

PIA's perspective on Local Government skill shortages

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Local Government Planners

- Around half of planners are employed by Local Governments and 30% in private practice (Source ABS 2001) -
- in 2005 there are an estimated 8 200 planners in Australia so around 4100 planners are employed by Local Government and indirectly many more consultants undertake work for Local Governments (Source: Australian Jobs 2005 DEWR) - PIA has around 2100 LG members
- Local Government Planners undertake core planning work (development assessment, strategic planning) and increasingly more are moving into related areas such as transport planning, social planning, economic development, and urban design
- Planners in rural/regional areas often work alone and undertake a wide range of functions

Growing concerns about the planning profession.....

- In 2002 - 2003 there were growing concerns from all levels of governments and the development industry about the shortage of planners and their skills
- PIA established a high level national committee to investigate and report back - National Inquiry into Planning Education and Employment
- Received support from the Planning Officials Group

The Inquiry set-up

- Discussion paper prepared
- Submissions called for (43 received)
- Workshops held in most states/territories (140 attendees)
- National Survey of employers (191 responses)
- Research & discussion with others
- Consultation draft report released
- Final report launched in September 2004

Major findings of the Inquiry.....

- Found a critical shortage of planners – especially in major cities and sea change communities (16% vacancy rate)
- **THE SHORTAGE IS MOST CRITICAL IN LOCAL GOVERNMENT**
- Long term skill shortage exists within rural and regional communities
- **PLANNERS WORKING IN DEVELOPMENT ASSESSMENT WITHIN LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFTEN EXPERIENCE DIFFICULT WORK PLACE CONDITIONS**
- Planners often too busy to get time off work to attend training

Other recent research.....

- **NSW Department of Local Government Report (2005) surveyed LGs in NSW - found that planning has the greatest skill shortage in NSW local governments**
- **PIA survey of Victorian rural and regional local governments (2004) found a severe shortage that was expected to worsen - was having an impact on LG's ability to perform its statutory obligations**
- **SA LG Association (2003) report on "Planning Skills Retention in Local Governments" identified the need for recruitment & retention strategies to counter the skill shortages**

Why is there a shortage?

- **More planning jobs being created - not enough graduates**
- **Planners dropping out - working overseas, working in other professions**
- **Disillusionment with planning**
- **Difficult & unproductive workplaces**
- **Competition for skills - pushing up wages, mobile workforce**
- **Women planners over 35+ dropping out or working part-time**
- **Difficult to attract planners to work in rural areas**

Does the Shortage Matter?

- **Shortage = stressed working environment**
- **Delays and inefficiencies in the development assessment sector = costs to the economy and frustration by the development sector**
- **Shortage = delays for the homeowner and frustration the community**
- **All of the above = reduction in respect & confidence in the profession and in local government**
- **Poor perceptions of working environments in some local governments = exacerbates shortage of planners**

What does this mean for planning in Local Government?

- The shortage is causing an upward pressure on salaries = increased costs
- An emphasis on performance in development assessment leaves fewer resources for strategic local planning
- High staff turnover is time consuming for management, training intensive and work disruptive
- Skills shortage exists in terms of experience, urban design, regional planning
- The shortage is leading to serious workplace stress on top of an already difficult working environment

What can PIA/LGMA do about attracting and keeping planners in Local Government?

- **Market & create local governments as a workplace of choice, especially for younger planners**
- **Lift the profile of local government work and achievements**
- **Actively support Continuing Professional Development for planners**
- **Create family friendly workplaces, especially for women.**

PIA's response to findings.....

- National Committee established to oversee implementing recommendations with representatives from ALGA
- Lobbying the Commonwealth Government to recognise urban and regional planners as an “occupation in demand” for visa purposes & PIA becoming an assessment agency
- Lobbying State/Federal Government for support with skill shortages
- Fostering cadetships within local governments
- Increasing student intakes & fostering new courses
- Developing a Code of Conduct (protocol) to guide the relationship between elected representatives and the profession (discussed later)
- Seeking local government workplace flexibility
- Introducing mentoring schemes for final year planning students
- Improving the standing of the profession

Certification of Planners

- Over the last few years there have been various debates and concerns expressed within PIA and beyond about planner qualifications, the need for lifelong learning or training of planners, the need to enhance the professionalism of planners, and planners standing in the community
- Certification responds directly and indirectly to a number of key recommendations of the *PIA National Inquiry into Planning Education and Employment* relating to improving the professional standing, training and recognition of planners
- Certification gives the community, governments, fellow professionals and the development industry an assurance that a Certified Planner has the appropriate qualifications, experience and training considered appropriate for a practising planner by PIA

Overview of PIA Certification Requirements

- **Corporate Member of PIA**
- **Complete 4 compulsory units of training**
- **Demonstrate commitment to CPD**
- **CPD documented & audited**
- **Certification fee**

Ongoing skills development for planners

- **New Continuing Professional Development (CPD) Policy to take effect from 1st July 2006**
- **Compulsory CPD has been confirmed and compliance will be audited**
- **Range, type and accessibility of CPD expanded – for PIA and non PIA sponsored activities**
- **Web based system being developed for on-line records**

Activities of PIA Local Government Planners Network

- **Local Government Planners Network established in 2004**
- **Regular CPD, conferences, newsletters**
- **Provides support, mentoring, career advice, technical support**
- **PIA lobbies on behalf of its LG members**

PIA & LGMA working together on shared interests.....