

INQUIRY INTO SKILLS SHORTAGES IN RURAL AND REGIONAL NSW

Organisation: Camden Council
Name: Ms Noleen Jessup
Position: Manager - Employee & Community Relations
Telephone: 02 4654 7786
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Theme:

Summary

Skills shortage of Town Planning Professionals.

Camden Council is particularly concerned at the lack of Town Planners in Australia. The shortage has been recognised by the key professional body PIA (Planning Institute of Australia) who has undertaken considerable work in an attempt to address the critical shortage.

As the State Government has just released plans for the provision of 160,000 new dwellings in the South West and North West Sector Release areas, the demand for planners to implement these plans will increase. Camden Council wants to be involved in this process as approximately 55,000 of these homes are to be provided within our Local Government Area, however is concerned at the ability to deliver the necessary resources to accord with the government's timetable and the need for land release across the Sydney Region. The release of land is to take place over the next 30 years so the demand for staff is a long-term issue. This work is in addition to the regular work undertaken by Councils who are already under-resourced in terms of planning staff.

In an attempt to develop young planners, Camden Council has devoted budget amounts for trainee planners. In association with the Planning Degree Course run through the University of NSW, it was proposed to provide practical placements for students through their one-year practical placements required for their course. For the past two years there have been insufficient students available for Council to fill the positions available. As the course is run at the Randwick campus, students prefer to take positions with city consultants or inner city councils as their living arrangements better suit access to these areas. Councils such as Camden find it difficult to attract students away from their city residences.

Estimates of the number of graduates from planning courses currently conducted will in no way satisfy the demands for professionals from local government which must compete with the private sector in attracting graduates. Country councils have even greater difficulties attracting staff than city councils.

The number of places offered in planning courses in no way satisfies the demand for planning professionals.

In 2004 PIA undertook a comprehensive study of the issue of the shortage of planners. Their report "National Inquiry into Planning Education and Employment, June 2004" is available on their website www.planning.org.au. The recommendations of the report are being implemented where possible however require intervention by government in terms of providing additional graduate places in the university programs and increase overseas immigration opportunities.

Camden Council urges the Committee to consider the issues raised in the PIA inquiry, as they will go a long way to addressing the critical skills shortage for planners in regional and rural NSW.