outpaced the national average, with 550,000 additional persons accommodated in these regional capitals between 2001-2011. Current estimates are that an additional 1.0 million persons will be living in the regional capitals by 2026.

Regional Capitals Disadvantage
Regional capitals are relatively disadvantaged in a national context, with lower incomes, lower educational attainment, and higher unemployment rates. As the graph demonstrates the educational attainment of students in our regional capitals is 10% lower than the national average when it comes to completion of Year 12 and 11% lower in terms of tertiary education achievements.

Essential Economics (2014) have estimated that regional capitals are responsible for approximately $210 billion in economic output annually, which represents approximately 16% of total national economic output per annum. However, productivity per regional capital worker is approximately 10% lower than the national average.

Accommodating the additional 1 million people expected to take up residence in the largest 50 regional capitals over the next decade will present many challenges, not the least amongst them is how to lift educational levels to national standards.

What Industries will Regional Employment be generated in?
At the commencement of the decade between 2004 and 2014, the top five industries in terms of national employment were Retail, Manufacturing, Health, Construction and Education and between them they employed around half of the total workforce. By 2014 the top five industries were Health, Retail, Construction, Professional Services and Education.

The decline of Manufacturing and the rise of Professional Services is a trend that is likely to continue. Our regional capitals will have to be attuned to this trend to continue to provide the employment base necessary to sustain the population growth projected in these regional capitals.

Endnotes
The Supreme Court has recently held that a councillor did not breach pecuniary interest disclosure provisions of the Local Government Act when considering a Planning Proposal to amend an LEP covering land in which he had a proprietary interest. The decision narrows significantly councillor disclosure requirements in planning decisions.

The Mehajer v Director-General of the Department of Local Government [2016] NSWSC 143 involved an appeal to the Supreme Court against an order of the NSW Civil and Administrative Tribunal (‘NCAT’) suspending a councillor on Auburn City Council from Civic Office for a period of four months.

The principal issue before NCAT was whether the councillor was present and voted at Council meetings dealing with a Planning Proposal report recommending LEP amendments involving increases to floor space ratios and maximum building heights of certain properties in the municipality, including councillor owned property. No disclosure of pecuniary interest in the property was made by the councillor at these meetings.

The principal issue before NCAT was whether the councillor was obliged to disclose his pecuniary interest and not take part in the Council meetings insofar as consideration of the Planning Proposal report. NCAT held that the councillor’s pecuniary interest ought to have been disclosed, and that his continued presence and participation in the meetings constituted a breach of s 451 of the LGA.

The Supreme Court was required to consider whether there had been any error of law on the part of NCAT. If the councillor was obliged to disclose his pecuniary interest, his failure to do so constituted a breach of the LGA. If he was not, then NCAT’s findings constituted an error of law.

Section 448 of the LGA provides for a series of exceptions to the general obligation for disclosure of a pecuniary interest. Pertinently, s 448[gl does not require disclosure of:

“an interest in a proposal relating to the making, amending, altering or repeal of an environmental planning instrument other than an instrument that effects a change of the permissible uses of:

\[(i) \text{land in which the person ... has a proprietary interest, ... if the person ... would by reason of the proprietary interest have a pecuniary interest in the proposal.}\]

To assist in its interpretation of the relevant provisions of the LGA Act, the Court also considered the structure and content of the Auburn LEP. At the heart of the statutory provision (s 448[gl]) that required interpretation was whether the councillor had “an interest in a proposal relating to the ... amending ... of an environmental planning instrument other than an instrument that effects a change of the permissible use of ... land.”

The central question was whether the Planning Proposal considered by the Council was one which related to the amending of an EPI, namely the Auburn LEP, which did not effect a change of the permissible use of land.

The decision by NCAT approached this interpretation question on a more general basis, assigning a broader interpretation to the phrase “permissible uses” to include any way in which the land might be used.

On appeal, the Court held that the phrase “permitted uses” was limited to the concept of a permitted use in environmental and planning law, which is understood as being the same as the uses of land set out in the land use zones and table set out in Part 2 (“Permitted or prohibited development”) of the LEP.

The clauses of the LEP that were proposed to be amended fell under Part 4 of the LEP (“Principal Development Standards”) and not Part 2. In the Court’s opinion the phrase “change of permissible use of land” in s 448[gl of the LGA did not include any clause within Part 4 of the Auburn LEP. Thus no breach of s 451 of the LGA had occurred and the exception to disclosure of pecuniary interest as it related to the Auburn LEP (and indeed all LEPs under the Standard Instrument) applied to the councillor. The NCAT decision constituted an error of law and was set aside.
Seated in the busy, sunny offices of HillPDA Sydney, Elle Clouston and Shona Porter had a candid chat with Chief Commissioner of the Greater Sydney Commission, Lucy Turnbull. Sydney’s first Chief Commissioner talked about her love of cities, the first year aims of the Greater Sydney Commission and women friendly cities.

**Shona Porter (SP):** Where does your passion for cities come from?

**Lucy Turnbull (LT):** If you are interested in how cities work; in how they grow and change, work and don’t work, I think this inevitably leads you to architecture, design and planning. I would say that I’m interested in this whole area as well as the systems. Cities are about software and hardware. First of all they are about people, the human element, the software. How humans enjoy or don’t enjoy, get frustrated by or get fulfilled by cities. A (persons) sense of happiness about cities depends on how they work and function, the hardware. So cities to me, is the creation of both place and systems and its bringing these together, which is so important.

**Elle Clouston (EC):** In a year’s time, what will the Greater Sydney Commission (GSC) have achieved?

**LT:** We will have a really good, workable but also aspirational set of District Plans for the six districts of Sydney. Rather than being just land use plans, they will be integrated plans; bringing together community aspirations and State Government bodies including transport, infrastructure, education and health.

The holy grail of planning is integrating land use and transport planning, which is one of the GSC’s key tasks. We will also have developed and will be well into implementing a really compelling, diverse way of actually engaging with the community. I think it’s always important to let the community have a chance to have their say.

**SP:** Will the GSC be the voice of the City?

**LT:** I think one of the failings of our governance is that Sydney has not really had a clear metropolitan voice to shape the city. There has been a huge chasm between the small, very local scale, that local government operates at and the large scale State Government operates. The GSC will be an independent group of people to bridge this chasm between local and State Government. The District Plans and District Commissioners will be the way to bridge this gap, taking into account very local interests as well as understanding the metropolitan challenges, interests and priorities that we have if we are going to continue to live in a great city.

**EC:** What are your thoughts on density done well versus resistance to change?

**LT:** This is the time for change. If we don’t grow now and grow well, Sydney will not fulfil its potential, primarily due to congestion.

It is important to understand that changing the way centres work through greater density can actually have a massively positive effect on people’s quality of life. Not all of Sydney can have the same density or the same urban character, but I think it’s important that there are parts of Sydney that can enhance housing choice, increase economic activity, availability of jobs and transport and accommodate more people.

Change is difficult but a lot of the time it is really a communication and visualisation challenge that needs to show the way in which neighbourhoods can change and evolve in a positive way. Increasingly people are becoming more attracted to the compact but high urban quality lifestyle.
**SP:** Why should Sydney adopt the Polycentric Cities model?

**LT:** Sydney’s geographic footprint is way too big to have just one centre. Greater Sydney needs Parramatta to truly fulfil its role as the second CBD and support other existing strategic centres. In turn, this makes it possible for people to spend less time in congestion and commuting to jobs and more time within their community and neighbourhoods, if they wish.

All of the existing strategic centres are important to the growth of Sydney as a polycentric city. Of importance for the future of our cities is integrated planning and land use, as well as the implementation and delivery of educational, cultural and sporting facilities.

We need a balance between residential and commercial activity which, for example, can be achieved through zoning controls, reducing residential density vis-à-vis commercial development, and encouraging a blend of mixed use in the same building.

Without the right balance of jobs and housing, the strategic centres won’t be able to prosper. My view is that we need more creative and diverse ways to deliver mixed use and potential low impact and high impact mixed uses for the community.

**EC:** You have spoken previously about Women Friendly Cities. What are they and why are they important?

**LT:** Women friendly cities make it possible to fulfil women’s career, housing and lifestyle choices through the design of the city space. At the end of the day, men benefit from women friendly cities too; however space design is more of a problem for women. Having a lot of, what I call ‘walkable urbanity’ is important. This gives women more autonomy, independence and choice. Walkability works hand in hand with a safe, friendly city. A woman feels empowered to walk around a city based on how safe she feels, so proximity and urbanity works particularly well for women at all stages of their life. All of which cumulate to safe, workable, walkable areas for everyone but particularly women, that should be a consideration in new cities and renewal.

**EC:** Finally, what are your sentiments for planners?

**LT:** What I say most is that you will do a great job if you love what you do. What drives performance is good leadership and a sense of purpose, but also actually getting a charge from what you do. There’s absolutely nothing to substitute loving what you do.
Local Government in NSW is facing significant change through amalgamations in 2016. This article presents a personal reflection on what is proposed and what this could mean for the future of planners, planning and local government.

Local Government in NSW is facing major changes through amalgamations in 2016 which will reduce the total number of councils in NSW from 152 to 112 and in Sydney from 43 to 25. There has been opposition from vested interests who are interested in maintaining the status quo, and rhetoric from state government about how the “system is broken”. This article aims to look at what has prompted the move to amalgamations, and more importantly, what does it mean for planning. The views expressed are those of the author who has worked in local government for a long time and whose only vested interest is to see planning deliver good outcomes for communities.

Destination 2036
The journey to amalgamations started at Dubbo. A meeting of representatives from NSW Councils was held on 17th and 18th August 2011, convened by the Office of Local Government to develop a Vision, Directions, Initiatives and Actions over the next 25 years, ie to 2036.

The outcomes comprised a Vision, 5 strategic Directions, 12 initiatives and 34 actions.

**Vision:** (summarised): “By 2036, all NSW communities will be healthy and prosperous - led and served by strong, effective and democratically elected Local Government”.

**Direction 1: Efficient and Effective Service Delivery**
**Direction 2: Quality Governance**
**Direction 3: Financial Sustainability**
**Direction 4: Appropriate Structures**
- Initiative 8 Develop a number of different structural models for Local Government

**Direction 5: Strong Relationships**
- Initiative 9 More clearly define the functions, roles and responsibilities of Local and State Government
- Initiative 10 Align State and Local Government planning frameworks
- Initiative 11 Negotiate a new Inter-Governmental Agreement (IGA)
- Initiative 12 Recognise Local Government as a legitimate and important sphere of government.

![Interactive map with the 19 New NSW Councils released on 12th May 2016](Source: www.strongercouncils.nsw.gov.au)
Destination 2036 was about a lot more than amalgamations. Amalgamations can be seen in Direction 4 - Appropriate Structures, and Planning Directions can be seen at Initiative 10: Align State and Local Government planning frameworks. Planning frameworks referenced include strategic and land use planning, the Community Strategic Plan and the Long Term Financial Plan for the local government area.

Barry O’Farrell
The Liberal National Coalition was elected to government at the NSW elections held on 26 March 2011. A pre-election promise was “no forced elections”. It is clear from the ongoing government campaign, that it supports amalgamations. The criteria for what constitutes an acceptable level of performance from councils (in terms of size, efficiency, and value for services provided) have always been, and continue to be, somewhat murky. The issue may be resolved during 2016. The unfortunate outcome of the issue however is that it has become an area of conflict between local and state government with very little focus on the Directions and Initiatives which came out of Destination 2036.

Independent Review
The NSW Independent Local Government Review Panel was established by the Minister for Local Government following Destination 2036 at the request of the NSW Local Government and Shires Association. The final report contained 65 recommendations, aimed at strengthening the position of local government. The Panel is of the view that amalgamations of councils would result in less barriers to reform and would facilitate more efficient financial and professional management.

Fit for the Future
The response by the NSW government to the Independent Review report was in September 2014 to launch the Fit for the Future package which offered financial incentives to amalgamating councils, as well as creating a criteria for judging councils on their scale (population size) and their financial capacity.

LG Act Review
Concurrently with the Destination 2036 review, a separate committee has been undertaking a review of the Local Government Act. The Phase 1 amendments have been released in draft form for discussion, and the proposals include a strong direction towards improving the Integrated Planning and Reporting process, identifying it as a strategic planning tool.

GSC
The Greater Sydney Commission officially commenced operations on 27th January 2016. The merged Councils resulting from the amalgamations process will commence operations in the latter part of 2016. A function of the Commission is to; 10(1)[e] assist local councils in the Greater Sydney Region and other government agencies (including an agency of the

Commonwealth) on the implementation of any plan or proposal relating to development in the Greater Sydney Region.

Early days of course, but there appears to be a genuine intent to ensure plans including planning strategies are effective. The challenge is for councils to take an active involvement in the preparation of their District Plan including issues relating to government agencies and utilities which have been negotiated from a position of weakness in the past.

The New Councils
The 25 or so councils remaining in Sydney after 2016 will have an average population of 200,000, and with a total of 225 councillors, more or less, an average of 22,000 residents per councillor.

Delivering the housing, infrastructure, jobs and essential services necessary to keep the city running will be a product of the efficient integration of Local and District planning that is currently difficult to manage. The merging of Councils, whilst seen by some as a threat to community interests and values, should be seen as an opportunity to redress the imbalance which currently occurs in state/local planning relationships. That’s not to say, the same results could not have been achieved with smaller councils, but rather, since amalgamations are inevitable with the first tranche of proclamations occurring on 12th May, the opportunity should now be grasped to review the powers, and authorities available and ensure a better outcome is articulated and achieved.

Conclusion
The resolve of the Baird government has been confirmed with the recent merger proclamations. The longer term areas for investigation are in developing the respective roles of state and local government in integrating the various levels of planning to deliver better land use, servicing and fiscal outcomes for communities. Planners have a great ability to see the bigger picture and to balance the various influences at play.

My suggestion is, don’t stress about amalgamations. Look for the opportunities that will result.

Tony McNamara is Director of Planning and Environment at the City of Canada Bay Council. Prior to Canada Bay Tony was a partner with Environmental Resources Management, a consulting firm specialising in environmental impact assessment and contaminated site management. Tony has had a number of roles with the Planning Institute of Australia including President NSW Division. Tony has worked for a total of five Councils and has a good appreciation of the issues facing Councils from a city, coastal and regional perspective.

Endnotes
4 NSW Government Office of Local Government 2015
5 Greater Sydney Commission Act 2015

Figure 2: Proposed Sydney Council Mergers in December 2015 (Source: NSW Government)
The recently-released draft Hunter Regional Plan mentions scenic values twice in the very first sentence: ‘The Hunter region has a rich and diverse natural environment, scenic landscapes, extensive resources, bustling urban environments, international industries and local character-filled communities’. The document itself, however, provides no real information about where these scenic landscapes are, and what processes should apply.

It is fortunate that constraints such as native vegetation, heritage items and rural floodplains often serve to conserve what we value from a scenic point of view. For example, the rural floodplain that encircles most of Maitland, and the western edge of Newcastle, has, by default, created greenbelts that have prevented infinite urban sprawl between the towns. To the west of Maitland, where there is no such floodplain, urban development is marching on into the Upper Hunter, with the historic characteristics of separate settlements in danger of being absorbed into a contiguous mass.

Attractive towns sprinkled along our main highways have traditionally provided visual interest as one travels through them, yet now the first part of the town seen is often a cheaply-built homemaker’s centre or a mammoth service station. A notable example is the town of Singleton, previously first glimpsed nestled in a valley as one approached from McDougalls Hill to the west, with glittering lights enticing weary travellers at night. Now, on top of this hill is a large Bunnings and an equally large car dealership; no longer the avenue of trees, the pretty rest area, or the sense of arriving anywhere special.

Where are we going wrong in NSW?
In NSW, there are no specific requirements for scenic values to be considered at the state, regional or local level. This may sound surprising when a key public issue is how a new development will look, and the change to views that will occur as a result. Key concerns such as the loss of scenic landscapes, erosion of regional town settings, views of unattractive infrastructure and the escalating controversy over mining all relate directly to what we see and what we value.

How can we do better?
A key issue is a lack of baseline information to effectively inform our planning instruments. In comparison, the United Kingdom has a long history of protecting scenic values through what is termed ‘landscape character assessment’, which identifies what landscapes are important across the entire country, with these then...
acknowledged through each level of the planning system. The objective is not to prevent change, but rather to accommodate it in a way that is compatible and sensitive to the scenic setting. The benefits of this holistic approach are described: 'By setting down a robust, auditable and transparent baseline, Landscape Character Assessment not only helps us to understand our landscapes, it also assists in informing judgements and decisions concerning the management of change'.

Let’s make a start

It is no small ask to move towards a system similar to the United Kingdom, yet this is where we need to aim. The scenic values of our natural landscapes, towns, rural lands, coast and other much-loved places need a far better process to manage change.

A simple way to start would be to ensure that our regional planning documents incorporate some basic planning objectives related to scenic values, such as those already in the Lake Macquarie City Council’s Scenic Management Guidelines:

1. Protect vegetated ridgelines and upper slopes
2. Retain green breaks between urban areas
3. Protect important natural landscape features
4. Ensure the built environment does not dominate natural landscape qualities in non-urban areas
5. New development to achieve a balance between the character of both the built and natural environment
6. Protect and enhance attractive views from highly-visible viewpoints.

From this sound start, we could begin to ensure that planners at all levels of government are given the tools and policy support needed to protect our scenic values.

Stacey Brodbeck is the Director of Envisage Consulting and is passionate about protecting our scenic values. Stacey authored the ‘Lake Macquarie Scenic Management Guidelines’ in association with Council and specialises in visual impact assessment and advising government on relevant issues.

Endnotes

2 Lake Macquarie City Council 2012, Lake Macquarie Scenic Management Guidelines.
A big thank you to all our readers who had their say in the recent New Planner survey. Like all publications, New Planner must evolve if it hopes to remain relevant and continue to serve as an effective forum for news, knowledge and the exchange of ideas. The editorial team is excited by the great input we have received from our members, as we are always looking for new ways to improve the journal. We would like to share with you some of the key take-outs of the survey which we will be using to inform the future direction of New Planner.

The survey results confirmed many of our thoughts for New Planner as well as providing us with some fresh new ideas. We have already started to implement some changes to the journal this year, including bringing back the Local Government Planner’s Column, as well as switching to two themed issues each year so our members have more opportunities to write about their specialised areas.

### Who are you? Where are you?

- **62%** Full members
  - 22% Graduates & Students
  - 16% other including Affiliates, Fellows, and Non-members

- **37%** Consultants
  - 35.5% Local Government
  - 27.5% other including State Government, Academia

### Top areas of interest

- **52%** Statutory Planning
- **70%** Strategic Planning
- **49%** Urban Design
interests and expertise. We are looking at taking New Planner online for those who prefer to read digitally, with the printed version set to remain as a member benefit. Stay tuned for a number of other initiatives we look forward to launching in the upcoming issues of New Planner.

If you are interested in contributing to New Planner, we always welcome articles, opinion pieces, letters and news from our readers. Visit the PIA NSW website or email newplanner@planning.org.au to add your voice to the discussion on all things planning.

Congratulation goes out to Simon Manoski who is the lucky winner of our survey competition and is invited to attend 3 free PIA CPD events of his choice.

“Try key lesson /take away message sections that could be applied in practice”

“I like that it’s not an academic journal”

“More relevance to local government”

“Topical and newsy”

“Include case studies”

“More interviews”

“Thoughtful pieces on topical planning issues”

“More pictures with features”

“I like that PIA members can contribute to New Planner”
Five days a week, eight hours a day equals a forty hour work week. And this does not include travel or other time-grabbing niceties we do to prepare for our jobs. According to the most recent ABC census data (ABS 2013), a person with a full-time job spends thirty five to forty hours per week just at work.¹

Job satisfaction, a term coined in the 1930s, has been defined as an emotional reaction to one’s job, a (hopefully) pleasurable state resulting in the appraisal of one’s job or, simply, how one feels about one’s job. ‘Satisfied’ suggests a level of contentedness, a positive affirmation of tasks we are undertaking about forty hours each week.

Job-satisfaction studies are often associated with organisational social scientists wanting to understand and improve the attitudes of employees in order to create more productive workplaces—ones that encapsulate the hippest buzzwords today: innovative, collaborative, dynamic or millennial-inspired. Aspirational? Perhaps. Citing everything from modifying and gentrifying workplace interior environments to endless workshops about managerial communication strategies, findings from job-satisfaction research underpin many of the changes we see in workplace aesthetics, communication flow within departments and between co-workers, and in how we actually do work. All of these tangible outputs are linked with job satisfaction.

We wanted to know if planners were satisfied in their jobs. Published research on the topic in an Australian context was, for the most part, non-existent. However, in 2004, PIA conducted a study that informed the publication National Inquiry into Planning Education. Their findings confirmed a shortage of planners in Australia but did not go so far as to examine potential causes of this shortage. Could this shortage be attributed to a lack of job satisfaction in the profession? An understanding of sources and motivators of job satisfaction in the planning sphere might not only attract a larger workforce, but it might also allow the profession to retain its workforce.

An intense literature search revealed that the planning profession has not come under job-satisfaction scrutiny since the 1980s, and that research was generated from the United States under the guise of job dissatisfaction. Disconnect between theory and practice; isolation and disengagement from society, and ineffectiveness of the profession, were noted as three indicators.²³ Herzberg et al. (1959).⁴

PIA tells us that their members choose the profession of planning to ‘make a difference’, alluding to the fact that planners are motivated by intrinsic factors (the job content or the work itself) over extrinsic factors (job context or the physical and social environment where the work takes place). These dated, but still relevant, concepts were pioneered by Herzberg et al. (1959).⁵ The planning workforce, like many professions, is divided into the public and private sector. Of the surveys completed, 71% of respondents were from either local government, state government or university employees. The remaining 29% comprised professionals from private consultancies or those acting as sole traders. The results were not surprising. Planners are satisfied in their jobs. In fact, based on a Likert-scale measurement, they are very satisfied. Both sectors identified strongly with statements around liking their co-workers, having a clear understanding of their responsibilities, and having the necessary skills to undertake their job.

Survey participants comprised a mix of public and private sector NSW planners, some indicating membership of PIA. 51 out of 153 NSW local councils were selected randomly with council planners voluntarily opting to participate in the survey. Additionally, other planners connected to social media groups for the profession were also targeted. An online survey of 31 questions was devised from an analysis of general job-satisfaction surveys and literature. The surveys were designed to fit within a planning context and required both qualitative and quantitative responses. Cooperation was sought from PIA, local councils and social media groups. The databases were confidential to those sending out the surveys. Although the actual number of surveys distributed is unknown, according to the ABS 2011 census data, there are 2,987 planners employed in NSW. A total of 122 participants responded to the electronic inquiry—a response rate of 4%, a typical response for a survey.

Are we satisfied?

Kathryne Glover PIA (Student), Environmental Planner, GHD Pty Ltd
Christine Steinmetz, Senior Lecturer in Planning, Faculty of Built Environment, UNSW Australia

The survey results support this literature, finding that a desire to benefit society is one factor that distinguishes a public employee from a private one.
Of greatest significance was the disagreement that planners were able to affect positive change within the community.

And yet, within the planning community, there were differences. Planners from the public sphere identified strongly with statements relating to the effectiveness of the profession, being challenged in the work they do, and being motivated by opportunities to make a difference in society. These differences included informing good policy, shaping functional cities, and creating urban spaces with equal access for all. The private-sector respondents identified strongly with the goals of their organisation, and being motivated by opportunities for promotion.

The literature tells us that public-sector workers are motivated by job security and stability, teamwork, and worthwhile service provided to society, while their private counterparts are motivated by status, opportunity to advance, autonomy and high pay. The survey results support this literature, finding that a desire to benefit society is one factor that distinguishes a public employee from a private one. A higher percentage of public-sector participants agreed with the statement ‘my job makes a difference in the lives of others’ when compared with the private-sector respondents. If a planner’s satisfaction is taken from this statement alone (a statement advocated by PIA as the main reason planners join the profession), the average public-sector employee was more likely to feel that he or she could make a difference.

Whilst all respondents were found to be more motivated by extrinsic factors than intrinsic factors, there were marked differences between the responses of public and private participants. And although it was found that participating planners felt they had the necessary skills to undertake the job, all agreed that the job was not reflective of their expectations. Of greatest significance was the disagreement that planners were able to affect positive change within the community. Such a finding shows a great discourse between what motivates planners and what comes to fruition.

These findings also raise a number of questions regarding the culture of the profession and its validity and portrayal in the media; and they are significant in determining the next steps for the White Paper and Planning Bills, which aim to create a more effective approval system and improve the overall culture of the profession. Through these findings, we can hope to create a more effective planning system, resulting in a cohort who are satisfied with how they spend their forty-hour weeks.

Kathryn Glover is an environmental planner at GHD and conducts environmental impact assessments on a range of state-significant infrastructure projects. Kathryn has a strong research background in her Bachelor of Planning degree from the University of New South Wales and has worked on various grants within the Faculty of Built Environment.

Dr Christine Steinmetz is a Senior Lecturer at the University of New South Wales in the Bachelor of City Planning program. She is an active researcher on topics such as land-use policies for adult-industry premises, job satisfaction, and higher education. Christine lectures full time in research methods and research design and introduction-to-planning courses.

Endnotes
The food grown on the fringe is mostly perishable food that needs to be close to the market or niche food production to be either sold at the farm gate or in farmers’ markets and other outlets. These peri-urban areas contain good soils, have a good climate for growing food and are located close to the market. According to the ABS Agricultural Census, the peri-urban areas in Australia produce 47.2% of the perishable vegetables (including broccoli, capsicum, cauliflower, coriander, herbs, lettuce, mushrooms and fresh tomatoes). This production cannot easily be relocated to inland areas because of lack of water, fertile soils and access to the markets.

The Sydney Region produces 5.2% of Australia’s perishable vegetables. Hawkesbury LGA is the highest producer in Sydney with 2.2% and the eighth largest in Australia. The Bundaberg LGA is Australia’s largest producer (13.5%), followed by Whitsunday (12.9%), Lockyer Valley in Brisbane (9.4%), Wyndham in Melbourne’s outskirts (6.6%) and Southern Downs in south east Queensland (6%). So the fact that Sydney produces 5.2%, indicates that this food production is significant for the fresh vegetable supply. Pitt Town, Wilberforce and Freemans Reach are shown in the photo below.

The peri-urban area produces 17.8% of Australia’s poultry meat (with Gosford number one), 35.1% of Australia’s ducks and 34.9% of Australia’s turkeys and 12.6% of Australia’s eggs.

The Institute for Sustainable Futures at the University of Technology Sydney has estimated that in 2011 the Sydney’s peri-urban area produced 500,000 tonnes of food, which is enough to feed 20% of the population. This includes 40% of the demand for eggs, 10% of vegetables, 38% of dairy, 55% of meat and 2% of fruit. This is in contrast with Melbourne which feeds 40% of its population with locally produced fresh food.

The land use on Sydney Metropolitan’s fringe is primarily rural residential development (78.3%). This is both rural fringe (0.4-2 ha lots in estates) and rural living (2-40 ha and above lots, scattered throughout the rural landscape, often in close proximity to farms). These houses can be subject to odour, noise and other impacts from the farm which reduce neighbours’ amenity. The pollution laws favour the rural resident, not the farmer, as it is assumed that all pollution can be kept on the property which is virtually impossible due to the nature of farming, land use mix and size of the farms.

The paradox is that the farmers were there first but newer residents can force them to relocate if they cause a nuisance. Food producing land has been continually pushed further inland as Sydney has expanded with the peri-urban area now located at the foot of the Blue Mountains. In the 1950s the peri-urban area extended from Epping, Carlingford and North Ryde in the north to Prospect in the west and Fairfield, Cabramatta and Liverpool in the south west. The continual relocation of food production has the effect of making food growing a non-permanent land use, which is strange given it’s an essential of life.

In 1957, Denis Winston noted that the peri-urban area was an important part of Sydney’s food supply. This is still the case today, and evermore important that we have a source of fresh food close to the city. The lack of water, good soils and climate change mean that we cannot push food further inland. The growing popularity of the local food movement as well as transport costs and long supply chains, means there is more reason to keep growing food in the peri-urban area.

The production of food on the urban fringe is an important industry that needs to be taken into account by the State Government in its strategic planning for Sydney’s growth. We need to change the paradigm about our attitude to food production. This is an issue that is ripe for consideration by the Greater Sydney Commission.

Endnotes
1 Sinclair I 2015, Growing Food in a Residential Landscape Paper presented at the State of Australian Cities Conference Gold Coast.
2 ABS 2012, 7121 Agricultural Commodities Australia 2010-11.
5 Edge Land Planning 2003, Western Sydney Land Use Study.
6 Winston D 1957, Sydney’s Great Experiment: The Progress of the Cumberland County Plan.
Everyone hates DAs

Shona Porter PIA (Graduate), Town Planner, City of Canterbury-Bankstown Council

The NSW planning reforms of a few years ago sought to address what the development industry shouts from the roof tops and what council planners chinwag about in their cubicles: everyone hates Development Applications (DAs).

Why do we hate DAs so much?

To borrow from recently appointed NSW Chief Planner Gary White, planning in NSW has been fought in the trenches of the ‘battlegrounds of DAs’ for far too long. The current system wears down our developers and private planners, but importantly, also our local government planners. The current process of DAs has arguably led to a toxic work culture for government planners to work within.

The battleground that is DAs stems from a central issue: the failure of a proper hierarchy between strategic and statutory planning frameworks. The now cliché rhetoric of ‘streamlining DAs’ does nothing but funnel the pressure onto DA planners whilst ignoring the fundamental, that our strategic planning is failing us.

The NSW planning reforms commencing in 2012 were meant to shift the planning focus back to its rightful place, strategic planning. One of the 2012 Queensland White Paper workshops featuring Evan Jones and Gary White gave some excellent insights as to why DA’s have become a battleground and thereby a frustrating, drawn out process for all.

Jones and White spoke about the intentions of the (at that time) recently released Green Paper, led by former NSW Minister for Planning and Infrastructure, Brad Hazzard. Jones reiterated that the Hon. Hazzard and the Green paper sought to rebalance the planning system towards strategic planning so that the future of our communities isn’t determined by slugging it out in the field DA by DA¹.

White spoke at the workshops, “the DA system is not your planning system, but that is where the battlegrounds of DAs have been fought for the past 25 years. It is why we have suffocated ourselves so well. Development Assessment is a delivery platform to deliver... what your plan says. It enables that which is consistent and what is articulated well in the strategic system. We haven’t done that well”.

Without the much needed change to our local strategic planning process, the ‘battleground of DAs’ approach will continue.

Also talking about the strategic plan as being the storybook for the city, White pointed out that a community’s strategic plan communicates a places’ past, present and envisaged future. The DA system is the physical realisation of the story.

DAs are not meant to be the game changers.

Four years on from the workshops, the conversation seems to have disappeared. Progression of the released White Paper has been shelved and in turn, the treatment of council development assessment officers has and continues to be disrespectful, verging on abusive. This treatment can come from any angle of the DA process. Developers, fellow private planning consultants and community objectors. The battle cry between developers and objectors leaves council planners stuck between a rock and a hard place.

Such outcry from developers, community members and fellow planning professionals has resulted in the now cliche slogan of ‘streamlining DAs’ to ‘speed up’ development assessment.

But why can DA’s be slow? Not helped by a shortage of council planners, applicants are lodging non-compliant development with both LEPs and DCPs. Of course, this requires a longer, battleground merit assessment to be slugged about between the developer and council planner.

And this is why developers, consultant planners and council planners hate DAs. Ask applicants why they lodge non-compliant applications and they all say the same thing. Money. Just kidding. They say the controls don’t work. They say that to achieve the maximum building height the FSR needs to increase or parking needs to decrease.

Council planners will tell you, lodge something that meets the controls and we will turn it around quickly. But while non-complying development continues to encourage negotiation, the process will be a longer, battleground merit assessment required to be slugged out between the developer and council planner.

Without the much needed change to our local strategic planning process, the ‘battleground of DAs’ approach will continue. The introduction of strong local strategic planning processes would create the evidence base for reasonable planning controls, which are reflective of community desires, growth expectations as well as reflective of viable development outcomes.

Until this happens, the DA battlegrounds will continue to soak up the blood and sweat of the council planners, who are only trying to do their job in achieving appropriate development outcomes. We all hate slugging it out over your non-compliant DA, but we don’t get to relax about it over a sneaky Friday 2pm office bev.

Shona is a recently reunited local government planner with over five year’s experience in town planning. She is the Deputy Convenor of the NSW Young Planners and passionate about connecting local government planners and promoting their work culture.

Endnotes

¹ NSW Department of Planning and Infrastructure [2012], Evan Jones and Gary White lead the policy discussion workshop on strategic planning, NSW Planning System Review, viewed on youtube.com 15 March 2016.
The PIA has long supported the debate over locations and options for a second Sydney airport, which has now been resolved in favour of Badgerys Creek. The Federal government has previously been entrusted to plan for a functional airport and now the NSW Government must plan for the best outcomes for western Sydney and NSW. Essential to this process is contributions from local government, industry and interest stakeholders. Happily, this debate appears to be currently underway at all levels of government, commerce and the community.

Whilst the Western Sydney Airport (WSA) brings some certainty, the challenge now is to bring some certainty to surrounding areas. Planning is as much about asking the right questions as it is about processes and answers. What do we want for Australia, NSW, and western Sydney? And how can we enhance liveability and a sustainable environment? What sort of Western Sydney?

PIA supports integrated land use and transport planning which acknowledges that transport and development are not two separate but two facets of the same. As PIA noted in their submission to the NSW Long Term Transport Master Plan (LTMP) Discussion Paper 2012: ‘Of all the transport projects under consideration for Sydney, the location of a second airport would be expected to have the greatest single impact on the siting of new transport corridors and nodes and new industrial and commercial growth areas’. The NSW LTMP did not include WSA as a land use, thereby leaving the plan compromised as a blueprint for western Sydney. New infrastructure of this scale and impact impacts on the type of community consultation undertaken. The dilemma: consult early [with little detail] or later [with greater details but limited manoeuvrability]. Or do both; consult continuously but risk consultation fatigue?

The airport will have a huge environmental impact, but how do we plan to maximise the environmental and social outcomes? Airports in Australia have been developed as islands, with autonomy and little regard for surrounding land use. Are there better models, such as the emerging District Plan or a SOCOG model used for the Sydney Olympic Games? There is a hope that the new Federal Minister for Cities will encourage a better integration of Federal airports into our cities.

The airport should be planned as only one part of western Sydney’s development. Whether we are looking at an Aerotropolis or a more conventional regional centre, as suggested in Figure 1, there are clear benefits to providing a mix of employment and housing. Employment self-containment will also increase the opportunities for healthy transport and better air quality.

What sort of surrounds?

As2021 is a nationally adopted standard, recently reviewed and updated, and should be the sole tool to be used for statutory land-use planning in the vicinity of the airport. The EIS should clearly and unambiguously acknowledge this. PIA has also supported the adoption of AS2021 as the standard tool.

If the approaches proposed in the Draft EIS (released in October 2015) are accepted, we will have a state of permanent confusion with regard to land-use planning around Badgerys Creek, consequent delays and legal processes, and the potential sterilisation of many square kilometres of land that is well suited to residential development. This will further exacerbate the already-dire situation with regard to the supply of affordable housing in the Sydney region. It is broadly acknowledged that housing-price rises are largely due to constraints on land supply; housing supply is at least as serious an issue for Sydney as is the need for a second airport.

The NSW Roads Minister has claimed that the situation of the roads near the existing Sydney Airport ‘could only be described in technical terms as a bloody mess’.

Transport Evaluation?

The historic answer has been ‘predict and provide’: predict the levels of new activity generated by new development and then provide additional new transport infrastructure required to satisfy that predicted demand at an acceptably-high ‘Level Of Service’ California, USA, has benefitted and suffered the outcomes of this philosophy: the California Environmental Quality Act has for many years used ‘Level Of Service’ as a means of evaluating new projects which discourages infill, widens roads, removes pedestrian crossings, and mitigates against bus and rail projects in favour of road vehicle capacity. Recently, in recognition that transport planning must be about more than just cars, the Governor’s Office of Planning and Research released guidelines recommending an alternative
measure, Vehicle Miles Travelled (VMT), which will reduce emissions and create transport choices.

Using such an alternative approach could ensure the WSA and surrounding areas are well designed and evaluated with a suitable land use and employment mix on the site and surrounds, potentially reducing wasted car and goods trips, including trips to Sydney Airport. The Draft EIS takes some account of this. This benefit will be maximised by appropriate location of land uses and early provision of public transport.

Railway?
The decision on whether/when to provide a rail service in the near term should be influenced by the broader airport development objectives – including sustainability. The scoping study should identify the preferred long-term rail context for Western Sydney, not just WSA.

The NSW Roads Minister has claimed that the situation of the roads near the existing Sydney Airport “could only be described in technical terms as a bloody mess”, and encourages staff and travellers to use rail. The existing Airport Rail Line serves many of the 150,000 people who travel to and from Sydney Airport every day, but also has a synergistic role improving the operation of the entire Sydney rail and road system, including supporting developments around Green Square and Mascot. Such considerations need to be made for western Sydney, where the key need is for an integrated north-south railway, which also serves the WSA.

How much car parking?
Mode split transport at the WSA appears to be presented as a fait accompli in the Draft EIS: car parking for 11,500 cars, but no rail.

It is important that in the absence of government-provided rail to western Sydney and the WSA that the government incentivise the airport and the private sector to build rail instead of only car parking. This may be difficult because parking is currently so profitable. The Draft Airport Plan suggests 11,500 car parking stalls in Stage 1 and a staggering 70,000 stalls in the long term – all profits for the Airport. Including road upgrades, this will have a cost of around $2 billion in current dollars – enough to fund kilometres of metro rail with a lower environmental cost.

The formation of the Badgerys Creek Economic Zone, and related LEPs, might allow excessive car parking because trains and buses cannot be assured. Early plentiful car parking may undermine the business case for early rail.

What now?
PIA should work with government to improve the planning and decision making for WSA as an integral part of wider planning for western Sydney, NSW, and the nation. Professional planners are ideally placed to assist communities and decision makers understand the effects of short-term decisions on the very long-term issues out to 2060 and beyond.

Colin Henson is the Convenor of the Transport Planning Chapter of PIA NSW. He worked on identification and evaluation of 12 potential airport sites and Wilton, as well as airports in Hong Kong and Africa and conducted a PIA Webinar on Airports in 2014. This article gratefully acknowledges the input of other PIA members in developing the PIA submissions on WSA.

Endnotes
1 Draft Western Sydney Airport EIS, 2015 and Draft Airport Plan 2015, DIRD.
3 Revised VMT CeQA Guidelines Proposal 20 January 2016
What is a Smart City?

The concept of ‘Smart Cities’ can generally be described as combining urban planning and technology in a manner that enhances liveability and generates economic prosperity. It is a terrific catch phrase, but what exactly is a Smart City and why is being one desirable?

In Australia, the advent of the internet and the growing adoption of digital technology over the past 20 years had a relatively modest influence on the planning and development industry. However, in the past 5 years or so it has become increasingly apparent that advances in technology are having a greater influence on how people use cities, and how urban planning and development is being undertaken. For example, commercial office space has for many years incorporated new technologies that are useful for general work duties. The provision of video conferencing facilities is now standard in most boardrooms. However, digital technology and data management is increasingly being used to automatically manage basic building functions, such as lighting and heating, while also providing monitoring and managing everything from the fitness of employees through to water usage. The adoption of smart technologies into office building design and operation is now associated with the more efficient use of space and time.

‘The Edge’, an office building in Amsterdam primarily occupied by Deloitte, operates with 2,500 staff and just 1,000 desks. This is possible through the use of mobile and other technologies to manage the use of temporary workspaces. If we can make office buildings more efficient and effective spaces, how can we use technology in urban planning and development to improve our cities? A good question.

In essence, the Smart Cities concept recognises the reality that we can no longer simply provide a land use planning response to urban development issues. Technology and the availability of more detailed and higher-quality data than ever before means that smart solutions can sometimes be found to land use planning and development issues which simply would not have been possible until recently. These solutions can be cost-effective and lead to significant social, economic and environmental benefits. For instance: suffering traffic congestion? Why not try implementing technology to make car-sharing easier and more efficient. Urban water usage too high? Use technology to identify and apply differential pricing to excessive water users in real time. Want to improve community access to the planning system? Enhance online accessibility and engagement processes. And this is why the ePlanning program of the Department of Planning and Environment is so important.

But a Smart City is not just about using technology for its own sake. At a recent workshop I attended with a university exploring the Smart Cities concept, the CEO of a public transport operator (not in New South Wales I should emphasise) explained that ticketing technology has provided incredibly detailed information on how customers access and use the transport system, which the organisation is responsible for. However, actually doing something with that information to create a positive change remains difficult given infrastructure and other operational and institutional issues. In this instance the data collection is incredibly smart, but the ability of the system to respond to the lessons provided by the data is ‘un-Smart’, to invent a new word.

This issue reflects the key challenge for the Smart Cities concept. We have systems, policies and objectives which are from an age where ongoing advances in technology were, at best, a secondary issue in urban planning and development.

Smart Cities is thinking about ways in which we actively bring technology into our planning and development expertise. If implemented correctly, the use of technology can generate massive improvements in terms of how our cities function. Given the rapid rates of change in technology, we can’t even envisage the scale and nature of these improvements at this point in time.

If our decision-making frameworks are out-dated and cannot respond in a timely or appropriate fashion to the opportunities that technology brings, all that we have will be smart thinking and dumb implementation. What a shame that would be.

Sean is Managing Partner at Essential Economics and an urban and regional economist with a specialisation in property and land use planning and development.
Cities like Adelaide, Melbourne and Parramatta have embraced the ‘Smart City’ movement, using technology to make their activities more efficient. These Cities, and others like them, contribute to the prosperity of their region by supporting digital innovation, connecting communities and taking Government online. In March, Lake Macquarie joined the club when it adopted its first tech focused strategy; the ‘Lake Mac Smart City, Smart Council Digital Economy Strategy’.

Thomas Boyle is the Strategic Landuse Planner & Project Officer at Lake Macquarie City Council (LMCC), and one of the champions behind its Smart City project. In working on the Strategy, Boyle wanted to bring the whole of Council on the ‘Smart City’ journey and by doing so, found that many great things were already being implemented by different departments. It seemed momentum for digital integration was already building, particularly given the recent arrival of fast broadband internet to the LGA. “The Executive said - how can we capitalise on the arrival of the NBN and how can we work with the community to do everything we should be doing?” says Boyle. This helped set the project tone, prioritising co-creation with staff and inspiring innovative engagement with the wider community. “Just get out there and start talking to your community as early as possible” he says.

As a framework, the ‘Smart City’ can encompass everything from apps to real estate, buildings to transport, energy to Government, and everything in between. So with such a broad lens, where do you begin? For Lake Macquarie it was about their strengths, both natural and community based. “The economic side of the Strategy was seen as very important but Lake Macquarie has a very strong history of executing actions around sustainability” says Boyle, “The Smart City captures the digital economy but also how to apply the outcomes of digital innovation to our everyday lives, to improve sustainability and the health and well-being of our community”. In doing so, Lake Macquarie has focused the Strategy on five strategic outcomes (with 18 diverse initiatives) that speak to the unique context of the LGA – it’s people and place.

As such, Lake Macquarie’s unique character has been recognised in a strategy that positions technology as the digital glue to bind the community, share information and help accelerate business reach, even to a global audience. “The Strategy is designed to be a tool, to help people and get them thinking more about technology, change and opportunities” says Boyle.

This people centred approach has paid off for Council with over 300 ideas contributed during the exhibition period and importantly, buy-in generated from local businesses, particularly from the digital and entrepreneurial sectors.

“People in the tech space know things are changing rapidly, and they told us you can’t plan well into the future” says Boyle, “so developing flexible and open government policy is key to nurturing and supporting start-ups. The aim is to reduce rigidity internally (at Council) to the best you can.” With many internal barriers including funding, time, leadership, communication and in-house knowledge, Boyle suggests communication is key.” Government is traditionally very hierarchical. There are lots of silos, so you need to clearly and succinctly articulate the benefits of reprioritising resources, or find new resources to have these conversations”. He also suggests another way to incentivise action is to make the process enjoyable, “All throughout the project I was conscious of trying to get buy-in and you need to bring people along the journey, communicating well, making it fun and meaningful”.

The ‘Lake Mac Smart City, Smart Council Digital Economy Strategy’ delivers a bottom up approach to an often ambiguous concept. Its proactive efforts to establish and build momentum around meaningful engagement (both internal and external to Council) has delivered a comprehensive yet focused vision for making Lake Macquarie smarter, in more ways than one.

**Start your smart city journey with these first steps:**

1. Download the ‘Lake Mac Smart City, Smart Council Digital Economy Strategy’ and see what all the fuss is about: haveyoursaylakemac.com.au/smart-city
2. Start a working group in Council and get talking about how technology is currently being used within the organisation, and how it could make your community better.
3. Visit a co-working space or digital hub and meet the entrepreneurs and companies that are pushing boundaries and pioneering in the tech space.
5. Follow the conversation on twitter by searching #smartcities.

**John O’Callaghan** is the Director of JOC Consulting, a creative urban planning practice specialising in community, place and technology. Find out more at www.jocconsulting.com.au
Planning to communicate?

Dean Hosking MPUA, Senior Planning Consultant Urbis, Convenor NSW Young Planners

To be a successful planner, we need to be the most effective communicators we can be. Our profession increasingly relies on technology to communicate and interact with people through emails, online forums and websites. As the planning profession evolves and adjusts with technological shift, are we making an effective use of available resources to communicate successfully with the outcome in mind?

LinkedIn, Facebook, Twitter. Emails, online forums, Skype. If I were a planner 20 years ago, I wonder how I would be partaking in community consultation, obtaining development submissions or lodging applications? Technology means we now have many ways to undertake so many aspects of our jobs as planners. Easily forgotten in today’s era, is that at either end of this technology is a person with a message, or receiving one.

The face to face interaction was by far the more successful of the two situations.

While this model has been widely cited and misinterpreted over the years and Mehrabian did not consider the model to apply to all communications, reflecting on this concept provides the opportunity for individuals to evaluate and ask: how effective am I at communicating?

While the percentages may not necessarily be accurate, the principal still holds true in that there is reduced bandwidth of information communicated between an email and a phone call, and likewise a phone call and face to face interaction.

Why is this important for planners to consider? The method in which we choose to convey our message can have a dramatic impact on how the information is received. I recall two experiences within one week, acting as a council duty planner. One interaction was over the phone, the other was face to face. Both instances were with...
local applicants looking to undertake very simple developments. The face to face interaction was by far the more successful of the two situations. I was able to sit down with the applicant, they were able to visually show me what they were seeking to do and I was able to walk them through what they had to do and the reasons why.

In contrast the phone call interaction did not provide a clear picture of the proposal nor could I offer definitive advice.

Reflecting on Mehrabian’s model, the face to face interaction provided a full range of communication, whilst the phone call interaction was limited to how I spoke to the person and the meaning of words.

### Listening to others

Planners are on the receiving end of a lot of information. We read reports, strategies, legislation and letters. We listen to people in meetings, forums, phone calls and discussions. In an age where we are information rich and time poor, we are looking for the most efficient resolution to any given situation.

By taking the time to analyse the situation and what we want to get out of the information we are reading or listening to, we give ourselves the opportunity to obtain the largest benefit from the situation.

There are several styles of listening which we can apply to written, verbal and face to face interactions:

- Prescribing: giving advice, telling them what to think
- Adversarial: disagreeing, rebutting
- Judging: criticism, evaluating
- Smoothing: problem solving
- Probing: questioning by agenda
- Passive: empty responses
- Dominating: filling the space, responding too quickly or with too much detail
- Interfering: changing subject, interrupting.

I can think of many meetings where I have witnessed all these styles take place; Pre-DA meetings, client feedback, planning panel briefings and Council meetings to name a few. As planners, when in a position to listen to another, are we focusing on our own needs and desires, waiting to respond with our point of view rather than absorbing the information we are hearing? Are we listening with preconceptions, thereby limiting our understanding of the other person’s message? How effective are we in this moment as a communicator?

Listening in the right way gives us the opportunity to uncover problems and/or understand something, or hear critical information.

Effective listening creates an open communication environment where others are willing to share ideas, insights and problems, which can improve commitment and motivation over time.

### What’s in it for me?

As planners, we are in a position to influence and change the outcomes of decisions that impact the future of our communities, cities and regions. The way in which we choose to communicate does have an impact on these outcomes and the associated processes. By reflecting on how we deliver a message and how we listen to another’s message, we give ourselves the opportunity to maximise the value behind the information we exchange, to be more persuasive over the outcome. Should I be using social media, email or the phone? Should I be meeting face to face? Am I hearing what the other person is really trying to say?

A little reflection, a moment to evaluate, what is in it for me as a communicator? is a Senior Planning Consultant with Urbis. He continues to grow his planning expertise on a range of projects involving seniors housing, tourism, residential, commercial and industrial developments. Dean is passionate about cities and people. Actively involved with industry groups and PIA, Dean is committed to Young Planners’ personal development and knowledge growth initiatives, providing opportunities for the future leaders of the profession.

### Endnotes

FitNSW is an annual forum showcasing NSW’s best endeavours in the areas of physical activity, active living and supportive built environments. The focus of this year’s event was childhood obesity prevention and the role different sectors can play to address this 21st century pandemic.

 planners were well represented at this year’s FitNSW, which also attracted practitioners working in government, industry and the NGO sectors, across the disciplines of health, the built environment and transport. Planning’s central role in collaborative efforts to support children being active and readily accessing healthy food was central to the presentations and discussions.

Within the NSW State Plan – ‘Making it Happen’ – the Premier has selected 12 ‘Premier’s Priorities’ for urgent action. Reducing overweight and obesity rates in children by five percent over ten years is one of these priorities. If the target is achieved, it will result in at least 62,000 fewer children being overweight or obese – a major risk factor for chronic disease going into adulthood. A special implementation unit has been created within the Department of Premier and Cabinet to oversee the whole-of-government delivery of plans to achieve the 12 targets. The focus on childhood obesity set the broad context for FitNSW 2016 which was opened by the NSW Minister for Health Jillian Skinner MP. She reminded the multidisciplinary audience that this is ‘not just a health issue. It needs all of us’. Keynote speaker, Shellie Pfohl, Executive Director of President Obama’s Council on Fitness, Sports and Nutrition shared a message about working collaboratively on this complex issue. Her compelling mantra that ‘active kids do better’, not only in terms of health, but academically and socially, had considerable resonance.

The United States has had an interagency council promoting health and fitness for 60 years. President Obama expanded its terms of reference to include healthy nutrition. Throughout both terms of the Obama administration, the First Lady instigated ‘Let’s Move’ as a further initiative to address childhood inactivity and poor nutrition, nor is a cookie cutter approach suitable – what works in one place does not necessarily work in another. Rather, a series of successful interagency partnerships across government and industry that carry the President’s imprimatur has been the best way to proceed. Key partnerships include the US Government’s Interagency Taskforce and various Let’s Move collaborations across schools, childcare settings and local government areas. The NGO Partnership for a Healthier America was established to foster sustainability of the Let’s Move initiative beyond the term of the Obama administration. A national campaign that focuses on disability inclusion has also been instigated.

Following the keynote address, delegates heard from Greater Sydney Commission (GSC) Chair Lucy Turnbull. In outlining future healthy planning opportunities for the Commission, she spoke about the critical role that transport plays in shaping a city, particularly connectivity and walkability. Commissioner Turnbull also said that she and the GSC are keen to be involved in the development of healthy planning guidelines as part of the Sydney Metro Strategy and delivering the Green Grid.

Clare Gardiner Barnes, Deputy Secretary of Transport for NSW, focused on the transport theme in her address, describing various active transport initiatives. To see these come to fruition, Claire made the important point that supportive infrastructure requires shifts in behaviour and attitudes.

An innovative collaboration between the Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (WSROC) and a group of Western Sydney Local Health Districts that led to most WSROC council mayors signing the Walk21 International Walking Charter concluded the event.

You can view all FitNSW presentations on the PCAL sites at www.pcal.nsw.gov/fitnsw.

Endnotes
1 www.nsw.gov.au/making-it-happen
2 www.fitness.gov
3 www.committoinclusion.org
The year is flying by. Easter has come and gone, leaving behind fond and maybe guilty memories of chocolate overloads. Winter is now upon us and the budgets for 2016/2017 are being finalised.

As the financial year draws to a close, it is always fun to look back at what has been achieved, but more interesting is to look forward to what will arise from the budgets over the next financial year. The Greater Sydney Commission will be pushing full steam ahead to deliver the District Plans, the amalgamated Councils will be coming to terms with what the mergers mean, and in my opinion ‘value capture’, ‘planning gain’, or ‘value sharing’ will be the most contested, discussed, celebrated or unfavoured policy discussion likely to stir our industry.

Continuing the trend from the March issue, the Department of Planning and Environment has welcomed a number of new staff members, including Catherine Van Laeren, Gina Metcalfe and Karen Armstrong. PIA National President, Brendan Nelson, has also joined the Department’s team as Deputy Secretary – Growth, Design and Programs while Liz Develin is on maternity leave. In recent months, the Department said goodbye to Lee Mulvey who has joined with Ben Hendricks at Mecone, Paul Robilliard who is starting at JBA, and Colette Goodwin who is joining Helen Deegan at TPG in North Sydney.

A special congratulation is offered to Adam Littman from the Department’s District Planning Team who has won the UrbanGrowth from the Department’s District Littman.

Meanwhile, in other Government-related news, our former Managing Editor and recently announced Australian Young Planner of the Year, Andrew Wheeler, has commenced a six-month post in the NSW Ministry of Health as Senior Policy Analyst (Healthy Built Environments). Andrew is the first urban planner to work in the Ministry and his appointment signifies a strengthening relationship between planning and public health in NSW.

JBA has announced the appointment of Caroline Squires as an Associate, supporting the property economics and demographic team, and Stefan Meissner as a Senior Architect and Urban Designer.

Urbis continues to grow, welcoming two new planning consultants, Meadhbh Nolan and Christophe Charkos, in the Sydney team earlier in the year. Guillermo Umana has returned to Urbis as a graduate planning consultant, with Lucy Band joining the team as senior consultant in social policy.

Associate Director Madonna Locke has left sunny Brisbane to join the Sydney Urban Design team, along with new consultant urban designers Stella Zhou and Agnes Tiong, Stephen Davies, Director of Heritage at Urbis, has been appointed as the new Chair of the NSW Heritage Council.

Elton Consulting is excited that Liz Densley has joined the planning team, leaving her previous job at Mid-Western Regional Council, where she was the Manager of Strategic Planning and Environmental Services. Liz will be working in Sydney and across the regional areas. Poppy Dossett has also joined Elton Consulting to work within the housing policy and affordable housing division, after her experience in Mission Australia Housing.

Jonathan Sjostedt has recently accepted a position as Graduate Planner at City Plan Strategy and Development in Newcastle.

Cox Richardson (the Sydney studio of Cox Architecture) has appointed Lachlan Abercrombie as Senior Associate and Shirin Adorbehi and Sydney Ma as Associates. Their continuing contribution to the planning team has resulted in successful outcomes for many key projects that inform Sydney’s growing urban environment from urban design and public domain to broader city planning and infrastructure strategies.

In further news, New Planner would like to celebrate the innovation and progressive ideas coming out of Cox Richardson who are excited to be working in partnership with UNSW Built Environment and UDIA NSW, to create an interactive app called Urban Pinboard. The app will connect government, industry and the community in a single conversation about how we build cities. Cox Richardson is using innovative digital technology to drive smart city transformation and we implore their creativity and encourage similar thought leadership across the industry.

New Planner is now on LinkedIn and Twitter. We always welcome staff updates, company innovations, announcements and any other news you would like to share. Send us an email to newplanner@planning.org.au and follow us on LinkedIn and Twitter.
Be a Disruptive Planner

Whether you’re planning for the ‘smart’ city, ‘liveable’ city, ‘sustainable’ city, ‘resilient’ city, or ‘creative’ city, you’ll need to do things differently. And you’ll need to do it fast. If you examine the ‘best practice principles’ of the aforementioned cities, there are several commonalities. Each of the above cities will rely on the ability of the urban planner to collaborate, innovate, experiment, apply technology, and advocate for the profession.

Go beyond working with ‘other planners’ and other built environment professionals. Work with artists, local entrepreneurs, health practitioners, foodies, product designers, etc, etc. We need to demonstrate the relevance of our urban planning profession but we also need to seek opportunities to collaborate with those beyond our inner-circle. I always get a great buzz from working with artists, particularly those that are involved in ‘interactive public art’. Their contribution to our cities can be transformative, however, as planners we need to not only ‘regulate’ public art, but ensure that it does make an active contribution to the liveability of our cities.

Sonia Kirby, Queensland Planner, Autumn 2016

TaxiBots and AutoVots in Lisbon

The potential for driverless vehicles to dramatically change our cities has been highlighted by a report from the OECD which used Lisbon to simulate how driverless shared vehicles – a mixture of ‘TaxiBots’ shared simultaneously by several passengers and ‘AutoVots’ picking up and dropping off single passengers sequentially – might impact on traffic flows in a major city. The study found that the total number of cars on the road network in peak periods would fall by between 25% and 65%, depending on the availability of high-capacity public transport. What is more, the number of parking spaces in the city could be reduced from 50,000 to 10,000, freeing up a considerable amount of land for alternative uses and eliminating on-street parking problems.

Progress is also being made tackling some of the remaining challenges to the widespread introduction of autonomous vehicles. Coping with the unexpected is the target of the new Toyota Research Institute, which will concentrate on teaching autonomous vehicles to respond to unexpected events, such as objects falling off a vehicle travelling in front.

Paul Burrell, Town and Country Planning (UK), February 2016

The ‘bicycle-isation’ of Australian cities

This was advocated in an article written in 1974 by Alan Parker. It called for the cessation of freeway building and other “massive road construction”. Instead, the energies of planners and capital investment should be redirected to facilitate an “integrated public transport system” where “safe systems of bicycle routes through residential suburbs be planned to connect with railway stations, key bus and tram stops, schools, shopping centres and factories”.

Inspired by documented success of cycling infrastructure overseas, Parker envisaged that a recalibration of the transport system would create transport efficiencies, improve suburban amenity and benefit local economies. In effect, ‘bicycle-isation’ would make the city work better as a whole, allowing citizens to benefit from the proximity and connectedness inherent to urban living. Interestingly, Parker’s primary justification for displacing the motorcar with train, bus and bicycle wasn’t to reduce congestion, improve the amenity of neighbourhoods, or even facilitate greater integration with the existing transport system – these were secondary. It was to reduce road fatalities.

Jack O’Connor, Planning News (Vic), March 2016

Car parks for housing

As I glide past each mega car park on the way to Geelong I am left stunned at the total private capital investment lying
around idle all day, namely all those cars. I am left to wonder how it is economically rational or productive to first compel the vast majority of householders in middle, outer and fringe suburbs to purchase an additional car and then leave that investment out in the midday summer heat or freezing cold all day, simply because the station is too far from home and there is no reliable, frequent bus shuttle service to fill the breach?

Do the maths: for every 1,000 car parks at metro train stations, at an average value of say $15,000 per car, doesn’t that add up to $15 million in idle capital? What’s so hard about train stations every two kilometres, not four, and streamlined frequent shuttle services to the nearest station? I ask this question because I want to exchange all that land and millions of dollars of compulsory yet unproductive investment in cars and car parking...for housing: for brilliantly designed, energy-efficient, solar-powered housing, instead.

Bernadette George, Planning News (Vic), March 2016

Granny flats gaining ground

Vancouver, British Columbia, has one of the most expensive housing markets in the world (the average price of a detached home is around $1.32 million USD), but it’s achieving recognition among planners for a housing type often associated with affordability:

Vancouver cemented itself as an ADU leader. They typically face the rear property lines of single-family lots, providing what Heather Burpee, a senior planner with the city of Vancouver, calls “gentle density.”

Brian Barth, Planning (USA), April 2016
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