

The NSW planning profession
Looking forward



**Report of the Planning Professionals
Working Group to the Minister for Planning**

November 2006

The NSW Planning Profession: Looking Forward
Report of the Planning Professionals Working Group

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FOREWORD

The NSW Government is focused on achieving the best possible design for towns and cities. As the population grows, we are planning ahead to ensure appropriate infrastructure is provided, the best environmental outcomes are achieved and cities are dynamic hubs of activity. We are making real progress with the Metropolitan Strategy, regional strategies and our plans for a network of strong regional centres outside the Sydney CBD.

Planners are essential to achieve these goals and build sustainable communities. They need our support and the NSW Government is working with the profession to address important issues.

For example, I am aware that some regional areas struggle to attract and keep planners. Others have told me that more workplace and training assistance would help to boost the planning profession.

The NSW Government is tackling these issues with a range of initiatives. For example, we fund the Skills Shortages Scholarship Program, which helps councils to boost planning skills.

In March 2006, I convened a forum of about 60 members of the profession and the industry to discuss these issues. The forum was a valuable opportunity for planners to exchange ideas and discuss ways to support the next generation of planners. Its suggestions were then examined in detail by a working group, chaired by the Department of Planning and charged with creating an action plan.

This report is the result of the working group's meetings and deliberations. It contains 21 recommendations to help the profession grow into the future. I thank its members for their contribution.

The NSW Government recognises that a well-resourced and appropriately-trained planning profession is vital for the State's future growth. We will continue to work with key stakeholders to promote the work of professional planners.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Frank Sartor'. The signature is stylized with a large, looped 'F' and 'S'.

The Hon. Frank Sartor MP
Minister for Planning
Minister for Redfern Waterloo
Minister for Science and Medical Research
Minister Assisting the Minister for Health (Cancer)

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Planning Professionals Working Group was established to examine further the issues and suggestions raised at the Planning Profession Forum held on 27 March 2006.

The Working Group has canvassed how to address the current and anticipated future shortage of planners and, in particular, the shortage of planners to undertake statutory assessment. The Group identified three priority areas for action to address the potential supply of planning professionals:

- Education needs, and workforce issues affecting retention of employees
- The profile of planners/planning as a barrier to supply
- Structural issues deriving from the nature of planning and the planning system.

The role of planning is increasingly broad, multidisciplinary and focused on strategy. In considering ways to increase the supply of 'planners', the Working Group supports drawing on the potential for a wide range of professionals (engineers, architects, urban designers, ecologists, economists, geographers and others) to contribute to strategic planning and assessment, and for paraprofessionals to assist with less complex planning tasks, in addition to professionals with qualifications in urban and regional/town and country planning. The report therefore refers to both 'planning professionals' and planners.

Encouraging professionals from a wide range of backgrounds to engage in planning is clearly one response to increasing the supply of planning professionals, although general skills shortages, especially in disciplines such as engineering, restrict this option.

Promoting short courses in development assessment to existing non-planning council staff and others is a means to increase the supply of paraprofessionals to assist with less complex planning tasks especially basic enquiries and routine assessment (recommendations 1 and 4).

Attracting school leavers to take courses in planning, and graduates in other disciplines to undertake postgraduate study in planning, is important in increasing the supply of planning professionals (recommendation 15). A website providing information about planning generally and study options in NSW is recommended (recommendation 13).

Financial support and recognition of planning students is both an incentive and encouragement to young people to enrol in planning courses and to form a relationship with a local government sponsor, who may become an employer. Implementation of the new Department of Local Government scholarships, with a special category of planning scholarships part-funded by the Department of Planning with the Department of Local Government and councils, is therefore supported (recommendation 5). A system of planning

cadetships within the development industry is also supported (recommendation 6).

Existing planning courses do not necessarily cover all the skills and content that Working Group members consider necessary as a basis for work in planning. Further examination of gaps in the skills and content of existing courses is recommended, and the inclusion of training in communication skills should be encouraged (recommendations 2 and 3).

Pressures on planners deriving from the nature of their work, including statutory deadlines, management of work flows and engagement with the public and elected representatives, are identified as factors affecting work choices in a market where employees are in demand. Addressing these issues is crucial to retention of the existing workforce, and therefore to managing one aspect of the supply equation. Secondments, exchanges and rotations are identified as ways of refreshing and developing staff, which are generally supported. Developing and implementing a program encouraging short-term exchanges between the public and private sectors (and within the public sector) is recommended (recommendation 9).

The Working Group concludes that programs to provide better leadership and in-house training for young planners will generally be workplace specific. The Department of Planning, as a major employer of planning professionals is committed to improving its capacity and developing best practice in this area (recommendation 7). Finding career structures and roles not tied to supervisory positions is recommended to retain older staff (recommendation 8).

Joint planning and assessment teams using combined State and local government planning professionals, sharing staff between adjoining councils, and partnerships between rural/regional and metropolitan councils are ways of meeting resource demands (recommendations 10 and 11). A 'flying squad' of accredited professionals is proposed to assist with priority rezonings and assessments where resources need to be supplemented to deliver timely results (recommendation 12).

Raising the profile of planning, both as an area of activity and as a career path, is the focus of several recommendations. Increased efforts to place positive media stories about careers in planning are proposed to help raise awareness of planning as a desirable career (recommendations 13 and 14). Augmenting the existing awards and prizes given by the Minister for Planning for 'Excellence in Planning' is suggested as one way to create a positive image of planning and the career paths it offers (recommendation 16).

The planning system in NSW, and particularly the recent rate of change to the system, is seen as contributing to the pressures placed on planners and to their attrition rate. The aim of the planning reforms is to simplify and to improve the efficiency of the system and should continue to be implemented, including further reforms to the development assessment process. Industry members of the Working Group suggested proposals which may reduce the administrative burden on some planners: extending the types of exempt and complying development; and changes to the deemed refusal period for development applications. These suggestions should be investigated (recommendations 17

and 19). Service delivery benchmarks and appropriate levels of resourcing from fees should be investigated in consultation with local government (recommendation 18).

Finally, two longer term measures, which require resourcing from both public and private sectors are a funding package to provide incentives and support for students and sponsorship of a university chair in planning to help raise the profile of planning and resource educational demand (recommendations 20 and 21).

Recommendations

The Working Group recommends implementation of a number of actions beginning in 2006 and identifies further actions for later investigation:

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS (See also Tables 1 and 2, pp 26–28 for implementation details)	TIMEFRAME
1: Promote courses for training in statutory assessment to meet the immediate identified shortage of statutory planners	2006 and ongoing
2(a): Undertake continuing work to identify gaps in existing university and TAFE courses and what additional skills and information could be covered to meet workplace needs 2(b): Coordinate a set of professional development units offered by universities and TAFE with industry recognition (Professional Development Module)	Ongoing Longer term
3: Request universities and other course providers to incorporate training in personal and communication skills in planning courses	2006–07
4: Explore options for funding training of trainee planners and existing council staff for work as planning professionals or paraprofessionals	2006
5: Implement the Department of Local Government/Department of Planning scholarship program	2006–07
6: Advocate and support a system of planning cadetships within the development industry.	Develop 2006–07
7: Implement capacity building/staff development in workplaces	2006 ongoing
8: Recognise that career progression need not be tied to supervisory roles and create roles to retain experienced planning professionals	Longer term
9: Develop and implement a program that encourages short-term exchange placements of planning professionals between the private sector and the public sector, and between State and local government.	Immediate and ongoing

RECOMMENDED ACTIONS (See also Tables 1 and 2, pp 26–28 for implementation details)	TIMEFRAME
10: Promote and implement joint State/local government assessment teams	2006 ongoing
11: Promote joint planning/assessment teams between adjoining councils and rural/metropolitan partnerships	2006 ongoing
12: Develop and implement a ‘flying squad’ of experienced, accredited planning professionals for short term assignments to relieve bottlenecks	2006 ongoing
13: Develop a website about careers in planning, showing pathways for study	2006–07
14: Media placement of good planning initiatives case studies and profiles of planning professionals	2006 ongoing
15: Promote planning to potential students	Develop 2006 Implement 2007
16: Augment the Minister for Planning’s ‘Excellence in Planning’ awards and prizes for presentation at an annual awards night	2007
17: Continue to implement the planning reforms to simplify the system, and investigate further reforms to the development assessment process	2006–11
18: Investigate service delivery benchmarks and resourcing in the context of reviewing development application/major project fees, in consultation with local government	2006–07
19: Consider ways to increase the use of, and achieve a more consistent approach to, exempt and complying development amongst local councils	2006–07
20: Put together a funding package of both public and private sector contributions to increase student support, including targeted funding/scholarships for rural students and emergency funding for hardship cases to ensure students can complete degrees	Longer term
21: Sponsorship of a university chair to raise the profile of planning issues and assist with increased demand	Longer term

1 INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this Report of the Planning Professionals Working Group is to make recommendations to the Minister for Planning on potential actions to address the shortage of planning professionals in NSW.

1.1 Planning Profession Forum

In convening the Planning Profession Forum on 27 March this year, the Minister recognised the need for the public and private sectors to take concerted action on the serious issues of the current shortage of planners and the challenges facing planners in 2006.

Speakers at the Forum included Ms Sue Holliday, President of the Planning Institute of Australia (PIA), and Mr Ross Woodward, Deputy Director-General of the Department of Local Government, both of whom reported on surveys conducted by their organisations which provide statistical and qualitative evidence of the shortage of planners, especially in local government, a problem widely recognised by employers of planners and also by the development industry which experiences the effects of the shortage. PIA and the Department of Local Government have identified suites of actions to increase the supply of planners and issues/causes associated with difficulties in attracting people to work in planning and to remain in the profession.

The Forum canvassed the views of a broad cross-section of people from planning and related industries on the key issues facing the planning profession and its employers. The participants discussed the three inter-related issues of the shortage of planners, the planning system and process, and the nature of a planner's work and working environment, identifying a number of suggested ways forward.

1.2 Planning Professionals Working Group

Following the Forum, the Department of Planning established the Planning Professionals Working Group to make a practical contribution, building on ideas raised at the Forum. The Working Group consists of representatives of State and local government, University of NSW (UNSW), University of Technology Sydney (UTS) and TAFE NSW, the development industry, and PIA. A list of members is at Appendix A.

The purpose of the Working Group is to:

- Review the output of the group work carried out at the Forum and identify the most important issues facing the profession that require action
- Identify short-to-medium term initiatives in each of the sectors—State Government, local government, industry and the tertiary sector—that can be implemented quickly, together with analysis of potential long term issues and actions
- Provide a written report to the Minister for Planning.

The Working Group has focused on professionals working in planning, taking a broad view of the work in which planners are engaged, and extending the definition of 'planners' to include all professionals working in strategic land use planning and development assessment.

1.2.1 Review of forum discussion

The first step on the Working Group's agenda was to review the Forum findings and identify priority issues.

Discussion at the Forum confirmed the general finding of both the *National inquiry into planning and education and employment* (PIA August 2004) and the *Skills shortages survey in NSW local government* (Department of Local Government August 2005) that employers are experiencing difficulty in finding and retaining planners with the necessary skills, particularly statutory planning skills, and there is a pervasive perception that there is a shortage of planners.

The dimensions of the planning skills shortage are partly documented in previous reports, such as the PIA and the Department of Local Government reports, which use surveys and Australian Bureau of Statistics data based on people nominating as planners (rather than as managers, for example). However, there is as yet no accurate baseline profile of the planning profession.

The Forum identified a range of issues related to the demand and supply of planners, as well as potential solutions. Issues raised include:

- The changing nature of the challenges facing planners and the need for ongoing professional development
- The working environment of planning professionals, which is often politicised and characterised by a heavy workload
- Whether the annual number of planning graduates is sufficient to meet projected demand, given wastage and other factors (the evidence seems inconclusive)
- The low/hidden public profile of the planning profession in NSW and the need for strategies to address this
- Options for increasing the supply, such as making immigration easier
- Additional capacity options, such as planning assistants and consultants.

1.2.2 Views of the Department of Planning's Young People's Group

At its first meeting the Working Group received a presentation from Ms Amy Blakely, of the Department of Planning's Young People's Group, outlining the key challenges in the attraction and retention of planners. The challenges identified paralleled those canvassed at the Forum and in the PIA inquiry report:

- Toxic environment
- Lack of job satisfaction
- Political and bureaucratic work environment
- Lack of professional development
- Poor leadership/insufficient resources

- Low professional profile
- Bad publicity
- High demand for planners
- Lucrative private sector
- Opportunities to work overseas
- Ageing workforce.

The Young People's Group has also put forward a set of preferred actions, based on a survey of members, for training, staff development, improved operation of workplaces and raising the Department's profile to make it an employer of choice. The Department will incorporate suggestions in its capacity-building program.

1.2.3 Previous surveys and reports

Previous surveys and reports confirm the Working Group's conclusions and place the skills shortage issues affecting planning departments in a broader economic and social context. In addition to the PIA and the Department of Local Government reports referred to above, the Legislative Council's Standing Committee on State Development *Inquiry into skills shortage in rural and regional NSW* (May 2006) identifies the shortage of planners as part of a larger skills shortage in rural areas.

The Standing Committee concluded that the available data on measuring skills shortages in NSW and Australia is inadequate and has recommended that the NSW Government establish a cross-agency working group that reviews existing data collection processes.

The Government's *NSW public sector retirement intentions survey report* (June 2006) found that, if the intentions expressed in the survey are realised, the NSW public sector will face several consecutive waves of retirement, with a possible attrition rate of 38% caused by retirement within five years. The report noted that 'current skill and occupational shortages confronting most employers in most states, including public sector employers, has necessitated exploring strategies to retain (and increasingly attract) mature-aged workers' (p.20).

The report makes various recommendations on implementing strategies to attract and retain staff, benchmarking workforce planning, information on superannuation options, employment policies for and valuing mature-aged workers, and a mature workforce retention project to promote retention of mature-aged workers in public sector positions that would otherwise experience critical skills shortages.

The Independent Pricing and Regulatory Tribunal (IPART) has also issued a draft report on the findings of its *Investigation into the burden of regulation in NSW and improving regulatory efficiency* (July 2006), which makes recommendations on structural reform to the planning system to achieve efficiency gains, including the standard instrument for local environmental plans (LEPs) and further streamlining the concurrence process.

2 DISCUSSION OF KEY ISSUES

2.1 General shortage of planning professionals

There is general agreement that there is currently a high demand for planners.

The PIA *National inquiry into planning education and employment* (August 2004) found that most cities and their regions and 'sea-change' communities were facing a critical shortage of planners, with an average 16% vacancy rate in planning positions over the previous three years. The *Survey of skills shortages in NSW local government* (Department of Local Government August 2005), found that town planners in general, and development/statutory planners in particular, represent the largest skills shortages in local government, with nearly all local councils surveyed citing planning as an area of skills shortage.

The Working Group identified shortages of development assessment planners as most acute, though it also recognises a lack of appropriate skills to undertake the new subregional strategies in the Sydney metropolitan area. The increasing focus on strategic planning means that developing skills in this area will be an ongoing imperative.

2.2 Location and demand

The PIA inquiry reported in 2004 that NSW rural and regional areas have had a long term moderate supply problem and that 'the Sydney region has been experiencing a critical shortage of planners, particularly within local government', with a lot of movement between employers and overseas planners being recruited (p. 23).

Both the survey of local government and the Legislative Council's Standing Committee on State Development *Inquiry into skills shortage in rural and regional NSW* (May 2006) make it clear that the shortage of planning professionals is part of a broader skills shortage, in country areas especially. The Standing Committee Report also points to evidence that there is not only a problem of skills shortage or skills gaps in rural and regional NSW but a labour shortage as a result of outward rural migration (p. 7). This is relevant in identifying potential solutions.

Location is a key factor in the ability to attract and retain professionals, including planning professionals. Solutions to the problem of the supply of planners may also be relevant to other professions and linkages considered. Generic solutions providing financial incentives to locate or stay in rural NSW were raised in Working Group discussions, including income tax offsets for remote areas, and relocation allowances to move to rural areas. Employers in such locations may need to consider salary packaging to allow planners to pay for accommodation before tax or offer other forms of rent/mortgage assistance. Such solutions would clearly address the general labour/people shortage in rural and regional NSW, not just the shortage of planners.

It should also be noted, also, that councils within the Sydney metropolitan area do not enjoy equal access to the supply of planners, with western Sydney councils generally expressing more difficulty in filling vacancies.

2.3 Supply of planners and planning assistants: education issues

Increasing the supply of graduates is clearly a major goal in any strategy to respond to the shortage of people with the skills needed in planning.

There have been suggestions that increasing university places might be a solution to this problem. The university representatives on the Working Group do not support special initiatives here, given some difficulties in filling places in courses, and the commencement of new postgraduate courses in planning at UNSW and UWS in 2007.

2.3.1 Attracting students to enrol in planning: school leavers and transitional courses

Rather than increasing the number of student places, the Working Group agreed that the imperative is to attract students to planning in the first place—to make planning competitive with other professional courses and to improve the quality of the candidates enrolling. This applies both to attracting school leavers to undertake Bachelor of Town Planning degrees and to encouraging students in other disciplines to convert to a planning degree, either before completing their first degree or as a postgraduate qualification. Making planning more attractive as a profession is a necessary part of a strategy to bring more people into the profession, whether by education and training or by using related credentials to apply for a planning position (for example, a geographer applying for work in planning).

Pathways for transition and the training of planning paraprofessionals have been identified by Working Group members as key strategies for increasing the supply of planners.

2.3.2 Promoting existing education and training options

The thrust of proposed actions is to promote the existing education and training options available and to support the development of short courses to develop particular skills to train non-graduates. PIA and others promote the increasing training and use of planning assistants to share the administrative and process burden and to handle simpler public inquiries. The use of paraprofessionals/planning assistants is supported by the Working Group as a means to relieve the administrative burden of development assessment planners in particular.

The Department of Local Government, UTS and TAFE NSW have developed the pathway of a local government qualification for planning assistants, suitable especially for existing local government workers to upgrade their skills to include planning skills. This can be funded using various Commonwealth and State subsidies that fund training. Local government needs to be encouraged to promote this practice and access the funding.

TAFE NSW has developed a short course to train existing staff who have some relevant experience, for example, experienced senior clerical staff in planning sections in councils and diploma-qualified environmental health and building inspectors. UTS will provide articulation to a Graduate Diploma in Building Assessment for graduates of the TAFE short course. This has been negotiated as an initiative through the Department of Local Government working party.

This initiative needs support from the professional associations, the Local Government Management Association and the unions, such as promoting it to their members and encouraging councils to fund opportunities for staff to train or retrain. For example, the Mayor of Leichhardt has indicated to the Working Group that his council will provide opportunities for existing staff with no formal qualifications in planning or building surveying access to Existing Worker Traineeships in Statutory Planning, opportunities for new staff to access traineeships in statutory planning, and skills-gap training for existing staff who have building surveying qualifications and experience. Leichhardt Council will also offer a number of scholarships to existing staff interested in pursuing a TAFE or university qualification in statutory assessment or an undergraduate degree in town/urban planning.

The fastest way to increase supply is probably through traineeships and masters degrees. A 'tertiary conversion strategy' to target final year students/new graduates in other disciplines (especially in built environment and geography faculties) is proposed.

2.4 Supply and retention of planning professionals: workforce issues

2.4.1 Diversifying from 'planners' to 'planning professionals'

Increasingly planning is becoming a broader, multidisciplinary sphere of activity with a growing strategic, rather than regulatory, emphasis. The planning workforce consequently is becoming more multidisciplinary and the recent emergence and prominence of urban designers, in particular, was noted in Working Group discussions.

Increasingly also, the skills needed for complex environmental assessment and for policy development are provided by degree qualifications in other fields such as engineering, environmental science and economics, and graduates from these professions may not need formal planning qualifications to work effectively as planning professionals. The Department of Planning, for example, requires a degree qualification in urban and regional planning or related disciplines for general planning positions. Graduates of other disciplines, or with specific skills such as project management or urban design, may be better suited to some positions.

Raising the profile of planning as an activity generally, as well as a career path, is seen as an important part of increasing the numbers of people working as planning professionals.

2.4.2 Retention of planning professionals

Retaining the existing workforce is essential to an adequate supply of planning professionals. The 2004 PIA report found graduate numbers insufficient for the large 'slippage' out of the planning profession in Australia. Planners leave to work overseas, move to related disciplines or leave the workforce or leave or reduce their working hours for family reasons, especially women. The PIA report noted that although women represent around 40% of graduates only 26% of planners over 35 years of age were women in 2001. It conservatively estimated that in 2001 approximately 570 women aged over 35 were not working as planners because of family commitments and other reasons, and one-in-four was working part-time.

2.4.3 Managing workplace pressures

An important factor in managing workplace pressures is the interactive relationship between the shortage of planning professionals to undertake work, particularly work with statutory deadlines, and the levels of satisfaction planners have with their working environments.

The increasing currency of the term 'toxic work environment' suggests that all employers of planning professionals need to put strategies in place to manage workplace pressures to prevent burnout, retain staff and attract new people to their workplaces. This report does not canvass in detail the many workplace issues recognised by the Working Group. The Department of Planning is addressing the issues in its own organisation, which may have a wider influence given the size of its planning workforce.

2.4.4 Improving workplace leadership and mentoring

Many of the measures that have been put forward centre on improved workplace leadership, induction programs, mentoring and professional development.

Public consultation and interaction with political representatives have been identified as increasing challenges for planning professionals. The Working Group recognises the vulnerability of planners, especially young planners to criticism in public and council meetings, and advocates senior planners taking increased responsibility and providing juniors with support in such situations.

Protocols to guide the interaction of elected representatives and the public with planning professionals have also been suggested to address the issue of workplace stresses. Such protocols could include clear information for the public on what they can and cannot expect from planning staff and in what timeframes, and may be best provided by local councils. Council and agency codes of conduct should ensure that undue pressure from elected representatives is not applied to government employees and that advice is given and received professionally.

There is a particular need for planning professionals to develop communication skills to deal with community consultation, conflict resolution and mediation. Workplace-specific training solutions are considered most appropriate for developing skills in conflict resolution and communication. The

Working Group recommends that university and other courses incorporate training in personal and communication skills as these are essential for effective planning professionals.

2.4.5 Secondments, exchanges and rotations

Secondments/exchanges are generally endorsed as a means of refreshing staff and bringing new insights to people and workplaces. The Working Group noted some existing supportive partnership relationships between metropolitan councils and under-resourced rural/regional councils (for example Penrith and Lachlan), and encourages this approach. Such arrangements benefit both councils, as they provide opportunities for career development for the donor organisation.

The staff development benefits of secondments need to be well understood and experienced to encourage managers to release staff. Secondments otherwise may be seen as solving one organisation's staff shortage at the expense of the donor organisation, and do not increase supply generally.

The Working Group proposes establishing a program that encourages short-term exchange placements of planning professionals between the private sector and public sector (Department of Planning and Department of Local Government). The program would be based on a similar model operating within the legal system. Protocols will need to be developed by the department with input from the Independent Commission Against Corruption to ensure that the probity issues can be successfully managed. The program will be guided by a steering committee chaired by the Department of Planning.

Rotations within planning organisations are also important for staff and skill development and for creating an understanding of the connections between strategy, policy development and development assessment. Some local councils achieve this with a place-based approach to planning and others have consultative mechanisms to ensure interaction between their different branches on a place or project basis. The Department of Planning intends to increase its use of staff rotation to provide opportunities for staff development and to assist with cultural and organisational change.

2.4.6 Incentives and programs to retain the existing workforce

In addition to managing workplace pressures, improved leadership and staff development, the Working Group concluded incentives could be provided in some workplaces which do not have the advantages of flexitime, flexible working hours, working from home and competitive remuneration packages. While the State Government provides these advantages (as do many councils), it was noted that the Department could improve its image and practice by making it clear that part-time employment and job-sharing would be considered when it advertises positions. This could make the Department a more attractive prospective employer for women.

The Department of Planning is developing a capacity-building program which, in addition to recommendations put forward in this report, consists of the following measures:

- Student planners placements (at least four per annum)
- Induction program
- Lunchtime information sessions
- Senior Managers Forum (four per annum)
- Young Planning Professionals Forum
- Annual conference
- Observers on governance structures
- Individual work plans and learning and development plans
- Technical assistant to the Director General (junior position, available for rotation of staff)
- Code of conduct and ethics (revised)
- Good management practices
- Higher duties opportunities
- Certified Practising Planner training.

2.4.7 Integrated council plans – reducing political pressures

The Department of Local Government is also encouraging councils to produce an integrated strategic plan which links environmental, physical, social and financial planning. This should mean councillors' attention will focus on strategy and budget and reduce political decision-making, taking pressure off planning professionals to a large degree.

2.5 Structural/systemic issues

2.5.1 Relationship between the planning system and workplace pressures

Development pressure and growth in NSW contribute to the factors producing planner shortages and burnout. The planning system itself has also been nominated as a factor in the equation. The PIA report in 2004 suggested that there were issues such as the development assessment process that require a response from State Government.

2.5.2 Effect of the planning reforms

The Working Group noted that the Government's planning reforms have already made significant progress towards simplifying the planning system and creating greater certainty for both proponents and the community. The reforms focus on strategic planning for growth areas, simplifying planning controls, improving the development assessment process, and providing flexibility in the use of development levies for local facilities and services and for special infrastructure contributions and voluntary planning agreements.

Several amendments to the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act in 2005–06 and a number of new State environmental planning policies (SEPPs) and circulars have implemented the reforms. A major step in simplifying controls is the gazettal of the standard instrument for LEPs which introduces a common language for LEPs and will save both developers and government time and money. All councils will use the standard instrument to prepare a new principal LEP for their local government area within the next five years. Concurrence and referral roles in the development assessment process were reduced by a SEPP in December 2004, and the ability to use panels and

planning administrators where council performance is unsatisfactory has been strengthened. A new system of regular performance reporting is being introduced to monitor key aspects of the planning and development assessment system and identify areas where further streamlining of current procedures and practices could occur.

Amendment of the Environmental Planning and Assessment Act in 2005 and the Major Projects SEPP introduced changes to the assessment of major projects in NSW and clarified which projects will be assessed by local and State government. The new Part 3A of the Act consolidates the assessment and approval regime for all major projects that need the approval of the Minister for Planning. Previously these were dealt with under Parts 4 and 5 of the Act. The new Part applies to State government infrastructure projects, developments previously classed as State significant, and other projects, plans or programs declared by the Minister.

The Working Group recommends that the Government continue to implement planning reforms to simplify the system to make it more design/merit focussed and to allow planning to be more proactive than regulatory. It was noted that simplification of the Victorian planning system has resulted in more proactive planning.

At the same time, the Working Group has suggested that the recent changes have led overall to an increased demand for planners, in part to advise other professionals on the changes. The changes also have a positive benefit in that they help resolve long-standing contentious planning issues of regional or State importance and will arguably reduce the pressures in some local government areas. Working Group members, however, noted that the recent changes to planning processes have the potential to exacerbate the situation of local government employers by increasing the dissatisfaction felt by, and exodus of, local government planners, when challenging work is dealt with by the Department of Planning, or when the way the work is performed is micro-managed to a high degree.

The rollout of the new standard instruments over the next five years to 2010 may also have the potential to create a demand which needs to be managed or resourced. The Working Group noted that the Planning Reform Fund has been used to fund the strategic work of the Department and councils, which will underpin the new principal instruments.

2.5.2.1 Responses to the resource demand resulting from planning reforms

The effect of the Minister's consent role taking the more interesting work away from council staff will be moderated by the delegation of the Director-General's assessment functions to councils under the major projects law, with an appropriate fee-sharing arrangement, as is already happening. The *New South Wales Major Development Monitor 2005–06* published by the Department of Planning in September this year makes it clear that the Minister strongly supports expanding such partnerships in the future. The Working Group supports this practice and the continued use of joint State/local government assessment teams.

In addition, the use of joint planning and assessment teams between a number of councils, especially in rural and regional areas, should be promoted, as well as partnerships between urban and rural councils to provide advice and resource assistance.

The use of a 'flying squad' of expert planning professionals established as a central accredited resource to assist councils to bring their planning controls into the new standard format, or to assist with rezoning and development applications where councils lack resources, is supported.

2.5.3 Review development application assessment fees and target assessment timeframes

Development industry representatives on the Working Group raised the proposal of an additional fee to enable fast-tracking of development applications. In their view, this would permit councils to secure additional (consultant) resources to provide fast-track services, while releasing other planners to assess the remaining routine applications.

Consideration of this as a 'solution' to the planner shortage problem needs to be very clear as to whether a shortage of planners is the major factor in delays in assessing applications. Other possible causes of delays are applications that are poorly documented or are inconsistent with policy or strategy. In some cases, planners assess the applications within deadlines, but a decision is delayed by political or public opposition.

It was agreed the fee regime and development application process generally should be reviewed. The view was expressed that priority might be given to development applications that are important for economic development and job creation, rather than allowing 'fast-tracking' across the board. A more effective approach may be to develop a system of service delivery benchmarks, where planning authorities agree to meet agreed or published benchmarks.

It is recommended that there should be consultation with local government on development application fees to address resource issues, acknowledging that higher fees would impact on development costs.

The view was also strongly expressed that it would be dangerous if the imperative of improving the development assessment process led to separation of strategic planning and development assessment work, as experience in both provides good professional development as well as good planning outcomes, and regulation needs to be strategically informed.

2.5.4 Wider use of independent panels to de-politicise decisions-making

The Working Group suggests the Minister and Director General could make more extensive use of independent panels to assess planning matters in circumstances where the council is not best placed or equipped to make the planning decision.

2.5.5 Extending the types of exempt and complying development

Some Working Group members commented that exempt and complying development has not been as successful as anticipated, with some councils being relatively restrictive about the type of development they allow in these categories, and disputes about what the provisions cover. The Department of Planning will be considering how to increase the use of exempt and complying development and to achieving a more consistent approach across the State.

In addition, the new measures to monitor and improve council performance, under recent legislation, will allow an overview of the types of development for which councils are in fact requiring development applications. Monitoring is intended to lead to measures to improve development application assessment times.

2.5.6 Changes to the deemed refusal period

It has been suggested that a review of the length of the period which applies before an applicant may appeal to the Court against deemed refusal (currently 40 days) may lead to changes in councils' responses, improved assessment times, and possibly a less stressed working environment for planners. There would, however, be opposing views on whether the period should be reduced, extended, or abandoned, and on the probable effects.

2.5.7 Concurrence and referral regimes

A further review of concurrence and referral regimes to cut unnecessary loops in the statutory processes is suggested as one way of simplifying the administrative processes which burden planners and produce delays.

2.5.8 Cultural issues

Planner negativity and a tendency to require more and more information for rezoning and assessment proposals have been raised as other systemic problems, which may impact on and result from planner overload. The Department is working to create a culture where extensive studies are not a prerequisite for council consideration of rezoning proposals. Again, the new performance-monitoring measures are intended to bring about a cultural change in the way in which councils approach their business. The challenge will be to ensure that councils improve their actual performance and that the indicators chosen are meaningful.

3 IDENTIFICATION OF PRIORITIES: ACTION PLAN

3.1 Identified priorities

The Working Group's analysis of the Forum outcomes and other material identified three priority areas on which the Working Group subsequently focused and developed an action plan for implementation.

The **three priority issues for action** identified by the Working Group to address the potential supply of planning professionals are:

- Education needs, and workforce issues affecting retention of employees
- The profile of planners/planning as a barrier to supply
- Structural issues deriving from the nature of planning and the planning system.

The **overall goal** of the measures identified by the Working Group is to increase and maintain the supply and quality/skills of planning professionals.

Already significant initiatives are underway in which organisations represented on the Working Group are involved. Current initiatives of the Department of Local Government and PIA are at Appendix B.

3.2 Immediate short term actions

(See also Table 1 for timeframes and responsibilities.)

3.2.1 Education and workforce issues

Recommendation 1: Promote courses for training in statutory assessment to meet the immediate identified shortage of statutory planners

It is recommended that courses for training in statutory assessment be promoted by professional associations, unions, the Local Government Management Association, Local Government and Shires Associations, and the Department of Local Government on their websites and to their members. The web page to include a list of courses and accredited providers contact details. This information would also be available on the website proposed in recommendation 2.

Recommendation 2(a): Undertake continuing work to identify gaps in existing university and TAFE courses and what additional skills and information could be covered to meet workplace needs

It is recommended that continuing work needs to identify what could be done to give students better technical skills. There is concern, for example, that newly graduating planners are no longer able to read drawings or understand the assessment process or how a CAD system is built up and can be used. It appears the skills taught vary between institutions and courses. Planning

courses concentrate on teaching students to think and on giving them the conceptual and intellectual tools to operate effectively as planners, rather than teaching technical skills. It is acknowledged that PIA has an ongoing role in the accreditation of planning degrees for eligibility for membership of the Urban and Regional Planning Chapter of PIA, providing one mechanism for implementing this recommendation. It is also noted that PIA is reviewing its Education Policy in response to new demands being made on planners. The skills needed for particular working contexts can be provided through Professional Development (see recommendation 2[b]).

Recommendation 2(b): Coordinate a set of professional development units offered by universities and TAFE with industry recognition (Professional Development Module), implementing where possible outcomes of recommendation 2

The education providers (principally universities and TAFE NSW) can work together to provide a professional development module, indicating study/training pathways and providers, that meets the need of industry. No single provider is likely to be able to provide training in all the skill sets/technical requirements identified by industry, so a coordinated module is proposed. Industry recognition and universal recognition of the units as valid qualifications are important for this approach to succeed, and make it worthwhile for providers, students and employers.

Recommendation 3: Request universities and other course providers incorporate training in personal and communication skills in planning courses

The Working Group sees effective verbal communication and plain English letter-writing skills as essential tools for planning professionals and recommends that units covering communication be included in professional and paraprofessional courses. This issue is covered in PIA's accreditation process and as a skill set in PIA's Certified Practising Planner initiative. A separate request arising from the Working Group will reiterate the importance of these skills.

Recommendation 4: Explore options for funding training of trainee planners and existing council staff for work as planning professionals or paraprofessionals

It is recommended that options for funding the employment and training of trainee planners and existing staff in statutory assessment be explored. TAFE NSW has indicated it will put the funding information together. This will be a combination of training subsidies for new and existing staff and resource sharing across councils.

Recommendation 5: Implement the Department of Local Government/Department of Planning scholarship program

It is recommended that the Minister endorses the implementation of the Department of Planning/Department of Local Government scholarship program for planners. The purpose of the scholarship program is to increase the number of tertiary students entering employment in NSW local government in areas of acute skills shortage. The program will include planning scholarships, which will be jointly funded by the Department of Local Government and the Department of Planning and successful councils.

Eleven scholarships will be awarded in 2006–07, with a minimum of five scholarships for the planning profession only. Councils will select the tertiary institution to partner with and courses to be targeted. The Department of Planning/Department of Local Government will provide \$2,500 to each successful council/scholarship and councils will be required to at least match this funding. The scheme will be reviewed after one year. One of the key aims of the program is to encourage more local councils to establish their own scholarship schemes.

Recommendation 6: Advocate and support a system of planning cadetships within the development industry

It is recommended that the Minister support the proposal of private sector representatives on the Working Group for instituting planning cadetships within the development industry, similar to the current engineering cadetships prevalent in the construction industry.

Recommendation 7: Implement capacity building/staff development in workplaces, including Department of Planning capacity-building program

It is recommended that the Minister supports addressing workforce issues through capacity-building programs and staff development and support in workplaces. In particular it is recommended that the Minister support the Department of Planning implementing a program with the following actions:

- Develop a comprehensive capacity-building program involving the Young Persons Group (Department of Planning)
- Extend the Department's student planner program to cover larger numbers and present a coordinated program with a variety of experience
- Investigate formal job-sharing and advertise shared positions.

Recommendation 8: Recognise that career progression need not be tied to supervisory roles and create roles to retain experienced planning professionals

Retention of experienced and senior planning professionals in a market where they are in demand requires innovation to devise roles which value and reward their skills and experience in flexible management and organisational structures.

Recommendation 9: Develop and implement a program that encourages short-term exchange placements of planning professionals between the private sector and the public sector, and between State and local government

The Working Group recommends an exchange/secondment program based on a similar model operating within the legal system. Protocols will need to be developed by the Department with input from the ICAC to ensure that the probity issues can be successfully managed.

Recommendation 10: Promote and implement joint State/local government assessment teams

The delegation of the Director General's assessment functions to councils where appropriate and the use of joint assessment teams comprising State and local government planning professionals is supported by the Working Group.

Recommendation 11: Promote joint planning/assessment teams between adjoining councils and rural/metropolitan partnerships

Sharing of resources between adjoining councils, especially in rural and regional areas, and partnerships between city and country councils should be promoted as an effective means of overcoming resourcing problems.

Recommendation 12: Develop and implement a 'flying squad' of experienced, accredited planning professionals for short term assignments to relieve bottlenecks

The use of a 'flying squad' to assist with the rollout of the new principal LEPs, or to help deal with rezoning and development application pressures, is supported.

3.2.2 Raising the profile of planning and planning professionals in NSW

Raising the profile of planning and encouraging uptake of courses leading to planning qualifications are the focus of several proposed actions. The Department of Planning's Media and Communications Unit has prepared a communications plan (Appendix C), which outlines options for improving the profile of planners/planning. This is only a preliminary plan which gives an indicative outline of the some potential communications work, and the cost of this work. The plan identifies a series of actions similar to those being pursued by other groups in response to skills shortages, but focused particularly on planning and planners. Stakeholders will be approached to support this work being carried out.

Proposed actions to raise the profile of planning and planning professionals are as follows (recommendations 13 to 16):

Recommendation 13: Develop a website about careers in planning, showing pathways for study

It is recommended that the Department of Planning and partners develop an information-based (static) website linked to the Department's website to explain everything one needs to know about a career in planning, including pathways and options for study and career advancement. The Working Group sees this as important step in promoting planning in NSW and encouraging prospective planning professionals to train and work here.

A major component of the website would be a chart/table/web of pathways for students showing all available educational options, how you can build on what qualifications etc. This information would also be provided in other forms to target groups. The website will also include interviews with planners and case studies. Links to the website from employer sites would also be pursued.

Recommendation 14: Media placement of good planning initiatives case studies and profiles of planning professionals

It is recommended that the Department of Planning and partners target media placement of good planning initiatives (such as the planning package for Wollongong now on exhibition) case studies, and career profiles about both representative and unusual planning professionals and their careers, including stories in in-house development industry journals.

Recommendation 15: Promote planning to potential students

It is recommended that organisations represented by Working Group members pursue a series of actions to promote planning to potential students, including:

- Providing the content for an existing electronic newsletter supplied to careers advisors, Year 10 to 12 students and councils

- Promotion at career expo events
- Tertiary conversion strategy, to encourage students to convert to planning or begin a postgraduate course in planning
 - Convene tertiary student advisors network/group to work out how to target/communicate with students and graduates.

Recommendation 16: Augment the Minister for Planning’s ‘Excellence in Planning’ awards and prizes for presentation at an annual awards night

It is recommended that the Minister augment existing prizes and awards given for ‘Excellence in Planning’. It is envisaged that the Minister could present the awards personally at an awards night, such as that usually held by PIA, and assist in raising the profile of the profession generally. Currently the Department or Minister provides prizes to students in planning courses in some universities and this program could be extended.

The funding required would not be large, and the awards themselves would be prestigious because of the resulting recognition, rather than because of a high dollar value.

3.2.3 Structural issues

Recommendation 17: Continue to implement the planning reforms to simplify the system and investigate further reforms to simplify the development assessment process

It is recommended that State and local government continue to implement planning reforms to simplify the planning system. This includes the introduction of new LEPs based on the standard instrument for LEPs, reducing the overall number of planning instruments, implementation of major project assessment under Part 3A, and monitoring the performance of the planning system, with consequential adjustments to policy and practice. (This is consistent with recommendation 58 of the draft Independent Pricing and Review Tribunal [IPART] *Investigation into the burden of regulation in NSW and improving regulatory efficiency*.) Simplifying the development assessment process may also enable some of the less complex tasks to be undertaken by planning assistants.

Recommendation 18: Investigate service delivery benchmarks and resourcing in the context of reviewing development application/major project fees, in consultation with local government

It is recommended that the fee regime and development application process generally should be reviewed taking account of resourcing issues and that service delivery benchmarks be considered in consultation with local government.

Recommendation 19: Consider ways to increase the use of, and achieve a more consistent approach to, exempt and complying development amongst local councils

It is recommended that the Department of Planning consider ways to increase the use of, and achieve a more consistent approach to, exempt and complying development amongst local councils, as also recommended by IPART.

3.3 Longer term actions

Recommendation 20: Put together a funding package of both public and private sector contributions to increase student support, including targeted funding/scholarships for rural students and emergency funding for hardship cases to ensure students can complete degrees

Further funding support both to attract students to planning and to enable undergraduate and graduate students to complete courses, and financial support from employers, was identified as a possible way to expand or underpin the supply of graduates. A steering group could be established to work out a detailed proposal. It should be noted, however, that the number of scholarships or student subsidy provided would need to be substantial to make planning more attractive than other professional choices.

Recommendation 21: Sponsorship of a university chair to raise the profile of planning issues and assist with increased demand

Industry sponsorship of a university chair is suggested as one way of raising the profile of planning within the property and development industry and the community generally while also providing additional resources for planning education.

4 FUNDING OPTIONS AND IMPLEMENTATION

- Develop a fees regime to reflect and meet resource needs.
- Planning Reform Fund to continue to provide councils and DoP with additional resources to support the implementation of standard instruments and regional strategies.
- Time/in-kind resources to develop programs/actions identified below.
- Public and private sector contributions to scholarships.
- Public and private sector contributions to excellence awards.

Commitment from Working Group members to lead and assist with actions is shown in the following table.

Table 1: Short term actions

Issue 1: Education and workforce issues

Proposed new initiatives	Industry sector	Lead Responsibility	Timing
<i>Education initiatives</i>			
Promote courses for training in statutory assessment	Professional associations, local government, State Government (and private sector)	Professional associations, unions, LGMA, LGSA, DLG on websites and to members	2006 and ongoing
Undertake continuing work to identify gaps in existing courses and the skills and content which could be added	Education, PIA	PIA	Ongoing
Request education providers to incorporate communication skills training	Education	DoP, PIA	2006–07
Explore options for funding employment and training of trainee planners and existing council staff	Education and local government sectors	TAFE	2006
Implement DLG/DoP scholarship program	State and local government	DLG	2006–07
Advocate and support a system of planning cadetships within the development industry	PIA and industry groups as a steering committee	Steering Committee to act as a clearinghouse. Use Multiplex template	Develop 2006–07

Workforce initiatives			
Capacity building and staff development Implement DoP capacity-building program	All sectors	All sectors DoP	2006 ongoing
Develop and implement a program of short-term exchange placements	Private and public sectors	Steering committee chaired by DoP	Immediate and ongoing
Promote and implement joint State/local government assessment teams	State and local government	DoP	2006 ongoing
Promote joint planning/assessment teams between adjoining councils and rural/metropolitan partnerships	State and local government	DoP, DLG	2006 ongoing
Develop and implement a 'flying squad' of experienced, accredited planning professionals for short term assignments to relieve bottlenecks	State and local government	DoP	2006 ongoing

Issue 2: The profile of planning and planning professionals in NSW

Proposed new initiatives	Industry sector	Lead Responsibility	Timing
Development of a website about careers in planning, with pathways for study	State Government in partnership with TAFE, UNSW and UTS, professional associations, local government and the private sector	DoP	2006–07
Media placement of case studies and profiles of planning professionals	State Government, private sector	DoP	2006 and ongoing Staff time
Promote planning to potential students: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> E-brochure for careers advisors and school leavers Tertiary conversion strategy targeting other disciplines 	PIA, DoP, DLG, universities	DoP, PIA	Develop in 2006 Implement in 2007–08
Augment Minister for Planning's Excellence in Planning awards and prizes for presentation at an annual awards night	State Government in partnership with PIA, the private sector, universities and TAFE	DoP in conjunction with PIA	2007

Issue 3: Structural issues

Proposed new initiatives	Industry sector	Lead Responsibility	Timing
Continue to implement planning reforms to simplify the system, monitor performance and adjust policy and practice	State and local government	DoP	2006–11
Investigate service delivery benchmarks and resourcing in the context of reviewing development application/major project fees, in consultation with local government	State Government	DoP	2006–07
Consider ways to increase the use of, and achieve a more consistent approach to, exempt and complying development amongst local councils	State and local government	DoP	2006–07

Table 2: Longer term actions**Issue 1: Education and workforce issues**

Proposed new initiatives	Industry sector	Lead Responsibility	Timing
Coordinate a set of professional development units offered by universities and TAFE with industry recognition and address gaps (Professional Development Module)	PIA, TAFE and universities	TAFE	2007–08
Recognise that career progression should not be tied to supervisory roles and create roles to retain experienced planning professionals	All employers of planning professionals – Government and private sector	N/A	2007–08
Funding package of both public and private sector contributions to increase student support	Private sector, State and local government	DoP	2006–08 Scope would depend on contributions

Issue 2: The profile of planning and planning professionals in NSW

Proposed new initiatives	Industry sector	Lead Responsibility	Timing
Sponsorship of a university chair to raise the profile of planning issues and assist with increased demand	Private and education sectors	Multiplex, Property Council of Australia, Urban Taskforce	2007–08 \$

5 RECOMMENDATIONS

The following recommendations are made for the Minister’s consideration.

Recommendation 1: Promote courses for training in statutory assessment to meet the immediate identified shortage of statutory planners
Recommendation 2(a): Undertake further work to identify gaps in existing university and TAFE courses and what additional skills and information could be covered to meet workplace needs
Recommendation 2(b): Coordinate a set of professional development units offered by universities and TAFE with industry recognition (Professional Development Module)
Recommendation 3: Request universities and other course providers incorporate training in personal and communication skills in planning courses
Recommendation 4: Explore options for funding training of trainee planners and existing council staff for work as planning professionals or paraprofessionals
Recommendation 5: Implement the Department of Local Government/Department of Planning scholarship program
Recommendation 6: Advocate and support a system of planning cadetships within the development industry
Recommendation 7: Implement capacity building/staff development in workplaces, including Department of Planning capacity-building program
Recommendation 8: Recognise that career progression need not be tied to supervisory roles and create roles to retain experienced planning professionals
Recommendation 9: Develop and implement a program that encourages short-term exchange placements of planning professionals between the private sector and the public sector, and between State and local government
Recommendation 10: Promote and implement joint State/local government assessment teams

Recommendation 11: Promote joint planning/assessment teams between adjoining councils and rural/metropolitan partnerships
Recommendation 12: Develop and implement a ‘flying squad’ of experienced, accredited planning professionals for short term assignments to relieve bottlenecks
Recommendation 13: Develop a website about careers in planning, showing pathways for study
Recommendation 14: Media placement of good planning initiatives case studies and profiles of planning professionals
Recommendation 15: Promote planning to potential students
Recommendation 16: Augment the Minister for Planning’s ‘Excellence in Planning’ awards and prizes for presentation at an annual awards night
Recommendation 17: Continue to implement the planning reforms to simplify the system and investigate further reforms to simplify the development assessment process
Recommendation 18: Investigate service delivery benchmarks and resourcing in the context of reviewing development application/major project fees, in consultation with local government
Recommendation 19: Consider ways to increase the use of, and achieve a more consistent approach to, exempt and complying development amongst local councils
Recommendation 20: Put together a funding package of both public and private sector contributions to increase student support, including targeted funding/scholarships for rural students and emergency funding for hardship cases to ensure students can complete degrees. Establish a subgroup to work out details and support
Recommendation 21: Sponsorship of a university chair to raise the profile of planning issues and assist with increased demand

APPENDIX A

MEMBERS OF THE PLANNING PROFESSIONALS WORKING GROUP

Ms Kim Cull	Executive Director, Department of Planning (Chair)
Dr Deborah Dearing	President, NSW Chapter, Royal Australian Institute of Architects
Ms Janet Dore	General Manager, Newcastle City Council
Mr John Kuhn	Manager, Project Delivery, Macquarie Goodman
Mr Bob Meyer	Director, Planning, Cox Richardson Architects and Planners
Mr Ken Morrison	NSW Executive Director, Property Council of Australia
Professor Peter Murphy	Dean, Faculty of the Built Environment, University of NSW
Ms Sonya Phillips	Mayor, Baulkham Hills Shire Council
Ms Sue Robinson	Executive General Manager, NSW Urban Taskforce
Ms Monique Roser	Recent past NSW President, Planning Institute of Australia
Dr Glen Searle	Senior Lecturer, Design, Architecture and Building, University of Technology Sydney
Ms Maire Sheehan	Manager Public Sector Programs Business, Arts and IT Curriculum Centre
Mr David Tierney	Strategic Advisor, Multiplex Developments Australia
Mr Ross Woodward	Deputy Director General, Department of Local Government

APPENDIX B

SOME CURRENT INITIATIVES

Department of Local Government

The Department of Local Government Taskforce work plan is well advanced in implementing the following actions:

- Strategies to market local government as an employer of choice (e.g. targeting school leavers)
- Developing a 'pathway' qualification in building and planning, targeted at existing council staff
- Developing a scholarship program
- Workforce planning tools
- Representation of women and other under-represented groups in the workforce
- Undertaking a Department of Local Government census of council employee profile.

Achievements of the Department of Local Government Taskforce to date include:

- Skills Shortage Survey
- 2006 Careers Expo (Local Government Village)
- UTS and TAFE Graduate Certificate in Development Assessment (July 2006)
- Scholarship Program (with councils and Department of Planning)
- TAFE Health and Building Diploma (June 2006)
- Promotional brochure targeting schools
- Certificate IV in Local Government Planning (State-wide from June 2006).

Planning Institute of Australia

PIA is implementing a number of measures in response to the findings of its report, including:

- Persuading the Federal Government to increase intake of overseas trained planners (skill in demand/reciprocal agreements/assessment agency)
- Raising the shortage issue with state governments and LGAs to secure action
- Promoting cadetship agreements with State governments
- Providing certificate courses for planning assistants
- Advocating greater workplace flexibility in local governments which don't match those of state governments
- Working with all universities to increase student intakes; protect and foster existing and new post graduate programs
- Developing a draft protocol to guide the relationship between elected representatives and the profession
- Introducing mentoring schemes for final year planning students.

APPENDIX C

DRAFT COMMUNICATION PLAN

Prepared for the Planning Professionals Working Group the Department of Planning Media and Communications Unit, 23 June 2006.

1. Background

The Planning Professional's Working Group was established to address short and longer term skills shortages within the planning profession.

In local government a recent survey indicated that planning represents the greatest skills shortage for this sector with nearly all respondents commenting on 'an overall industry shortage' and the 'domination of the private sector' to recruit the most experienced planners' by virtue of its ability to offer higher pay and better working conditions.

Within this context the Working Group was convened by the Minister to consider the issues that may be limiting the growth of the industry and to find ways to reposition planning as an exciting career option for young people and for those seeking to develop a career in a growth industry.

A key issue identified by the Working Group is the need to raise the profile of the planning profession. This paper outlines a number of communication options. These are options only and are not fully funded at this stage, however will be worked towards by the Department in conjunction with stakeholders.

2. Broad objectives

- To raise the profile of planners and planning as a profession.
- To increase awareness of the need for planners in NSW.
- To increase the supply of planners in NSW.
- To provide information about tertiary study options.
- To reach and influence career advisors in senior schools.

3. Target groups

- 'Careers journalists' working in the print media
- School leavers looking at further education options
- Career advisors
- Parents of school leavers
- University students
- People working in related fields such as customer service staff in local government

4. Campaign name

Through a brainstorming session with the committee develop a catchy name to feature on all aspects of the awareness campaign from website to publicity and print materials. Suggestions for discussion by the group may include:

- Create the future, Plan the future, Plan today for tomorrow, See the future: be a planner, The future is in your hands, Planning people, People for planning, Planning as a profession, All about planning.

5. Website

Develop a comprehensive information based (static) website that explains everything one needs to know about a career in planning. The site could feature the following topics and information:

1. Homepage—site entry point with various headings as below.
2. All about planning—introductory and explanation text with images about the different types of planning—a page per professional type. (Provide quick links to 2.)
3. Planner profiles—a page for each different type of professional planner profiled by real people. (Provide quick links to 1.)
4. Pathways to planning—tertiary training options for people wanting to know more about how to become a planner with links through to the various tertiary institutions.
5. Planning cadetships and scholarships—information about the various cadetships in the planning sector with links to relevant websites for further information.
6. Prospects for planners—provide current and future industry statistics plus remuneration scenarios—also links to planning recruitment websites such as local government sites.
7. Links—links to all associated and relevant sites.
8. Contact us by email. Cost: Internal site on the Department of Planning site \$3,200 or Independent external site \$6,000.

6. Flyer

Produce a DL, three-fold flyer (six panels) for distribution to school leavers—the flyer would provide basic information and details of the website.

Cost: Copywriting, preparation, graphic design—in-kind (Department of Planning) or external design cost (about \$40–60 an hour), 170 gsm, recycled paper two-tone colour, 50,000 print run \$5,500, 20,000 print run \$3,700.

Distribution:

a) Preliminary discussions with the Department of Vocational Training and Education indicate that assistance can be provided to reach secondary school career advisors through the Department's website bulletins and email systems—the advisors would then contact the Department of Planning to request the brochures.

b) Postal delivery of flyers to careers advisors in schools via a Department of Education secondary school mail out data base.

Cost (TBC) \$1,000–\$2,000—or in-kind (Department of Planning).

7. Media

Through careful choice of appropriate talent, the Department of Planning's Media and Communication staff will place a series of case study/career profile stories in the career and employment sections of the: Sydney Morning Herald, The Daily Telegraph, the FPC Courier group of weekly magazines and targeted regional and suburban newspapers across NSW as well as industry related publications such as Local Government News (to reach those working in customer service who may be thinking about updating their skills base).

The profile of each candidate should match the editorial objectives of the targeted publication, for example, successful professional planner—Sydney Morning Herald, sharp, savvy, young city planner—City Weekly, established planner working in a regional area—relevant regional newspaper, young planner(s) just out of training—the suburban newspaper of their home town.

Implementation will require the development of a media kit for each person. The kit should contain a media release(s), background biographical, academic, career and personality/hobbies/interests information and photographs.

Cost: staff resources only—Department of Planning in-kind.

8. Career expos

There are a number of opportunities to participate at Career Expo events in 2007. The main events are:

- Sydney Morning Herald Careers and Employment Expo (July 2007). Cost: \$5000 to \$8000.
- UNSW Careers Expo (March 2007). Cost: \$2000.
- TAFE NSW career events—dates unavailable for 2007. Cost TBA.

9. Career advisors

a) Develop a two-hour 'morning tea style' information event (with guest speakers) targeting career advisors. The event could be offered twice a year and promoted through the Career's Advisors Association of NSW networks (www.caa.nsw.edu.au). Cost: \$1,000 per event.

b) Use the careers advisors electronic network to disseminate a range of information about the planning profession to careers advisors in schools.

10. Tertiary conversion strategy

Work with careers advisors the tertiary institutions to influence/convince graduates of the benefits of adding a Masters in Planning to their degrees as a career entry point to a profession as a planner.

11. Young Professionals Group

There is an opportunity to work with the Department's Young Professionals Group (planners only) in association with the tertiary sector to develop a series of career information sessions for prospective planning students. (Career information sessions probably already exist but the benefits of working with this group in terms of ideas and relationship building should be explored.)

12. Networking online

In addition to the development of website there are a range of opportunities to promote planning as a career through existing career orientated websites that target school leavers and those looking at further education options.

www.tafensw.edu.au/courses/spotlight—shows a career through a student and teacher profile.

www.myfuture.edu.au/services—provides career information for school leavers. A great site that features planning as a profession—could be improved with information regarding supply in NSW.

www.year12whatnext.gov.au—an Australian government site that provides career information including a section on skills shortages—planning is not profiled here so there is an opportunity to have that listed.

www.jobsearch.gov.au/joboutlook—this Australian government site includes information about planners but categorises the profession under ‘marketing and sales representatives’ and the broader occupation of ‘Real Estate and Property’. A search on the ‘find jobs’ link was relatively poor and did not reflect the current employment environment for planners. There is an opportunity to correct this.