

Submission No: 188  
Authorised: 10/5/06  
Supplementary to:

*JM*



Planning  
Institute  
Australia

National  
Office

PO Box 5427  
Kingston ACT 2604

Telephone: (02) 6262 5933  
Facsimile: (02) 6262 9970  
Email: [info@planning.org.au](mailto:info@planning.org.au)  
Web: [www.planning.org.au](http://www.planning.org.au)

A.B.N. 11 802 663 785

Committee Secretary  
Standing Committee on Family and Human Services  
House of Representatives  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Sir/Madam

### **Submission to the House of Representatives Inquiry: Balancing Work and Family**

The Planning Institute of Australia represents around 4 000 urban and regional planners and associated professions in Australia. The Institute supports the timely House of Representatives Inquiry into Balancing Work and Family as this issue is contributing to a serious shortage of urban and regional planners in Australia.

In August 2004 the Planning Institute of Australia completed a National Inquiry into Planning Education and Employment and a copy of the report is attached as part of this submission. (It is also available on-line at [www.planning.org.au](http://www.planning.org.au)). The Inquiry was prompted by the concern over the perceived shortage of planners.

Amongst the findings relevant to this House of Representatives Inquiry are:

- There is a critical shortage of planners especially experienced planners occurring in the major cities and sea change areas, and this is likely to continue into the medium term.
- From the 2001 Census around 50% of planners were employed by local governments, 30% worked in the private sector and 22% for state/territory governments.
- In 2001, 50% of planners under 35 years of age were women but only 26% of planners over 35 years of age were women indicating a significant loss of experienced women planners from the profession. A conservative estimate suggests that in 2001 around 570 qualified working-age female planners were no longer working in planning.
- In 2001, one in four women planners worked part-time compared to one in ten men, but the number of men working part-time had increased from the previous census. Whilst the focus is generally on professional women who are trying to balance work and family the Inquiry noted that male planners are also increasingly involved in the work/family balance.
- Many planners experienced difficult work places particularly those working in development assessment areas within local government.

The Inquiry did not investigate in depth, the reasons why female planners leave the profession or have difficulties working in the profession but from research, submissions and a national questionnaire some of the reasons include:

- Some work places do not support flexible working conditions such as working at home or shared job arrangements, though examples of innovative work practices were provided to the Inquiry. In a positive light, the shortage of planners has meant that some employers have become more accommodating to flexible work practices.
- Stressful work places, particularly in local government may encourage women who are already trying to balance work and family to look elsewhere for employment given that planners are also sought after by other related professions.
- Women who take time out from the profession can find it difficult to keep their skills and knowledge up to date, making it harder to re-enter the workforce. Those in the workforce can also have problems attending after hour's seminars or conferences.

What does this mean for our profession?

- A loss of skills and experience from the profession, which is exacerbating the shortage. Replacing these skills involves expensive and difficult solutions such as bringing in overseas trained planners and increasing the under-graduate intake to university planning schools.
- Under-representation by women in senior decision making positions. It is desirable to have decision makers from a broad range of backgrounds as planners play an important role in creating livable communities.
- Few female role models for younger female planners. Younger planners often seek support and guidance from more experienced planners and the lack of female role models is not healthy for the future of the profession.

The Inquiry made a number of direct and indirect recommendations to address the work/family issues and consequent shortage of planners including:

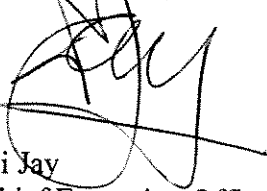
- Ensure that flexible working conditions are available, particularly within local governments, to support qualified and experienced female planners back in to the workforce.
- The Commonwealth Government includes planners on the "Migrations Occupations in Demand List".
- Universities increase the number of fully funded places for planning students.
- Planning employers provide appropriate financial or in kind resources to support continued professional development of their planning staff.
- Require all local governments to have Employee Assistance Schemes in place.

The Planning Institute has established a national steering committee to oversee the Inquiry's recommendations. Significant progress should be made on many of the recommendations by December 2005. However many of the issues around balancing work and family such as taxation incentives are outside the control of the Institute.

As an Institute representing urban and regional planners we support the House of Representatives Inquiry's Terms of Reference and look forward to reviewing the recommendations to assist men and women return and stay in the workforce.

If you require any further information regarding this submission please contact Liz de Chastel on telephone 6288 0729.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Di Jay', written over a circular stamp or seal.

Di Jay  
Chief Executive Officer

6 April 2005