

ANZAPS 2015 Conference: *Translating urban planning research and pedagogy into practice.*

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Planning for Country:

Empowering Built Environment students with Indigenous Protocols and Knowledge

ABSTRACT

Increasingly, Built Environment (BE) professionals, including planner, architect and landscape architect practitioners, are becoming involved in the planning and design of projects for, and in direct consultation with Indigenous communities and their proponents. These projects range from inserting Indigenous cultural landscape analysis into planning schemes, including Indigenous protocols and aspirations in policy statements; designing cultural centres, information centres and housing; drafting cultural tourism strategies and devising cross-cultural land management plans. This entails working with Indigenous communities or their nominated representatives as stakeholders in community engagement, consultation, and planning processes. Critically, BE professionals must be able to plan and design with regard to Indigenous community's cultural protocols, issues and values. Yet many (domestic and or international) students graduate with little or no comprehension of Indigenous knowledge systems or the protocols for engagement with the communities in which they are required to work, whether they be Australian or international Indigenous communities. Contextually, both PIA and the planning academe have struggled with coming to terms with this realm over the last 10 years. This paper will report on a recently completed Australian Government Office of Learning & Teaching (OLT) funded research project that has sought to improve opportunities to improve the knowledge and skills of tertiary students in the BE professions through the enhancement of their competency, appreciation and respect for Indigenous protocols and processes that also implicates the professional accreditation systems that these courses are accountable. It has proposed strategies and processes to expose students in the BE professions to Australian Indigenous knowledge and cultural systems and the protocols for engaging with Indigenous Australians about their rights, interests, needs and aspirations. Included in these findings is the provision of a tool that enables and offers guidance to BE tertiary students and academics how to enhance comprehension, exposure to, and knowledge and cultural systems of, Indigenous Australians. While the scope of this report is cross-BE, this paper will focus upon the planning practice, policy and academe realms.

Key Words: Indigenous knowledge systems, Australian planning education.

INTRODUCTION

Recent events in Australian history, including recognition of Native Title by the High Court in *Mabo v the State of Queensland [no. 2] (1992) 175 CLR 1*, have heightened recognition of the rights, interests, needs and aspirations of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in Australia and internationally. Despite this, little has changed in Australian Built Environment (BE) professional (planning, architecture, landscape architecture) education to integrate a better understanding of the need for engagement with Indigenous knowledge and cultural systems and relevant protocols, as distinct from cultural competency articulation. While aspirations of including a better understanding of Indigenous Australian's knowledge and cultural systems are embodied in the relevant agendas of the respective discipline professional institutes (PIA, AIA, AILA), little attempt has been made to realize this objective. This paper therefore reports on the summative findings of an Australian Government Office of Learning & Teaching (OLT) funded project that sought to re-dress this deficiency by providing Australian universities with tools to address practice realities and complexities through a nationally applicable cross-discipline educational module that will aid Indigenous and non-Indigenous cultural literacy in this context.

Historically, non-Indigenous scholar Rose's seminal study *Nourishing Terrains* (1996), for example, came about by the Australian Heritage Commission's rather urgent and poignant inquiries into the assessment and quantification of cultural landscape values and their associated land and water attributes across the nation. Rose was specifically commissioned to "explore Indigenous views of landscape and their relationships with the land". Knowing about 'wilderness' and how such a classification of land was to contribute to the 'National Estate' was the hot topic at the time and it finally opened up an informed cultural land planning and management conversation with Aboriginal Australia. Here 'culture and landscape' was to be inclusive of Aboriginal knowledge systems of sustaining environmental values and their associated obligations and cultural rights for *being*. It is fair to suggest that the Commission, at the time, were overawed by Rose's documented findings where the transformative understandings of the Australian environment,

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landscape (wilderness or otherwise), and now 'Country' opened up a deeper discourse about Australian 'space' and what could be shared and learnt about Aboriginal relationships and associations with Australian cultural landscape systems.

Rose was most fortunate to reveal to the popular culture of Australia that in Aboriginal knowledge systems, everything is alive and everything is in relationships; past, present, and future are one, where both the physical and spiritual worlds of *Country* interact. To her, the *Dreaming* is an ongoing celebration and reverence for past events: the creation of the land, the creation of law, and the creation of people. Stories are given to Aboriginal peoples from the *Dreaming*, everything comes into being through story, and the *Dreaming* is the ancestors. All things exist eternally in the *Dreaming*; the *Dreaming* is alive. The individual is born to *Country*, not just in *Country*, but from *Country*, and his or her identity is inextricably and eternally linked to the *Dreaming*. Further, Rose suggested,

In Aboriginal English, the word 'Country' is both a common noun and a proper noun. People talk about Country in the same way that they would talk about a person: they speak to Country, sing to Country, visit Country, worry about Country, grieve for Country and long for Country. People say that Country knows, hears, smells, takes notice, takes care, and feels sorry or happy. Country is a living entity with a yesterday, a today and tomorrow, with consciousness, action, and a will toward life. Because of this richness of meaning, Country is home and peace: nourishment for body, mind and spirit; and heart's ease (Rose 1986: 7).

As noted by Milroy and Revell (2013), Australian space is not emptiness, a void to be filled, or a neutral place for action. Rather, space is imagined—*called into being*—by individuals, families, and the cultures of which they are a part. Yet we experience a double spatial jeopardy in Australia, which is the oldest intact environment (120,000 years) in the world, and the oldest Indigenous culture in the world (60,000+ years). These spatial qualities negate uniformity and featurelessness within *Country*. They also allow *Country* to speak for itself. Indigenous peoples *humanize* their environments because of their (nonmaterial) *Country* relations and their in-built abilities to sense the resources of *Country* itself.

Importantly, *Nourishing Terrains* (1986) now indelible mantra: "*If you are good to Country, then Country is good to you*" eventually became revelatory to the planning and design academies and professional institutions of Australia, and elsewhere. This came at a critical time for Australian land use planners where the study of both ancient and contemporary biophysical and human ecological systems were overtly staring at one another, desperately seeking to understand the specificity of reciprocal environmental and social meanings and their associated ecological relationships, as explained above. Above all, 60,000 + years of Aboriginal 'Caring for *Country*' was beginning to make sense to Australian planners, and the professional inquiries and relationships Rose helped to set up were to change bi-cultural Australian planning practices forever. The cogent fact that *Nourishing Terrains* (1986) arrived in Australia only 17 years ago in the 'Nations' collective 60,000 year history should be extremely significant to Australia's planning institutions, and might we say unconscionable to Australia, overall.

PLANNING EDUCATION AND INDIGENOUS KNOWLEDGE SYSTEMS

The Context

Built environment (architects, landscape architects and planners) professionals must be able to plan and design with regard to cultural issues relating to stakeholders from diverse backgrounds. While 30% of Australia's Indigenous populations reside in cities, they are directly managing 70% of Australia's land whether by Native Title, leasehold or freehold title. Increasingly architect, landscape architect and planning practitioners are required to design and plan projects in direct consultation with these Indigenous communities and their proponents about projects that have national significance. These projects range from inserting Indigenous layers into planning schemes, including Indigenous protocols and aspirations in policy statements; designing cultural centres, information centres and housing; drafting cultural tourism strategies and devising cross-cultural land management plans that necessitate having Indigenous representatives on design or planning teams. This entails working with Indigenous communities as stakeholders in community engagement, consultation, and planning processes recognising the diversity of values and protocols amongst different Indigenous groups and communities.

Recent investigations as to Indigenous cultural competency articulation (Universities Australia 2011a, b) have found that the built environment expected professional practice competency needs have largely been neglected by Australian built environment tertiary schools. This can be attributed to a deference to Indigenous respect protocols and the invaluable environmental and cultural knowledge of these communities -- about the past, existing, and future curatorship of the Australian landscape -- to inform development, withstand change and adaptation that supports sustainable harvesting and cultural capital (Low Choy *et al* 2010, 2011a, 2011b; Wensing 2007, 2011; Wensing & Small 2012).

Effective stakeholder and community engagement involves not simply understanding “Indigenous perspectives” and protocols (Trounson 2012a, 2012b), but being able to co-operatively work with and for such communities in strategy and project formulation, and in the creation as well as the incorporation of Indigenous Knowledge Systems (IKS).

Within the built environment literature, there is a clear lack of discourse about the nexus between BE professionals and Indigenous protocols and knowledge systems. In contrast there is considerable rhetoric about desires but it has not generally been translated into tertiary-level execution other than in fragmented instances. Wensing (2011; with Small 2012) has expressed this as a major deficiency in the tuition and grounding of future planners. His thoughts reiterate conclusions and investigations by Gurran & Phipps (2003, 2004) who concluded that Indigenous knowledge systems and land management concepts were markedly lacking in planning education in Australia. Low Choy *et al* (2010, 2011a, 2011b) have reinforced both conclusions but have also demonstrated the unique and valuable insights that Indigenous knowledge systems and their stakeholders can offer to conventional planning practice.

This discourse cannot be appreciated in normal “cultural competency” appreciation curricula nor can they be realised in offering an “Indigenous perspective” as they are far more complex in place and design theory and practice, and such is a defined knowledge outcome that AIA professional accreditation policy expects a graduate to possess upon degree completion, as also PIA and AILA in their respective policies.

As noted in Universities Australia’s (2011a, b) investigations into Indigenous Cultural Competency, most universities have struggled with successfully devising and achieving a translation of Indigenous protocols into their curricula. Walliss & Grant (2000: 65) have also concluded that, given the nature of the BE disciplines and their professional practice activities, there is a “need for specific cultural awareness education” to service these disciplines and not just attempts to insert Indigenous perspectives into their curricula.

Bradley’s policy initiative at the University of South Australia (UniSA) (1997-2007), “has not achieved its goal of incorporation of Indigenous perspectives into all its undergraduate programs by 2010, it has achieved an incorporation rate of 61%” (UA 2011a: 9; www.unisa.edu.au/ducier/icup/default.asp). This initiative drew from the vision for Indigenous higher education articulated by the Indigenous Higher Education Advisory Committee (2007), the World Indigenous Nations Higher Education Consortium (2007), the Vision for 2020 of the Review of Australian Higher Education (2008) all of which were embodied into the Bradley *Review of Australian Higher Education* (2008) recommendations. Contextually, Bradley’s strategic educational aim at UniSA was to ensure that all its graduates demonstrate ‘an understanding of the cultural, historical and contemporary frameworks which have shaped the lives of Indigenous Australians’ (www.unisa.edu.au/ducier/ICUP/coreknowledge.asp) and are articulated in Bradley *et al*’s (2008: 5) belief that “education is at the core of any national agenda for social and economic change” and by the “deepening understanding of health and social issues, and by providing access to higher levels of learning to people from all backgrounds, it can enhance social inclusion and reduce social and economic disadvantage.” Thus a social reformist aspiration, which has been continued in UA’s release of *Indigenous Cultural Competency* (2011a; 2011b) reports that has attracted mixed media criticism (Trounson 2012a: 5, 2012b: 5) and concerns about “social engineering” rather than enhancing “criticism as a pedagogical tool ... as a means of advancing knowledge” (Melleuish 2012: 10) which is the agenda of this project.

Oberklaid (2008), in an analytical survey of the Australian BE sector, has concluded that there is a paucity of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander content in existing Australian planning courses, thereby substantiating the conclusions and concerns of Gurran & Phipps (2003, 2004), Low Choy *et al* (2009, 2011), Jones (2002), Margerum *et al* (2003), Walliss & Grant (2000), and Wensing (2007, 2011). The same conclusion can be drawn about architecture and landscape architecture programs.

Oberklaid (2008) expressed these findings as representing a major concern because planning courses were failing to:

- keep abreast of changes in the native title and land rights determinations and approaches to Australia despite the major impositions they have upon statutory and strategic planning practice;
- incorporate Indigenous peoples as integral stakeholders in any consultation process especially given the extensive ‘country’ acknowledgement statements articulated throughout Australia;
- adequately investigate property and land law, including Indigenous rights and interests as part of their translation of the Australian planning process;
- grapple with and translate the implications of native title rights and determinations into statutory and strategic planning processes and instruments for students and practitioners alike;
- address their moral obligations, and increasingly ethical obligations via PIA policy, to improve planners’ appropriation of Indigenous culture, rights and interests and the institutional frameworks thereto; and to,
- cultivate any research inquiry or discourse to assist the ‘re-tooling’ of planning education.

The same conclusions can be drawn of architecture and landscape architecture courses although there is a distinct lack of analytical research on this topic. Instead, as in the case of the planning courses surveyed by Oberklaid (2008), most courses offered fragments of this knowledge, knowledge systems, protocols and cultural codes (Walliss & Grant 2000). This is of increasingly concern as being able to synthesis, distil, and craft environmental knowledge and patterns in design and text is so integral to the planning and landscape architecture disciplines. Thus, an initial stage of this project is to comprehend and assess what is presently transpiring in all these programs to provide a comprehensive perspective.

PLANNING EDUCATION AND PROFESSIONAL ACCREDITATION IN AUSTRALIA

All three built environment professions – architecture, planning and landscape architecture – are subject to annual external peer assessments to ensure that the exit-point knowledge and skills of graduates satisfy and address their respective professional accreditation policies and criteria. The Australian Institute of Architects (AIA) (www.architecture.com.au/), the Planning Institute of Australia (PIA) (www.planning.org.au/) and the Australian Institute of Landscape Architects (AILA) (www.aila.org.au/) all expect, via their respective Education Policies, that Indigenous knowledge and protocols are integrated within the curricula of the courses they accredit and have discretion to withdraw accreditation thereby threatening the economic survival of a course and its standing in a university. For a graduate, satisfactory completion of an accredited course meets the educational requirements for corporate membership of the respective Institute, and thereupon a secure pathway for registration to practice as an architect, planner or landscape architect.

PIA has been more active in this realm than AIA and AILA, approving an *Indigenous Development Policy* (2007) that reaffirms PIA's commitment "to reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians", and has established an Indigenous Planning Policy Working Party that framed several discussion papers about 'country' and Indigenous protocols (www.planning.org.au/policy/indigenous-planning-working-group#improving). This Working Party has concluded that fundamental changes are needed to the way Australian planning education addresses Indigenous perspectives and interests, and in particular that there is a need to alert planners to the "... perceptual limitations of their own discipline and the particular discourse of our own craft" (Wensing 2007: 2).

When turning to PIA's *Accreditation Policy for the Recognition of Australian Planning Qualifications for the Urban and Regional Planning Chapter* (2012), it has been wanting. The preceding *Education Policy for Recognition of Australian Planning Qualifications* (2002) explicitly expected 'Core Curriculum' comprising

Knowledge of

- *indigenous Australian cultures, including relationships between their physical environment and associated social and economic systems* [author's emphasis] (PIA 2002: 9).

Gurran (PIA 2008) has noted that the core curriculum in planning includes an expectation of "knowledge of ... Indigenous Australian cultures, including relationships between their physical environment and associated social and economic systems" but that it has not been addressed.

The current *Accreditation Policy* (2012) watered this expectation down to:

A. Generic Capabilities and Competencies

...

- *operate in a manner that recognises cultural diversity, the need for equity in outcomes and the knowledge of and implementation of high ethical standards.*

B. Core Curriculum Competencies

A planning curriculum is expected to be able to identify and explicitly include three core curriculum competency areas:

1. Professionalism, Practice and Ethics

...

Performance Outcomes

1. Knowledge of the diversity of populations served, including indigenous cultures, minority and special needs groups, and different age groups including children and older people, and a capacity to engage meaningfully with diverse groups, including "hard to reach" populations [author's emphasis] (PIA 2012: 10).

Hidden at the rear of this *Accreditation Policy* (2012: 16) is a note that states:

DEVELOPMENT AND REFINEMENT OF THIS POLICY

The Institute recognises that this policy will be subject to further development and refinement and welcomes continuing constructive dialogue to improve the policy. The Institute also notes that this Accreditation Policy sits

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in a broader framework of Education policy that relates to a wide range of matters of relevance to the promotion and support of planning. In the context of the on-going implementation and refinement of the “Accreditation Policy for the Recognition of Australian Planning Qualifications for the Urban and Regional Planning Chapter”, the National Education Committee will examine the Discussion Paper prepared by the PIA Indigenous Planning Working Group titled Improving Planners’ Understanding of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians and Recommendations for Reforming Planning Education Curricula for PIA Accreditation (21 October 2010) with a view to further amendment of this Accreditation Policy.

PIA’s recent *Evolution* introspection review, now completed, is about to necessitate a comprehensive review of their current policy, that will include amongst other topics, “Inclusion of indigenous planning issues” (Riepsamen 2015: 1).

In contrast to AIA and AILA, PIA has an aging *Indigenous Development Policy* (2007) that states:

The Planning Institute Australia (PIA) is committed to reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. It is PIA’s vision that Indigenous Australians are provided with the same level of opportunities available to non –Indigenous Australians, in a society that values diversity and equality for all. Urban, regional and remote Indigenous populations suffer a high relative disadvantage compared to non-Indigenous populations. In some areas, this disadvantage expresses characteristics similar to those found in developing countries.

PIA ACTION

PIA aims to support Reconciliation by taking the following action:

- *Establish an Indigenous Planning Taskforce;*
- *Indigenous Taskforce to develop and Implement a Reconciliation Action Plan to be registered with Reconciliation Australia. The Action Plan will provide long term strategies supported by short term actions;*
- *Educate the profession about the complexities of the Indigenous development context in Australia and how planning skills, processes and techniques can help to understand and address these complexities;*
- *Promote effective tools for engagement;*
- *Engage with Indigenous people and people working with and for Indigenous people to exchange knowledge and to transfer planning skills, processes and techniques to the Indigenous context (rural, remote and urban).*

What is clear from appraisals of the three institutes is that while all aspirationally express, in generic policy and education accreditation standards, an expectation as to the advancement of and respect to Indigenous knowledge systems, each has failed to carry through this commitment, each has mixed text and monitoring systems as to university course performance on this topic, and each has placed greater stress as to learning outcome advancement on the topic in their non-education standards documents than in their actual education standards. Thus, both each institute and planning program is willing but have failed to carry through their commitments and aspirations on this topic. Further, each institute is ‘on a different page’ in the way they address, monitor, evaluate, and oversight policy and professional accreditation of this topic so there is a lack of consistency, co-ordination, rigour of monitoring, and comprehension of what may or may not be transpiring in the courses under their accreditation oversight towards addressing their policy aspirations in this topic.

PLANNING EDUCATION FINDINGS

As part of the project, a www survey, a series of workshops in Perth, Melbourne, Sydney and Brisbane were entertained with BE academics, practitioners and students, a www interrogation of all BE course offerings including their host university was undertaken, and a literature appraisal was additionally undertaken. For the purposes of brevity in this paper, only the summative planning academic and planning student workshop findings relevant to planning education and the planning discipline are discussed below.

Core findings from the overall investigation conclude that:

- nearly all undergraduate planning courses lack specific mandatory content in Indigenous knowledge systems. Where it occurs, it is in a content-driven unit/subject, thus resulting in minimal exposure of undergraduate architecture students to the topic;
- nearly all postgraduate planning courses lack specific mandatory content about Indigenous knowledge systems. Where it occurs, it is primarily in a content-driven unit/subject and occasionally in an elective/optional design studio often involving in-host city context, thus resulting in minimal exposure of undergraduate planning students to the topic; except at Deakin University, Edith Cowan University, James Cook University, and University of the Sunshine Coast;

- there is little connectivity in academic content and agenda between these undergraduate and postgraduate planning levels, and any execution and engagement is opportunistically driven by academic staff interests. The exceptions were the mandatory units at the University of Canberra, Edith Cowan University, Deakin University, James Cook University and University of the Sunshine Coast. Strong concentrations of these activities occurred only in the universities of James Cook University, The University of Melbourne, Deakin University, University of the Sunshine Coast, and Queensland University of Technology.

Key points arising from the professional institute (PIA, AIA, AILA) workshops were:

- Confusion in understanding of the definitions of 'Indigenous' and 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander' peoples;
- Did not know what was specifically in their Education Policies/Standards as they pertain to Indigenous peoples and knowledge systems;
- Did not know that there were specific references to Indigenous peoples in their other Institute Policy documents that stressed the need to better address the education of graduates about Indigenous issues and knowledges;
- Accepted that little attention had been given to these topics by the Institutes collectively;
- Noted that their Institute did not have an operational Reconciliation Action Plan;
- Noted that no monitoring of courses was occurring to measure whether this lack was being addressed;
- Did not know how many Australian Indigenous students were enrolled in courses that they accredited, and noted that they had not sought to obtain any information on numbers from courses;
- Discovered that each Institute wanted to engage with Indigenous knowledge systems and issues as an education accreditation policy but each of their respective Education Policies/Standards, and allied Policies, portrayed a mixed and un-coordinated approach to their aim. Thus they were generally 'on the same page' but policy/standard-wise 'on very fragmented pages' in practice; and
- Assumed that the 'Indigenous' clauses in their Institutes' Education policies sought to advance 'Australian Aboriginal people and culture knowledge' acquisition for both domestic and international students, and had not thought of the issue of international student fluency in indigenous issues generally and specifically to their home nation.

Key points arising from the BE academic workshops were:

- Built environments academics noted that Indigenous initiatives were generally being led by select internal academic staff with little Head of School, university support and infrastructure;
- Assumed that 'Indigenous' meant 'Australian Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander people', and not 'Indigenous' generically;
- Noted a lack of *Country*-specific and generic resources in which to undertake teaching and learning;
- Noted confusion in what was meant by the term 'Indigenous', as it was assumed to be only Australian 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people';
- Had assumed that their international students had knowledge of their own 'indigenous' peoples, and had in class found to the contrary;
- Wanted Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander staff to teach, or co-teach, content to their students, but noted that there was a major shortage of available and qualified people;
- Did not know whether they had any Aboriginal or Torres Strait islander students in their classes;
- Had not thought of international students learning about 'indigenous' content pertinent to their home nation;
- Noted that notions of decolonisation theory, and discipline-specific precedents in Australia were little known about outside of projects by Greg Burgess and Associates, Taylor Cullty Lethlean, and UDLA in Perth; and
- Did not know Aboriginal or Torres Strait people external to the university that could assist in teaching, and knew less about how, where and who to contact in local Aboriginal or Torres Strait organisations and/or communities.

Key points arising from the planning student workshops were:

- Planning students enjoyed the mandatory or optional units where they had been made available;
- Planning students did not know of other elective opportunities on this topic external to their host School because there were too few opportunities for electives in their courses;
- Both domestic and international planning students noted that 'Indigenous' content was lacking in their secondary school education, and had assumed that this would be addressed in their higher education;
- Planning students did not know of their university's Reconciliation Action Plan;

- Planning students assumed that ‘Indigenous’ meant Australian ‘Aboriginal and Torres Straits Islander people’, and not ‘indigenous’ generically and did not assume that content could be relevant to them prospectively practising overseas;
- International planning students assumed that ‘Indigenous’ meant ‘Australian Aboriginal knowledge and learning outcomes’ and not ‘indigenous content’ that might be applicable to their home nation;
- Planning students all noted that decolonisation theory and any historical grounding to this topic was lacking from their studies, although parts of this were addressed in in-field/immersive optional studios and mandatory units;
- Planning students noted that there was no content on this matter, and were particularly concerned about the lack of knowledge and learning they were experiencing in native title issues, Recognised Aboriginal parties, Aboriginal Corporations, and land law-related topics;
- Planning students wanted more content on this topic; and
- Planning students noted that there was little mention of this topic in their home university generally.

As part of the investigation, a large series of data tabulations were also undertaken, and several PIA-relevant tables are set out at the rear of this paper.

FRONTIERS AND CHALLENGES

Through the research undertaken in this project, and noting the United Nations *Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples* (2007), the recommendations of the Behrendt (2012) *Review of Higher Education Access and Outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People* and the Bradley (2010) *Review of Australian Higher Education*, the project authors have concluded that in terms of planning education:

- Although not discussed in the above paper, there is a need to decolonise planning curriculum at Australian Universities
- There is a shortage of qualified Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander staff to address Indigenous issues sufficiently in planning education;
- Universities across Australia who host planning courses demonstrate a lack consistent response and policy articulation to Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- Both domestic and international planning students consistently expressed the need for more content on Indigenous Knowledge Systems including engagement protocols;
- Planning students consistently expressed concern about the lack or variability of content, progression knowledge inquiry (rather than ‘one-off’ experiences), and discipline-specific knowledge being taught about Indigenous knowledge systems;
- Planning academic staff consistently expressed concerns about lack of content guidance, support from management in content creation, difficulty in positioning such content in already over-crowded curricula, and apprehensiveness in addressing Indigenous content;
- Planning academic staff consistently interpreted ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander’ and ‘Indigenous’ to mean ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander’ culture; little understanding that international students may need awareness and skills relating to first nations peoples in their home countries; lack of qualified Aboriginal and or Torres Strait Islander staff to address this topic; lack of content guidance; lack of support from management in content creation; the difficulty in positioning such content in their over-crowded curricula; and, personal apprehension in addressing content.
- Both professional practitioners and Planning Institute Australia (PIA) consistently interpreted ‘Indigenous’ to mean only ‘Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander’ culture in their discussions and education accreditation policies and standards, and did not comprehend that an accredited course hosted large numbers of international students who would return to practice in their home nations who possessed little comprehension of their own Indigenous cultures and potential engagement processes; and that
- PIA demonstrated a lack consistent policy with regard to Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, in particular education accreditation policies and standards; and that
- Planning professional practitioners consistently expressed a concern that current graduates coming to their practices appeared to lack any discipline-specific knowledge of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and Indigenous Knowledge Systems irrespective of whether their practice specialised in this topic or not.

In drawing a conclusion from the above, and especially as it relates to PIA professional accredited courses, a number of points are evident.

- PIA, at the upper policy level and at the educational policy level, lacks a robust approach to responding to this challenge;
- PIA accredited courses have little responded and appear to be ill-equipped in responding to this challenge, and lack guidance and tools at the university-internal-level and at the PIA-level to inform and assist and renovate their course operations;

- There is a perceptible issue extant about what is 'Indigenous' pertinent to PIA accredited programs, but also a lack of informational and protocol tools, cultural competency guidance and strategies, clarity about teaching execution but also the nature of teaching (including studies, tutorials, seminars, lectures, immersive events) that are appropriate and that can be integrated within the already cramped course packages.

In asking a planning graduate about "did they have any education about Indigenous cultures and their knowledge relevance to planning?" the answer will invariably be 'no' except in Canada and New Zealand where Inuit and Québec cultural issues and Māori and Pacific Islander issues are often integrated in studies. This response runs counter to Australia's signatory obligations under the UNESCO Indigenous Peoples Charter.

What has been learnt in the last 20 years in planning education is that the topic of Indigenous Knowledge Systems and Indigenous culture lacks confidence and engagement by academics, despite the lone academic voices in this arena highlighting the issue and the internal university growth of support units external to a planning course. Such demonstrates a disconnect between policy commitment and execution. It is clear that generic university policy is committed to this enhancing knowledge to its graduates in this topic, but that this commitment has erratically cascaded down to course execution. There is a need for a follow through by university 'learning and teaching' policy-makers to address this theme more robustly. Additionally, PIA has substantially failed to address the topic in its professional accreditation regime, in its overall policy articulation, but also in its oversight of monitoring the education of future planners in the courses that it professionally accredits. There is a need, and an apt opportunity by PIA given that it is again re-drafting its Education Policy, to assert a stronger policy emphasis on this topic and its demonstration by courses through its accreditation processes.

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