



PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2007

Introduction

It is with great pleasure that I report to you on the past year of the Women's Planning Network.

Our past 12 months have been, like every other year, challenging and very rewarding.

The finalisation of the Research Project into the accessibility of affordable housing for women has been a great achievement and it will be launched very shortly, amongst daily debate about the "housing affordability crisis" that is currently "gripping" Australia.

The past year, like previous years, has offered the WPN challenges and opportunities; each one has been met with a level of passion and commitment that has ensured that whatever it was, it was done with gusto, sorted out with ease and with plenty of fun along the way.

2006/2007 saw the WPN comfortable and at home in the PIA offices in the Green Building. That arrangement led to some great synergies and opportunities throughout the year. We remain committed to this arrangement.

I consider our key achievements and highlights to be:

1. Finalising the Research Project.
2. Holding successful events over the year, which have been informative and challenging and have not only provided networking opportunities for members but have also assisted in enhancing the network's profile.
3. The inaugural awarding of the WPN 'Rising Star' scholarship earlier this year.

To satisfy our own creative urges and quest for knowledge, we have again experimented with a range of events, with the goal of maximizing accessibility for our members, whilst keeping in mind what other networking groups are running, school holidays, inclement weather, work loads and speaker availability. It has been no mean feat but we have managed to put on an array of events, which the committee hopes you have all thoroughly enjoyed.

To briefly recap:

- October** A Planning Week walk with Dr Celestina Sagazio, identifying some of the key sites on the Women's Map, which was being reprinted at that time.
- December** A Christmas breakfast at Café Segovia

- March** International Women's Day breakfast, including the awarding of the Rising Star scholarship prize at the Pavilion Café in the Fitzroy Gardens
An Urban Design walk of the Southern Cross station with the Chief Architect for the station redevelopment, Keith Brewis
- May** CH2 building tour (evening tour)
- July** CH2 building tour (early morning tour)
- August** Fireside Chat at Loop Bar, with speakers talking about international planning experiences

The Committee

The 2005/2006 committee started out its year comprising of:

- Melinda Wealands as Vice President;
- Jode Cowie as Administration Assistant;
- Lecki Ord as Treasurer;
- Claire Merlo, Denise Underwood, Shannon Lea, Gilda Di Vincenzo and Bron Hamilton as committee members
- And myself as President.

The committee's membership was stable this year, with Shannon bringing baby Sophie along to many of the meetings, which certainly reminded us of the balancing act that many women do with between their careers and families! While we appreciate that nothing is forever, we hope that this arrangement remains workable for Shannon into the future.

As a committee I feel we have brought together a broad range of skills, knowledge and ideas, as well as a huge amount of enthusiasm and a desire to do things and to offer great events and information to the WPN's members.

As always, the committee was required to juggle and balance, often simultaneously, their myriad of commitments to slot in time to attend meetings, make phone calls and meet with potential speakers – like last year, even more so due to the completion of our research project and the launch planning.

I do feel though that the combination of the committee members and our excellent administration officer has ensured the WPN continues to operate as a well-oiled, albeit, little, machine.

In acknowledging and thanking the committee members, I would like to briefly mention their special contributions, which were made over and above the typical monthly activities and which may not be apparent to our wider member group:

Bron on top of being our networking guru, has lead the WPN's review and responses to the Research Project, ensuring that the project was completed in the ways that WPN

wanted it to be. She has also been a passionate speaker in the forum on affordable housing that was run earlier in the year.

Lecki has been instrumental in keeping the books balanced and has been a stalwart when it comes to making important WPN decisions, especially where money has been involved! We bid farewell to Lecki this year, after 5 years on the committee.

Denise has continued her involvement in the Research Project and has continued as our 'editor in chief' of the information we produce.

Melinda has been the vanguard of design and execution when it has come to the production of Vantage, our membership brochure and all of our flyers that we have used to promote our events this year.

Shannon has been involved with the organisation of events, including the all-important job of taking the photos, as well as contributing to the reviews of the Research Project documents.

Gilda has spearheaded the design, the building and the maintenance of our website, which is an area of expertise that we are all in awe and envious of!

And finally, **Claire** brought new ideas and enthusiasm to the committee and we are sorry to also be farewelling her from the committee this year.

I commend the committee for all of their work and for supporting me as the President.

Administration

Jode continues to prove that she is an invaluable member of the WPN team, undertaking all administration and book keeping tasks. We have maintained our existing relationship with PIA, whereby Jode is employed by that organisation. We feel that this arrangement is a cost and time-effective way of managing the human resource aspects of employing an assistant.

We have developed a good relationship Stuart Worn, PIA's State Manager, which has been important in ensuring that our administration arrangements have worked well for all involved.

Communications

The WPN's communications tend to be last minute productions and we often find ourselves wishing for longer lead times and 'more hands on deck' to help with production. We know this is the nature of a voluntary organization and we are proud of what we have achieved this year:

Vantage

Vantage has gone from strength to strength in its e-mag format. We have managed to produce 3 issues of Vantage over the past 12 months, which is slightly less than our

production goal but a good result nonetheless. We hope you have enjoyed reading them and have enjoyed the format changes made over the past 12 months.

We are always looking for contributions and encourage you to submit your articles and pieces for inclusion in future editions.

Website

Our website continues to be a significant link that WPN has with its members, the broader professional and general communities as well as with the rest of the world.

We feel that its strengths are in its simplicity and that it is easy to navigate. We have changed our web host, which has meant that we have cost-effectively increased our on-line storage capacity.

Email

Like last year, we find email to be an effective tool for communication and one which hopefully encourages less paper usage in offices. We have struggled though with out of date email addresses and networks which won't accept our emails with PDF attachments. Needless to say, our emails and their content, as well as our email address lists, are evolving to cope with the electronic challenges we face!

Conferences

We have not attended any conferences in the past 12 months.

Mentoring Program

The Mentoring Program has remained in hiatus this year. Following a meeting with Christina Bell (course convenor) and PIA representatives in late 2006, an online survey was developed and made available to PIA and WPN members to complete. The response was good – around 46 people offered their thoughts on what the mentoring program should offer in future and these results will shortly be discussed with the Mentoring Committee and the program reviewed accordingly.

It is intended to run the program in 2008.

Research Project

The Research Project was completed by Beca Planning in early 2007. We have been in the process of reviewing the Practice Notes which are the main outcome of the research and these will be available for use shortly.

We were also invited by Genevieve Overell to make a presentation to DSE officers in June of this year of our research and its findings. The research was well received.

The research has also been entered in this year's PIA awards by Beca and we look forward to seeing whether the hard work wins them and us a gong!

Linkages with other organisations

Our linkages with other organisations, such as PIA and VPELA have been reasonable, though we feel they could be improved.

Our involvement with the WPILGC has been limited – it has remained in hiatus due to a lack of funding, though our commitment to the organisation remains.

Membership

The Corporate Membership category is proving to be the main provider of the Network's member base – with 13 corporate members registered this year (the same as last year). We will continue in our efforts to maintain and expand the membership base in the upcoming year.

However, as you will appreciate, having 13 corporate members, which includes Councils and a range of consultancies, provides the Network with exposure to a broad audience of planners and social and built form professionals, as well as councillors and other staff.

Our challenge is to ensure that all of the women working in our member organisations that would be interested in attending our events, participating in our programs and generally contributing to the WPN, are aware of the Network. We call on all of you to help us make sure our message is getting out to people.

We also have 23 individual members of the WPN, of which we are appreciative.

The WPN Annual Award

The annual WPN award was not awarded last year and remains in hiatus. Like last year, it has not been a specific intention of the committee to not make this award available, rather a result of it being focused towards different priorities.

However, it remains a challenge for the new committee to 'open its eyes' so to speak to the great work that is being done by the WPN's members and to ensure that our members dedication, commitment and effort are well rewarded.

The Rising Star Scholarship

The inaugural awarding of the Rising Star scholarship occurred in March of this year. This scholarship provides in the order of \$5,000 towards the annual HECS fees for an undergraduate student studying a planning course and is sponsored by Hansen Partnership.

Five submissions were received from Melbourne University undergraduate students and the winning essay, by Katherine Bailey, reviewed the location and design of public toilets in Melbourne's CBD with a gendered perspective.

The Scholarship committee, comprising myself, Roz Hansen, Carolyn Whitzman (from Melbourne University) and Georgie Landau (WPN member) developed and implemented a communications program for this year's competition; Roz and I have met with Melbourne University and RMIT students and Carolyn and Beau from RMIT have been instrumental in its advertising to students.

We look forward to a larger pool of essays this year and to awarding the winner at next year's International Women's Day Breakfast.

Conclusions

The challenges for 2007/2008 present exciting opportunities for the WPN and the committee and include:

- Launching and publishing our research into the affordability of housing for women.
- Contributing to discussions and about the effectiveness of planning policy
- Ensuring the on-going security of the Ministerial grant, including improving relations with DSE, particularly to encourage the organisation's and staff involvement in our events and programs.
- Reviewing and relaunching the Mentoring Program.
- Expanding the WPN Committee.
- Initiating jointly-run events with VPELA and PIA.
- Continuing to expand our membership base, to incorporate a broader cross-section of women working in built-form and related professions.

So as you can see, the next twelve months will be a busy one for the WPN, though it will be one that we hope is just as, if not, more thought provoking, stimulating and rewarding than those of the past 13 years.

On behalf of the committee, thank you for your on-going support and we look forward to sharing the successes and highlights of the upcoming year with you at next year's AGM.



Kellie Burns