



## **PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2008**

### **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 the past 6 years that I have been a member of the WPN Committee, challenging and rewarding.

The launch at last year's Planning Week breakfast of the Research Project into the accessibility of affordable housing for women has been a great achievement and formed the basis of a briefing session to planning staff at the City of Darebin earlier this year.

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.

WPN's established working arrangements with the Planning Institute of Australia, Victorian Office, remained in place over the past year, with WPN's home being 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. Launching the Research Project;
2. Re-establishing strong linkages with DPCD planners;
3. Re-launching the 'm2M' mentoring program;
4. Awarding the Rising Star scholarship program;
5. Holding successful events over the year; and last but not least
6. Receiving a \$10,000 heritage grant from the Minister as a contribution to a new research project in the history of women in planning in Victoria.

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** Launch of the 'Toolkit for Affordable Housing for Women' Research and Practice Notes at the annual Planning Week breakfast.
- 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
- March -** 'Fresh' forum with AILA
- April** Urban Design Melbourne Laneway Walk
- June** 'Women Planning and Politics' joint event with VPELA
- August** WPN / DPCD planning forum

## **The Committee**

The 2007/2008 committee was comprised of:

- Melinda Wealands as Vice President;
- Jode Cowie as Executive Assistant;
- Julie Reid as Treasurer;
- Shannon Lea, Gilda Di Vincenzo, Bron Hamilton, Lenice White and Picha Djohan as committee members and along the way we welcomed Amy Mak;
- And myself as President.

Jode left the Network at the start of the year – the skills she developed and the contacts she made while employed at WPN enabled her to gain employment in the Green Building, with the Water Keepers organisation. We wished Jode all the best for her new endeavours and were secretly proud that WPN had enabled clearly enabled her career advancement. In fact, it was Jode's networking that lead us to Josephine Johnson who has been the inspiration for, and lead to, the synthesis of our next research project.

The committee's membership was stable this year, with Shannon bringing along toddler Sophie and baby Matthew to meetings from time to time. Again, Shannon 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. This was made somewhat more challenging with Jode's resignation and the difficulties in satisfactorily filling the Executive Assistant role.

The 'well-oiled little machine' that is WPN, and its committee, have faced extra responsibilities and pressure this year and in light of this, I am even more happy with what we have achieved.

Tonight we say farewell to three of our committee members and I would like to acknowledge and thank the whole committee for their special contributions:

**Bron** leaves us to move interstate with her family to support her husband in his new role in Canberra. Bron was instrumental in the finalisation and launching the Affordable Housing research project and has assisted with the running of events held throughout the year. We bid farewell to Bron this year, after 5 years on the committee.

**Julie** was instrumental in facilitating the WPN's Business Planning exercise at the start of this year and has kept an eye over the WPN's finances this year. We thank Julie for the past year and bid her farewell.

**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. Melinda celebrates her fifth year on the committee this year.

**Shannon**, in between giving birth to Matthew, has been involved with the organisation of events, including the all-important AGM and has been heavily involved in both the Affordable Housing and History projects.

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

**Lenice** was a great networker and strengthened, with Bron, our linkages with the Landscape Architect's institute, including involving WPN in a 'Fresh' careers development night. Lenice also organised the very successful Urban Design Laneway Walk and helped with other events.

**Picha's** legal background and cool headedness have been fantastic additions to the committee and have definitely assisted the committee in general terms but also specifically in relation to business planning, event running and the development of the History project (including the signing of agreements!).

And finally, **Amy** brought new ideas and enthusiasm to the committee and excellent linkages into DPCD.

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

## **Administration**

Jode's departure in February this year has impacted the functioning of the network this year and while we thought we had a great replacement for her in Amber McQueen, it was not to be, given Amber's pre-existing commitments.

In hindsight, the immediate employment of a temporary administration assistant may have assisted in keeping the Network's administration needs in order; however, Stuart Worn and the PIA team are to be commended for maintaining our administration and financial affairs in the breach.

PIA has recently advertised for a Communications Officer, whose role will include fulfilling the Executive Assistant position for the Network. Twenty-one applications for the position have been distilled to one candidate, who we have met.

We intend to maintain our existing relationship with PIA, whereby our Assistant 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 now look forward to this position being filled shortly.

## **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 continues to go 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 and we have added information regarding the committee, scholarship and mentoring program over the year.

## ***Email***

We continue to find email to be an effective tool for communication and one which hopefully encourages less paper usage in offices. We also acknowledge PIA's assistance throughout the year by allowing the Network to promote its events through the electronic 'Weekly Buletins'.

## **Conferences**

Picha attended the recent Premier's Women's Summit, which was held at the RACV Club in Melbourne on Friday the 5<sup>th</sup> of September. Picha will be providing an overview of the time she spent at the conference for the next issue of Vantage.

## **Mentoring Program**

The Mentoring Program was re-named and relaunched this year – now known as the WPN/PIA 'm2M' mentoring program. We received an excellent response from potential mentors, including Planners, Urban Designers and Landscape Architects. The pool of potential mentees was limited to Planners and in the end, only three successful matches were able to be made. Nonetheless, due to the commitments given in past years, we are running the program.

It is intended that a review meeting with shortly be held with the Mentoring Steering Committee to analyse participation fees and the composition of the course training to reduce the associated costs of the program, as feedback has been received that \$1500 per participant is in excess of typical staff training budgets.

## **Research Project**

The Affordable Housing for Women Research Project Practice Notes were launched in October 2007. They remain the main outcome of the research and are available on the WPN website.

A presentation of the Practice Notes and the research was made to the City of Darebin earlier this year and the Network has been approached by the Municipal Association of Victoria to participate in a housing affordability forum.

## **Linkages with other organisations**

Our linkages with other organizations, such as PIA and VPELA have been strengthened over the past 12 months.

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**

DPCD remains an honorary member of the Network.

The Corporate Membership category is proving to be the main provider of the Network's member base – with 10 corporate members registered this year (down from 12 last year – noting that 5 memberships remain outstanding). We will continue in our efforts to maintain and expand the membership base in the upcoming year.

We have 14 individual members, who in our view represents a fantastic number of women planners, architects and lawyers who want to be part of the Network.

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 organizations 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.

It will be a goal of the new committee to boost membership numbers and direct access to our members in the coming year.

## **The WPN Annual Award**

The annual WPN award was not awarded last year and remains in hiatus.

## **The Rising Star Scholarship**

The awarding of the second 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 or related course and is sponsored by Hansen Partnership.

Three submissions were received from undergraduate students and the winning essay, by Jana Perkovic, addressed issues of safety within public spaces.

The Scholarship committee, comprising myself, Roz Hansen, Carolyn Whitzman (from Melbourne University) and Georgie Landau (WPN member) enjoyed reviewing the scholarship entries. Picha will undertake the co-ordination of the scholarship in the coming year.

While we are yet to receive entries for this year's scholarship, we intend to shortly undertake an informative and forthright marketing campaign with the tertiary institutions to build their awareness of the generous \$5,500 prize on offer. The scholarship will be awarded at next year's International Women's Day Breakfast.

## **Conclusions**

The challenges for 2008/2009 present exciting opportunities for the WPN and the committee and include:

- Undertaking our research into the history of women in planning in Victoria.
- Celebrating the Network's 15<sup>th</sup> year anniversary.
- Contributing to discussions and about the effectiveness of planning policy.
- Ensuring the on-going security of the Ministerial grant, including further strengthening relations with DPCD, particularly to encourage the organisation's and staff involvement in our events and programs.
- Reviewing and running the Mentoring Program.
- Holding events that address professional, work-place and life balance related issues that are relevant to our members.
- Expanding the WPN Committee.
- Initiating jointly-run events with VPELA, PIA and AILA.
- 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 14 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.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Kellie Burns', with a long, sweeping horizontal stroke extending to the right.

**Kellie Burns**