

A History of Women in Planning in Victoria

Stage 1: Scoping Report 10 October 2008

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To: Kellie Burns, Women's Planning Network

This scoping report is a short document that is intended to spark ideas for a brainstorming meeting to be held October 23rd, with the WPN advisory committee for this project (Shannon Lea, Melinda Wealands, Kellie Burns, Picha Dohan) and up to 20 'key informants'. In this report, we will summarize work accomplished since the formal start of the project on September 12, 2008, along with ideas that have come up in meetings previous to the formal start of project.

Outputs of Project

It has been agreed between the researchers (Carolyn Whitzman, David Nichols, Jana Perkovic) and the WPN advisory committee that the outputs of the project are to be:

1. six hour-long interviews, each focusing on a decade since the 1950s, with key women in planning in Victoria. The interviews will be both video-taped and audio-taped, and still photographs will also be taken. The tapes will be turned into transcripts, with the assistance of WPN. David will lead the first three interviews, and Carolyn will lead the second three. Jana will organize the interviews and provide audio-visual help.
2. A 20 page background paper on A History of Women in Planning in Victoria, to be developed by all three researchers.

These materials will form valuable archival documentation in and of themselves, but will also be the raw material for a second stage of the research, where WPN develop:

1. a museum-quality exhibit on A History of Women in Planning in Victoria,
2. a 20 minute video for school and public use on the topic;

Background literature

A bibliography has begun to be developed, that covers three areas, with emphasis on the post-1950 era:

1. General history of planning in Victoria and Australia;
2. General history of women in planning in Australia and elsewhere;
3. Women in planning in Victoria and Australia

Preliminary Ideas for Interviews

Discussions have taken place with the WPN advisory committee, Dr. Julie Willis (author of a history of women in architecture in Australia), Dr. Louise Johnson (work on women in planning in Australia), Dr. Renate Howe, Professor Graeme Davidson, Dr. Tony Dingle, Professor Mark Peel (all historians with knowledge about planning in Melbourne), and a number of potential interview subjects. A planning alumni list at the University of Melbourne has also been reviewed for early women planners. Through these discussions and also a preliminary reading of the literature, these are the suggested themes for each decade, with possible interview subjects:

1950s - The Pioneers: The first professional planners accredited in Australia. The first Metropolitan Melbourne Planning Scheme.

Interview: Josephine Johnson, one of the first female accredited planners to practice in Victoria

1960s – Modern Melbourne is shaped: Ambitious housing projects are developed in both central Melbourne and in suburbs, with new roads to link Melbourne, its suburbs, regional centres, and rural areas. Women involved in the Housing Commission of Victoria.

Interview: Belinda Dale, the first woman to work for the Victorian government as a town planner (as of 1967, worked for the Town and Country Planning Board).

1970s – Local Activism: Partly in backlash to the transformation of Melbourne in the 1960s, grassroots activism stops central city expressways and begins to demand a more environmental and social perspective. Women are active in this movement.

Interview: Renate Howe, Fitzroy Residents Association and historian of urban activism in the 1970s/ Lecki Ord, former mayor of Melbourne and also a community activist in the 1970s.

1980s – Women Planners Enter the Mainstream: The 1980s were when women began to enter the planning profession in large numbers. Many of them battled to combine work and family, and find positions of leadership in a male-dominated profession.

Interview: Roz Hansen, Hansen Associates (large consultancy, one of the few founded and run by a woman)/ Kathy Mitchell (now president of the Victorian Planning and Environmental Law Association), both talking about their early days as professional planners.

1990s/ 2000s – Women in Leadership: By the 1990s and the first decade of this century, women were taking leadership positions in planning in Victoria.

Interview: Barbara Norman, first woman head of an academic planning program (RMIT), first female president of the Planning Institute of Australia/ Mary Delahunty, first female planning minister in Australia

Women Planners- the Next Generation: Women planners now comprise a majority of graduates, with a greater diversity of planners than ever before

Interview: Need 2-3 planners that represent 'diversity', including at least one non-European background.

Suggested survey instrument

Through Professor Paul Burton at the University of Queensland, I have obtained a survey instrument used by the late Jacky Underwood in the 1970s to undertake an 'ethnography' of London planners. Paul has recently used it to interview planners of both genders on the Gold Coast. We have modified it considerably, so that it focuses on career histories a bit more, it includes work/life balance and specific gender questions, and so that it is a little shorter to fit into an hour interview where there may be more than one interview subject.

Your Education

1. How did you come to be a planner? How did you first hear about urban planning? What did you hope to accomplish as an urban planner?
2. Did you take a planning degree? If so, where and when? How well did your planning course prepare you for your professional work?
3. Do you feel your gender influenced your education as a planner? If so, how?

Your Career

4. Have you had mentors: either formally or informally? Did anyone inspire you to become the planner you are now? How did they do this?
5. How well have you been able to balance your work and home lives? What has helped and hindered that balance?
6. What do you think your greatest accomplishment(s) is/are and why?
7. What do you think your greatest professional challenge(s) is/ have been and why?
8. Do you feel your gender has influenced your career as a planner? If so, how?

Future of the Profession

9. How has planning changed over the time you have been in the profession?
10. In your opinion, what are the current challenges facing women in planning?