

VANTAGE



THE WOMEN'S PLANNING NETWORK ANNUAL AWARD 2003

The Women's Planning Network Annual Award 2003 was won by Sheila Byard. Below is the testimonial, as delivered by Kellie Burns at the AGM, highlighting Sheila's exceptional contribution to the Network and women's lives generally.

"Good evening ladies

Tonight I have the pleasure in presenting the Women's Planning Network award to a most deserving woman and a long-standing WPN member.

This award recognises the meaningful contribution a member has made in the past year to, in simple terms, improvements to women's lives, particularly as achieved through the planning process. The committee has considered a fantastic collection of nominees and their involvement in planning and has considered the nominees' achievements in relation to the Network's key aims, which are:

- to promote and advocate for the involvement of women and women's perspectives in planning decisions
- to education and liaise with, a broad range of government and non-government agencies, companies and the general public about women's needs and the role of women in decision making
- to support women in the community as individuals and professionals
- to research planning issues and to develop planning policies, particularly where they effect and affect women's needs and aspirations.

So who did we choose?

Well, this particular woman, who, as you would expect is present tonight, was a founding member of the network back in 1992 – 1993. She has been on a great many committees and boards. Her contribution to the Women's Planning Network, which I will outline shortly,



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has been exceptional and has given the network much of the momentum and oomph it has needed to be a success.

But before I cause utter commotion – but I notice not before I’ve whipped you into a minor frenzy of ‘who is it?’ – I would like to call the recipient to the front of the room.

Sheila Byard, could you please come and join me?

Where to start with Sheila? With her most recent successes or to look back over 30 odd years, over a period of Sheila’s life where she has embodied an enduring and dedicated involvement to community life.

Sheila’s local communities have benefited immensely from her tireless involvement, enthusiasm and determination to make events work, to get projects off the ground and to ensure people in the community are rewarded for their lifetime of effort. In the words of the eloquent Lecki Ord, Sheila has been a ‘tower of strength’.

- Since the early 70s Sheila has combined her academic and professional interests with those of her local communities. She is a thinker and a doer. I will go on in a moment to describe Sheila’s perhaps more academic pursuits but I think Sheila’s energy and commitment can also be beautifully described in an another Lecki soundbyte:

“Sheila is the sort of person who would turn up to a local BBQ in pouring rain unfold a vast ground sheet and make a canopy to tie to adjoining trees and down pipes so that it is a success rather than a washout”

- Her interests are broad and while you could ultimately say they relate to community development, her involvement has taken many forms, including:
- Her urban research experience began back in the days of DURD looking at community participation in planning and has been broad in scope including an International Planning History Bulletin paper on Saarinen – the 2nd prize winner in the Design for Canberra competition -for which she consulted original Swedish language sources.
- She has been involved in initiatives to do with housing and care in an Ageing Society has enabled her to spend time

in Sweden as a guest of the Swedish Housing Research Institute.

- She has also spent time in Kobe, Japan as a participant in a Japan Housing Council program on Housing in an Ageing Society. She continues to be involved with the Australian Housing Institute and the Victorian ‘Housing For the Aged Action Group’.
- Sheila’s experiences with this in turn benefited the WPN by cultural exchange opportunities from both Australian and Japanese groups visiting each country.
- At Victoria University she was involved with various initiatives to link academia and community to improve public access to information about what governments do
- She has a continuing interest in the Women’s Peace Garden in Kensington; in 2002, for the 20th anniversary of its establishment, she worked with council, community and the local school to encourage an on-going sense of commitment to this park created by women politicians, planners, engineers and gardeners.
- Most recently Sheila has worked on a series of short projects dealing with governance issues, including organizing a forum in 2002 with WPN involvement on ‘Water Women and Environmental Management’.

- Sheila is a member of the City of Melbourne’s Heritage Advisory Committee. At present – and as a bit of a plug – Sheila is working with others on a project to identify heritage places in the Melbourne CBD that have particular significance for women, especially women architects and planners. As Sheila has said herself – “it’s an ideal opportunity for a fresh collaboration between the WPN and other organizations”.
- I have enjoyed reading Sheila’s bio, emailing Lecki and imagining what a hectic but rewarding life she has hopefully enjoyed until today. I feel that Sheila’s work and dare I say it, her passion for her community, embodies the Network and its aims. She exemplifies the qualities we want the Network to embody, and lives in a way that I am sure makes her life meaningful but which also helps groups, such as the Network, thrive and move into the future.

So thank you Sheila, on behalf of the Network, for your involvement in community life and for commitment to the Women’s Planning Network.”

THANKS GAB

I could see the relief on Gabriel’s face as she stepped down from the Presidency of WPN at our AGM in September. You can see from the President’s Report that she presided over a very busy year, and juggled the Mentoring Program, a full time job and some degree of personal life at the same time.

We all make our own pace, and Gabriel’s pace is frenetic. She enthused us at every meeting and organised many activities between meetings, including the oversight of the administrative office and the changeover of administrative officer. Her energy and confidence encouraged members to ‘step up’ into new roles and take on more responsibility stretching our commitment and developing new skills. The fact that she believed that we could do it made it much easier to accomplish.

Having put in time as a committee member, treasurer, vice president and president, Gabriel has made a great contribution to WPN. I know it has been important in her life and allowed her to get into situations where she has learnt much about networking, women’s issues, politics and planning and met many people who will continue as friends.

Thank you Gab.

2003 PRESIDENT'S REPORT

by Gabriel Hodgson
(edited by Kellie Burns)

It's been a very productive year and we are drawing closer to the end of a process of reflection and transition, which was greatly assisted by our Members Survey carried out in August 2002.

The development of five key priorities for the year set the committee's program for the year and our upcoming ten-year anniversary encouraged the committee to look to the future and strengthen what the Network means and what it should strive for.

The Network's viability and productivity was ensured by the Minister for Planning's ongoing financial support

The year's key priorities

This year the committee developed and worked to the following key priorities:

- Nurturing linkages with other organisations
- Developing a communications strategy
- Improving our financial viability
- Supporting the mentoring program
- Furthering the research project – Women's Participation in Local Decision Making.

These priorities were derived from member's survey in conjunction with the priorities of improving our financial viability and furthering our major projects.

Our linkages with other organisations

We nurtured our linkages with other organisations and they are now stronger and more productive. Our relationships with PIA, VPELA, the Victorian Women's Housing Association, DSE, the Municipal Association of Victoria and VLGA are all in good shape. We also made or strengthened links with One Umbrella Australia Inc, the United Nations Vic. Chapter, Women in Film and Television (Victoria and Emily's List. I also participated in numerous key women and planning conferences, where I met many wonderful and inspiring women, and promoted the profile of the Network.



Relationship with the Minister for Planning

In May 2003 Kellie Marks, Lecki and I met with the Hon. Mary Delahunty MP, Minister for Planning, the Arts and Women's Affairs and I can report that our relationship is in good form.

While our meeting was brief, we updated her on some of our key achievements and heard her thoughts about the strengths of and future opportunities for the Women's Planning Network. Our 'network' and the Mentoring Program were commended and she encouraged us to consider how the Network might encourage the community to embrace the Melbourne 2030 strategy and best planning practice.

We are very thankful to the Minister and the Department for their support since 1995.

How the network has communicated

In the last year, we circulated flyers, information, updates and articles of interest through Vantage, supplementary "bulletins" and the women-planning email list. Email contact was also popular – members liked emailed updates and some committee meetings were conducted online. Vantage could not have been such a success without its key contributors and is only as good as its contributions – we are always looking for fresh ideas and articles so please consider making a one-off or regular contribution in the new year.

Other achievements from the year:

- The drafting of communications strategy, which has already, and will in future improve our member interaction with and the Network's profile.
- Initiation of a logo review, to spearhead a general stationery and promotional material revamp.
- Preparations for a website 'facelift', including the registration of a new domain name to improve the visibility of our website, with the new address to be finalized in conjunction with the logo review.

The year's professional development opportunities

It was a busy year with the continuation of programs and the running of events:

- The WPN/PIA Mentoring Program is in its sixth year (partnered with PIA since 2001) and since 1998 has had around 100 participants. It is an ongoing success and continues to be one of our most highly recognised features.
- The Network also hosted (and co-hosted) a number of other professional development events all of which were informative and well-attended.
- I have been representing the Network on the DSE/MAV Planner's Professional Development Roundtable, which provides an opportunity for promotion of our mentoring program and to broaden its reach throughout the industry.

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WHAT DOES CITIZENSHIP ACT THE IMPLICATIONS FOR PLANNING

By Dr Melissa Permezel, Senior Social Planner at Sinclair Knight Merz, Armadale.

The following article outlines some of the key points from my PhD thesis in Urban Planning at the University of Melbourne, completed in 2002. I thought the thesis might interest WPN members not only because the research details women's activism in local communities, but also because of the issues it raises around local area planning, community participation, and citizenship.

The thesis began in a small town in Chile where I had been living with an elderly woman for six months. Most days, her friends, especially women, would drop in for a cup of tea. Her kitchen was a hub of social networking where issues about poorly paid jobs, lack of work and education options were discussed. Some women would also talk about abusive relationships and how there was nowhere to go to address the situation. A key theme dominating the discussions was the lack of local forums where such social support needs could be articulated, given that most of these people, especially the women, were

constrained through socio-economic circumstances and a lack of transport options.

On returning to Australia, I began to reconsider the avenues available to Australian women here where their social support needs could be articulated and mediated. A conversation with a group of women on the porch of a Melbourne neighbourhood house revealed similar needs and aspirations to the Chilean women. It began to occur to me that the needs expressed by both groups of women represented struggles for citizenship. Their stories highlighted the gap between their formal status as citizens and their struggles to achieve everyday tasks with limited resources.

My identification of that gap prompted me to conclude that citizenship is an increasingly important issue to explore. 'Citizenship' is the formal term used to articulate how people participate in Australian society and the particular rights and entitlements they need to do so. It is important not only because of its

association with particular groups, such as migrants, but also because of the manner in which it is increasingly used to talk about how all people participate as 'active citizens'.

The aim of the thesis was, therefore, to develop a new understanding of citizenship as a 'practice' that relates to people's everyday experiences of participating in community and society. Specifically, it explored the idea that citizenship is a practice, representing the process and mechanisms that people use to get the necessary social support and education they need to participate in the communities they live in. I researched the idea of 'practicing citizenship' by analysing how neighbourhood houses and community centres in Melbourne act as places where people's citizenship needs are articulated and mediated in local communities.

Research Methods

The study used a qualitative approach. Detailed data was gathered from six neighbourhood houses in different parts of Melbourne via in-depth interviews and focus groups with a range of neighbourhood house participants, local and state government bureaucrats, and councillors. Participant observation was also undertaken.

Key findings

The key findings of the thesis are discussed in relation to the main 'identity' or user groups in neighbourhood houses; women, people from non-English speaking backgrounds, and people with disabilities.

Why neighbourhood houses are important for women

The research showed that neighbourhood houses are important for women because they:



UALLY MEAN AND WHAT ARE NING?

- Are sites where the range of formal (adult education programs) and informal activities (drop-in, unstructured gatherings) enable women to express their needs for emotional support, social interaction, educational and personal development.
- Create employment opportunities for women to enact their professional capacities as co-ordinators, tutors, and committee members.
- Are sites where women address issues of domestic violence and abusive relationships.
- Provide women-only classes and activities that enable women to feel more comfortable, safe, and free to develop the confidence they need to address their personal situations.
- Create an accessible public forum: programs are low cost, houses are located in local neighbourhoods, and usually close to people's homes.
- Operate from 'old homes' – ordinary suburban houses that create a low-key, welcoming, and familiar environment.

Why neighbourhood houses are important for migrants from non-English speaking backgrounds

Whilst, in general, migrant's participation is generally more limited in the neighbourhood house context, they provide important local forums that:

- Create opportunities for people from non-English speaking backgrounds to learn English in an affordable, non-threatening, engaging, and responsive atmosphere.
- Through their low key, less-structured environments provide the flexibility to tailor language learning to the needs of specific groups and individuals.
- Provide a forum where important learning can occur around the cultural,

social, and political mores and social relations that characterise Australia.

- Provide a public forum where migrants can mix with a range of people from different backgrounds.
- Provide an important forum in which cross-cultural communication can occur between people of different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

Why neighbourhood houses are important for people with disabilities

The research findings made clear that addressing the needs of people with disabilities is a difficult and complex undertaking in the neighbourhood house setting, especially given the tension between houses' desire to 'be there for everyone' and their genuine lack of resources. Despite this, the research indicated that:

- Houses are one of the few public forums where people with disabilities can go to mix with a range of people from different walks of life, given that many are often marginalised from mainstream agencies.
- Houses provide a local, low-cost forum to undertake a range of educational and interactive programs and activities.

Implications for planning

The research raises a number of important issues for local area planning and suggests ways to improve participation in local communities. In particular, the research highlights:

- The legitimacy and value of gender- and ethno-specific environments and activities.
- The importance of having informal spaces and opportunities for interaction alongside formal programs

and activities to facilitate community building and social networking, particularly between people from different cultural and linguistic backgrounds.

- The significance of having 'low-key', community-based education and learning environments so people can develop the confidence to go on to more formal educational institutions or take up new employment opportunities.
- The importance of having affordable and local public contexts close to where people live. Many people undertake the majority of their daily activities in their local neighbourhood or have limited transport options. They therefore require services and opportunities for interaction or learning that are close at hand.
- The value of constantly evaluating community development principles and practices to make sure they address the aspirations and needs of relevant individuals and groups.
- The role of architecture in influencing people's perceptions of how they can participate. The experience in neighbourhood houses suggests the style and design of a space or building is important in creating a welcoming place that people can trust and want to be a part of.

Dr Melissa Permezel is a Senior Social Planner for Sinclair Knight Merz.

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WELCOMING THE NEW COMMITTEE



Melinda Wealands



Kellie Marks



Jan Salmon



Denise Payne

The management committee for 2003-04 is a mixture of new and old faces. Three have continued on from the previous committee — Lecki Ord (President), Kellie Burns (Vice-President) and Kellie Marks (Treasurer) and four have 'stepped up' to new challenges. We welcome Melinda Wealands, Melissa Permezel, Jan Salmon and Denise Payne and look forward to working with them this year.

Some introductory information about these members.

Denise Payne

Denise is a site architect with a love of botany and architecture. She runs her own business, SITE ONE, which she started 7 years ago after studying landscape architecture at RMIT. In the business she works predominantly with plants but in a variety of contexts. Before studying, she ran her own business managing architectural firms and, before that, ran a graphic design business for 13 years.

Her main loves are her man, her two sons, friends, family, her cats, food, plants, beautiful buildings and her bed!

Jan Salmon

Jan Salmon has extensive experience in State and Local Government, having worked in a diverse range of planning projects including the Regional Forestry Agreement. In these roles, she developed expertise in strategic planning, business analysis and stakeholder engagement. She now runs her own planning consultancy, established in 1996, providing services to individual clients and local governments.

One of her interests is the use of mediation to resolve planning disputes.

Kellie Burns

Kellie is taking up the challenge of Vice President this year and

looking forward to another productive year, developing our communications strategy, boosting our member base and planning and running fantastic events, including celebrations of our 10-year anniversary.

Kellie Marks

This is Kellie Marks' second year as the Treasurer of WPN. The role has provided a number of exciting challenges and learning opportunities.

Kellie has over five years experience as a strategic urban planner. She has recently moved back to local government with the City of Moreland, after two years in private consultancy. She is currently studying for a Master of Environment at Melbourne University (very part time!).

Melinda Wealands

Melinda works as an urban designer with Earthtech's planning, urban design and landscape architecture team, and has done so for the past 4 years. After being introduced to the Women's Planning Network a few years ago through being a mentee in the mentoring program, she has continued to enjoy the events and forums that the network runs, and has decided this year to get further involved in the network.

Her particular interests are in designing and creating successful

communities, and using urban design at a strategic level to create better outcomes. On a more personal side, she loves travelling (spent a large part of this year exploring southern Europe), being creative and spending time with friends and family.

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The WPN research project

Researching planning issues and influencing policy is one of the Network's objectives and our project, Women's Participation in Local Decision Making, adds another valuable resource to our collection of WPN research publications. We have asked the VLGA to incorporate our research into their proposed community consultation methodologies program. It is also a goal to host our own professional development program about effective consultation using the outcomes of this research.

Our awards

- The Annette Mastrowicz prize was not awarded in 2002/03 and efforts to revitalise the award in partnership with the URLC were to no avail. The new committee is encouraged to take up the challenge of its revitalization.
- The Annual Award was reworked to refine the meaning of a "meaningful contribution" as considered by the judging panel and a \$600 subsidy of a professional development program chosen by the recipient is the new prize. All members are encouraged to consider nominating colleagues next year's award.

Acronyms

PIA – Planning Institute Australia (Vic.)

VPCLA – Victorian Planning and Environmental Law Association

DSE – Department of Sustainability and Environment

DOI – Department of Infrastructure (now DSE)

VLGA – Victorian Local Governance Association

DO YOU HAVE WHAT IT TAKES?

DO YOU WANT WHAT IT GIVES?

THE 2004 MENTORING PROGRAM WANTS YOU!

The 2004 WPN/PIA Mentoring Program will kick off in February next year. It's a fantastic program and has enriched the lives of its 100 participants since it began in 1998.

Mentoring is a powerful form of personal and professional development for both mentees and mentors.

Mentees – you will grow and develop with the focused attention of your mentor.

Mentors – you will reap the benefits of watching the development of your mentee, you'll feel valued and may even rethink and refine your style, skills and methods.

We're now seeking expressions of interest from potential mentors and mentees in this excellent 8-month program. It offers great value for money professional development with the added benefit of enhancing your professional network and making new friends.

Mentors are invited to donate their time to the program and the fees for mentees are:

Member of WPN or PIA	Non-member of WPN or PIA
Self funded \$650	Self funded \$900
Employer funded \$950	Employer funded \$1200

If you think you have what it takes or if you want what it gives, please register your interest now!

To register your interest or for further information please contact:

Kellie Burns, program coordinator on tel.0413 597 087 or email kburns@sjbplanning.com.au

or

Christina Bell, program facilitator on tel. 9818 8322 or email peoplema@mira.net



Why the network needs you!

It is clear from our recent membership survey that the Network has a wealth of experience and expertise in its membership base and in planning generally. WPN relies on involvement (financial and otherwise) of members for its success.

We need your input and suggestions in preparing events, functions and seminars. If you would like to speak, or be part of a function, we'd like you to volunteer. It is not necessary to be a member of the committee.

Equally, if you know of a woman who has something to share, or a woman whose experiences you would like to know more about, please contact us.

Easy to find us

The Women's' Planning Network has now registered the domain [<wpn.org.au>](http://wpn.org.au) so it is easy to remember how to access our web page.

Go to <http://www.wpn.org.au>.

The website is due for a revamp this year but this has not been implemented until we complete our communications strategy. Volunteers interested in contributing skills in this area please contact the admin office.

This has enabled us to implement some generic email addresses which will not change with changing office bearers and are a bit easier to remember.

President president@wpn.org.au

Treasurer treasurer@wpn.org.au

Admin admin@wpn.org.au

FORTHCOMING EVENTS

The WPN is renowned for its fabulous and thought provoking events and nifty networking opportunities. In the coming and next year you can look forward to:

Planning Week Breakfast

Wednesday 19 November

Come and hear Dr Noreen Krusel Manager, Natural Environment CFA, talk about her experiences of Earth, Wind, Fire and Water

WPN Christmas Party

Late November/Early December

Stay tuned for date and venue – it promises to be bigger and better than last year's fabulous night at the Phoenix Hotel

2003 Mentoring Program Awards / 2004 Program Intro Night

February 2004 – date to be confirmed.

10 Year Anniversary Celebrations

2004 is the Network's 10-year anniversary and the committee is busily working on events to celebrate this fantastic milestone. Updates and invitations will be provided in the new year.

MEMBERSHIP NOW!

This is the time to renew your membership, or you risk not getting future information on events or copies of Vantage. Membership runs from 1 July to 30 June each year.

Several canny members have persuaded their employers to take out corporate membership, which enables all staff to take advantage of our member benefits.

WPN welcomes Maddocks, VicUrban and SKM who have been early adopters of corporate membership and several councils are in the process of getting the appropriate approvals.

Corporate Members need to nominate one person as being the main contact for billing and administrative purposes and also to nominate the individuals who want to take an active part in that membership. In this way we can communicate directly to those people about events and activities and keep them informed.



MEMBERSHIP FORM

- I would like to renew my WPN membership \$75.00 (GST inc) (Single Membership)
- Corporate/Council Annual membership fee \$150.00 (GST inc) (less than 8 employees)
- Corporate/Council Annual membership fee \$280.00 (GST inc) (more than 8 employees)

Name _____ Phone _____

Address _____

E-mail Address _____

Organisation _____ Occupation _____

Cheque/Money order enclosed for \$ _____

Please send to WPN, P O Box 18310, Collins St East, Melbourne 8003