

Stephen Rowley

PhD, BPD, BA (Hons), MPIA

RCI Planning
PO Box 493
Ascot Vale VIC 3032

0466 188 634
stephen@rciplanning.com

Qualifications: PhD, University of Melbourne
 Bachelor of Planning and Design, University of Melbourne
 Bachelor of Arts (Honours), University of Melbourne

Key Skills and Expertise

- Fifteen years of experience as a statutory planner at state and local government.
- Extensive experience as an advocate before VCAT.
- Experience providing commentary and reporting upon planning issues and VCAT decisions, both as current Planning Editor of the Victorian Planning Reports, and in my previous role as co-editor of *Planning News*.
- High-level understanding of the Victorian planning system, developed through my experience as a statutory planner and my time working in the Planning Systems Reform area at the former Department of Planning and Community Development.
- Advanced research and analytical skills, as shown by completed PhD research and published academic writing.
- Experience in statutory drafting gained from roles at state and local government.
- Provision of university-level courses on statutory planning, with a part-time position at RMIT University where I have delivered the Statutory Planning & Environment subject (undergraduate and postgraduate) since 2013.
- Experience in writing on urban planning for a variety of publications and audiences, including in academic journals, books, submissions to government, trade magazines, newspapers, and websites.
- Strong verbal communication and presentation skills for varied audiences, developed with experience in university lecturing, conference speaking, and advocacy before VCAT.
- A history of urban planning policy advocacy and demonstrated commitment to the urban planning industry, notably through contributions to the Planning Institute of Australia committee and its publications.
- Author of a book on the cultural depictions of cities and towns and their influence on urban planning practice, to be published in October 2015, and currently writing a book on the Victorian planning system for publication in mid 2016.

Current Roles

I currently divide my time between consulting work for RCI Planning, my academic position at RMIT University, work for the Victorian Planning Reports, and other writing and advocacy projects.

RCI Planning

Principal Planner (September 2014 – Present)

I established RCI Planning in September 2014 to provide planning services to a wide range of clients including local government, permit applicants and residents.

My statutory planning and VCAT experience means these are a key focus of my practice. I also focus on strategic work, with an emphasis on statutory drafting and narrowing the gap between policy intent and practical outcomes.

RMIT University

Lecturer

(Sessional March 2013 – December 2014; on staff January 2014 - Present)

Since 2013 I have taught both the undergraduate and postgraduate Statutory Planning & Environment subject at RMIT University, initially on a sessional basis and since January 2014 as a part time staff member. My goal has been to help bridge the gap between theory and practice, encouraging students to think about how statutory frameworks can best be used to achieve the aspirations we have for the built environment.

Duties include:

- Academic research focussing on planning systems efficacy and equity, and cross-jurisdictional comparisons.
- Developing and refining Statutory Planning & Environment course structure (including the lecture plans and readings).
- Developing and presenting a weekly lecture and tutorials.
- Preparation of screencasts and other supporting information.

Planning Institute of Australia (Victorian Division)

Vice President (October 2014 – Present)

Policy Convenor (October 2012 – July 2014)

Committee Member (June 2011 – Present)

I joined the Victorian committee of the Planning Institute in June 2011 and commenced as one of the committee's Policy Convenors upon the creation of these roles in October 2012. I was elected Vice President in October 2014.

The Policy Convenor roles were created to help the Institute develop and refine its policy positions in a more organised and pro-active manner. In this role I contributed to the preparation of various PIA submissions, notably in relation to the review of Victorian zones and the new metropolitan strategy for Melbourne.

Victorian Planning Reports

Planning Editor (July 2013 – Present)

I currently serve as Planning Editor for the Victorian Planning Reports (VPRs). Established in 1983, the VPRs are the definitive reports on planning decisions at the Victorian Civil and Administrative Tribunal and Supreme Court (see www.vprs.com.au). In this role I work with the Managing Editor in writing case notes and editorials for the publication and its website, as well as for the regular VCAT column in *Planning News*.

Books

My first book, *Movie Towns and Sitcom Suburbs: Building Hollywood's Ideal Communities*, focuses on the cultural depictions of cities and towns. It was published by Palgrave Macmillan in October 2015.

I am currently at work on my second book, which will be an introduction to the Victorian planning system for students, practitioners, and the broader public. This is due for publication in mid 2016.

Previous Employment and Roles

Moreland City Council

Principal Urban Planner (April 2012 – September 2014)

Senior Urban Planner (October 2007 – March 2009; September 2010 – April 2012)

This was a part time role (three days a week). Duties include:

- Processing planning permit applications, including writing assessment reports, negotiating with applicants, and provision of planning advice.
- Representation of Council at VCAT hearings.
- Advice to the strategic planning branch on draft amendments and strategic work, with a particular focus on statutory drafting and “reality testing” proposed policies and provisions.
- Liaison with developers, consultants, Councillors, members of resident groups, and other members of the public.
- Representation of Council at VCAT hearings and mediations.
- Chairing public meetings and consultation sessions.
- Supervision and mentoring of junior officers.

Planning News

Co-editor (July 2007 – December 2010)

I was co-editor of the PIA Victoria magazine *Planning News*, with Tim Westcott and Gilda di Vincenzo, from July 2007 to December 2010. We sought to consolidate the publication's traditional role as the agenda-setting publication in the Victorian planning industry. We also had a strong focus on making the magazine more lively and attractively presented than it had been in the past.

During our editorship we initiated a number of special issues of the magazine, providing in-depth expert focus on a variety of topics, notably: the implications of peak oil (September 2007); planning system reform (April 2008); The *Melbourne 2030* audit and the Eddington report (August 2008); *Melbourne @ 5 Million* and the Victorian Transport Plan (February 2009); planning for disaster recovery in the wake of the Black Saturday bushfires (March 2009); politicians and their role in planning (May 2009); corruption in planning (July 2009); planning in the media (October 2009); and the findings of the Bushfire Royal Commission (September 2010).

I was the lead author on many editorials during that time, as well as a number of single-author articles.

The role involved teamwork, attention to detail on tight timeframes, following and participating in debate within the profession, and extensive networking (required to source contributions).

Department of Planning and Community Development, Statutory Planning Systems Reform

Senior Planner (March 2009 – September 2010)

This was a part time role (three days a week).

Principal duties included:

- Drafting of new provisions (and redrafting existing provisions) for the Victoria Planning Provisions. This involved drawing on my statutory planning experience to craft provisions that would be effective at achieving policy objectives while minimising regulatory burden.
- Liaising with external stakeholders, notably other government departments, VCAT, professional bodies, and local government on proposed initiatives.
- Participating in legislative review as principal liaison between the Statutory Planning Systems Reform unit and the team reviewing the *Planning & Environment Act 1987*.

City of Melbourne

Senior Planning Officer (April 2003 – September 2007)

Planning Officer (May 2001 – April 2003)

My role at Melbourne involved general planning duties similar to my role at Moreland. However the Capital City location provided unique opportunities, including the opportunity to assess larger development projects, and experience representing the City of Melbourne at meetings between the then Department of Sustainability & Environment, VicUrban and developers in relation to the Docklands precinct.

I also undertook a secondment to the Local Policy Branch between March 2002 and April 2003, gaining experience in strategic planning.

Mornington Peninsula Shire

Development Planner (October 1998 – May 2001)

Other Experience

Lecturing and Speaking

I am an experienced speaker on planning issues having presented to various community and industry forums, as well as in my own teaching.

I was a panel member speaking about the proposed revised Planning Policy Framework for PIA in April 2014.

In addition to my own subjects at RMIT University I have presented guest lectures for various university courses at Melbourne University, RMIT University, and Deakin University.

Other Professional Roles

I was a member of the Judging Panel, Media Category, for the PIA Awards for Planning Excellence, from 2008 to 2010.

In December 2008 I was invited by the Department of Planning & Community Development to participate in workshops for the review of the *Planning & Environment Act*.

Published Writing

I have written widely on both urban planning and film, and for a wide range of audiences, including academic writing, trade publications, popular press, and online sources such as websites and blogs.

As noted above, I have recently published my first book and have another due for publication in 2016.

I have written opinion pieces relating to urban planning for *The Age* and *Crikey*. I have also written extensively on urban planning related topics for *Planning News*.

References

References can be provided on request.