Building upon the strong foundations laid over the past couple of years, this year has been transformative for PIA.

In taking on my “dream job” as a 34-year-old back in 2011, it’s fair to say that I knew that I had a big job ahead of me. But as I bow out, now at 40, I’m filled with pride to see how much the Institute has grown and transformed. There is, of course, still much to be done. However I leave knowing that there’s a solid foundation and structures in place for the next CEO to take PIA to the next level. I look forward to watching the next stage of PIA’s journey and will be cheering from the sidelines.

I believe it’s critical for growth to periodically pause and reflect on progress and achievements, to learn from the challenges and celebrate the successes. This Annual Review provides us the opportunity to do just that, and I hope that as you read through these pages you’ll be pleased with PIA’s achievements over the past year.

2016 saw the completion of the 2012-2015 Strategic Plan and the endorsement of the new PIA2031 Strategic Plan for the coming 15 years. The directions of the 2012-2015 Strategic Plan centre heavily around the implementation of the Membership Retention & Recruitment Strategy. Membership growth through Planning Matters: Membership Matters has seen a 6% increase in members, with PIA hitting a high of 5,286 members on 30 June. This follows growth in the previous two years, which is a pleasing trend and further cements PIA’s position as the representative body for planning in Australia.

The substantive focus of the past year has been on Registered Planner as the organisation’s most critical strategic initiative. The commencement of the rollout of Registered Planner in early 2016 was the culmination of more than three years of work to review and transform CPP into a credible, competency-based model. Reaching this milestone is a personal career highlight for me, involving countless hours of deep thinking, robust discussions and extensive research. Following a significant program of member and stakeholder consultation, I believe that we have developed a robust model that has learned from the lessons of CPP and will position PIA and Registered Planners to be recognised by government and industry as highly competent, qualified planning professionals.

There is still some way to go in implementing Registered Planner, but alongside the supply of Registered Planners we are focusing equally on the creation of a demand for Registered Planner. Unfortunately I don’t get to see this through, but early indications across the country are that governments and industry are interested in Registered Planners as a means of assuring that the advice guiding the planning and development of our cities and regions is coming from appropriately qualified and capable professionals.

Aligned with PIA’s commitment to developing high quality planners, our CPD Policy and University Accreditation Policies have been reviewed and updated in the past year, providing a strong basis for the education and professional development of planners. This is supported by a strengthened program of professional development across the country, including a nationally available program of webinars and a commitment to the sustainable expansion of Victoria’s PLANET program to other states and territories. National Congress in Brisbane had the largest numbers of delegates, and (importantly) the largest cohort of PIA members, attending in at least the last decade. To compliment the urban focus of Congress, this year we’ve successfully trialled the inaugural national Rural and Regional Planning Conference, meeting the needs of our planners working outside of the major capitals.

It has been a strong year in Policy & Advocacy nationally, with PIA releasing the first of its Journey towards 50 million reports. 2016 has also been the first year of a Cities Minister, with PIA playing a role in the collaborative advocacy that saw the inclusion of a Cities portfolio in the Ministry. This was taken up by the Hon Angus Taylor MP as the Assistant Minister for Cities and Digital Transformation, and retained following the Federal election. PIA has engaged strongly with the Minister and supporting departmental teams to assist in shaping the cities agenda. City Deals – a concept PIA advocated for in the 2013 federal election as part of the Urban Coalition – has also been taken up federally this year, representing another policy win for our Institute. It has been fantastic to be personally involved in the collaboration and advocacy that led to these outcomes, with various professional and industry groups coming together and uniting for a common cause.

Supporting the need for better cities, PIA is a key member of the Parliamentary Friends of Better Cities group, which is a non-partisan group through which PIA and other collaborators can engage with parliamentarians. This has raised PIA’s profile and provided the platform for the launch of our Journey towards 50 million report, Through the lens: megatrends shaping our future. This was a great success, attracting ongoing attention via a sustained social media campaign.

Social media, traditional media and other communications have been an area of increased focus in the past year with the employment of a Communications Manager. Our media presence increased substantially from 460 to 596 media hits, and more recently we have formed a partnership that will see PIA stories promoting planning reach an audience of more than 50,000 via an allied industry online platform. PIA is continuing to look for new ways to increase our presence as the trusted voice for planning.

Governance of the Institute is undergoing continuous improvement and is well supported by the Board Secretariat, with a new electronic voting system introduced this year to further enhance the quality of PIA’s governance systems. Financial performance is solid, with the Board making strategic decisions to invest in advancing Registered Planner, resulting in a modest profit. Membership, event attendance and strong support from our sponsors continue to be the main financial drivers of PIA’s success. PIA’s management continues to prove that it is adept at controlling expenditure and generating revenue in a constrained and competitive operating environment.
Once again, the PIA team and the multitude of volunteers across the country have put in an enormous effort this year. The National President, PIA Board, Division Presidents, Division Committees and a raft of other committees and working groups across the country give up much of their time to contribute to advancing PIA and the profession – and for that I thank and congratulate you on your achievements for PIA this year. I’d also like to take the opportunity to thank the past volunteers, Directors and Presidents for their support on the journey over the last six years. There are too many to name here, but I’d like to pay thanks to the National Presidents under which I’ve served: Neil Savery RPIA (Fellow), for taking the risk to employ me in the first place and for his guidance and support over the years; Dy Currie MPIA CPP (Fellow) for her strong support in my first three years – we had some fun learning the ropes together and setting PIA on the path to demonstrating why #planningmatters; and to Brendan Nelson RPIA, for his passion in advancing PIA’s policy and advocacy.

I would particularly like to acknowledge the great work and support of PIA’s staff. They work tirelessly behind the scenes to deliver the best that they can for PIA and its members. I liken the PIA team to a flock of ducks on a river, calmly gliding around on the surface, but paddling hard underneath to work with the current to get to their destination. I say river rather than pond, because at PIA there are not too many still pond moments – mostly raging torrents!

PIA is very fortunate to have this fantastic team of staff, and I have had the privilege of helping to guide them. We have taken the concept of ‘OnePIA’ and made it business as usual, moving from what was once a very parochial culture to forming a unified national organisation that works closely and positively together. I believe PIA is at the forefront of our industry in the flexibility and adaptability of its work environment, which has enabled us to attract and retain good talent. I am very proud of being able to provide a career path within PIA through which I’ve watched several team members blossom and grow professionally to take on leadership roles.

My deepest thanks go to my wing-man, Chief Operating Officer David Williams, who has been a loyal, wise and humorous guide and mentor throughout my CEO journey. My heartfelt thanks to my team, past and present, for all your hard work on behalf our members and for your support of me over the past six years as CEO. It has truly been an amazing experience to succeed in my dream job. Now it’s time to pursue a new dream.

Kirsty Kelly RPIA
Chief Executive Officer