

Local Government

National Forum on Skills Shortages

27th April 2006



**Australian Local Government
Training**

Examining the Issue

In response to increasing community and industry concerns, the Department of Sustainability and Environment (previously the Department of Infrastructure) and the Municipal Association of Victoria (MAV) commissioned consultants PPK Environment & Infrastructure to review the professional development and training needs of planners working in local government.



The Partnership

The research involved extensive consultation with planners, Councils and representatives of key industry and community groups and was an important joint initiative between the State and Local Government in Victoria.



The Action Plan

From the research a project action plan sought to synthesise the findings and produce a Strategy Framework that would facilitate a co-coordinated approach to the education, training and ongoing support for staff required to serve the planning function in local government.



Identifying the Role of the Assistant Planner

A key strategy was discussion on the use of a support function ie the paraprofessional “Assistant Planner” and the “Planning Support Officer”.

The strategy involved identifying the competencies and describing the role of the planner in some detail to identify those tasks that could be allocated to a support role.



Identifying the Role cont.....

A key outcome was to provide a more efficient allocation of tasks to match skills and career path preferences, including the creation of “Planning Assistant” positions and reallocation of work activities between Planning Assistants, Junior Planners, Senior Planning and Planning Manager;



Part of the Solution...

Creation and promotion of the certificate and diploma courses in planning to train and give better recognition to planning assistant positions within local government planning departments

and

Improving awareness in planning as a career;



Delivering the Message

Key to the success of the initiative was the strong partnership between key stakeholder bodies. These included:

- Department of Sustainability and Environment;
- Individual Councils
- The planning profession, peak associations and other representative bodies.
- ALGT National Industry Advisory Board (ITAB)
- Swinburne University of Technology



The Model

The competency model reflects that those working within the planning system have different roles and functions.

Accordingly, the model distinguishes between Senior Planners, Planners and Planning Assistants, reflecting that the senior planners are concerned primarily with managing the planning function whereas the planners are doing the majority of the work with the planning assistants providing a supporting role.



The Model cont...

In some councils, officers assigned primarily to an administrative support role often learn enough to be able to provide support to the planners, to varying degrees. It is expected that the use of the Assistant Planner will relieve the planner of the more routine assessments.



The Model cont...

This is a defined role where the officer undertakes the full planning assessment process on applications considered to be routine. This role is considered as an important step in an overall strategy to release the professional planner to attend to more complex issues.



The Qualification

The following is based upon the competencies provided under the LGA04 program, and it is mapped to the specific standards for the Assistant Planner that were developed as part of the Training Package development.

- 1 Assess routine planning applications
- 2 Handle planning enquiries
- 3 Identify and refer planning issues and problems
- 4 Conduct information and document searches
- 5 Maintain plans, records, documents and systems
- 6 Support planners
- 7 Develop self



Benefits to the Council

The use of the Assistant Planner was identified as one strategy to enable the professional planner to participate more holistically in the function for which he/she was educated .

This is done by providing direct support through the provision of the Assistant Planner who is skilled to address the more routine assessments and enquiries



Benefits to the Council cont...

The Certificate IV is classified as a Traineeship, in most States and Territories. In some cases Commonwealth and /or State Government incentives and subsidies are available to employers.



Benefits to the Applicant

The exciting prospect about the role of the Assistant Planner is that it can be officially recognised as part of the LGA04 Training Package, and many who are de facto delivering an Assistant Planner role (or part thereof) can now be formally recognised and trained.

The course can lead to on going career planning for the individual and articulates into tertiary qualifications



Delivering the Model Nationally

- identifying suitable program additions and negotiating with training providers to value add to the delivery
- identifying additional competency standards from other training packages, or
- in the long term by modifying the competency standards through the Commonwealth's continuous improvement program for training packages



Current status of Program

- The first course started Aug 18 2004
- 60 participants to date including 3 class room groups and 1 on-line group, 29 have completed the course and the remaining 31 are currently completing it.
- In Victoria new entrants under 25 entered under the State Governments Jobs for Youth Program.



Contact ALGT:

ALGT, formerly an Industry Training Advisory Board (ITAB) under the previous VET arrangements, will now act as an **Industry Advisory Committee** to the new ISC

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