



Re-Thinking Skills for Planners: TELCO as case study

TELCO Projects

Refer to: all facets of the deployment of telecommunications infrastructure projects. These are essentially land-use and legislative based issues for planners.





Contentious land uses
often provoking
unsubstantiated fears

**“Base-station
Radiation can
Adversely Affect
Humans”**

**“...symptoms suffered by
people living near mobile
phone towers.”**

**“EME
Specialist**

**Non-planning
legislation**

**“The study’s conclusions
demonstrated that low
frequency as well as
radiofrequency
electromagnetic fields below
the allowed exposure limits
displayed gene-damaging
potential.”**

Started with a Question

How could our Bachelor of Planning curriculum review address new skill sets in a contemporary planning environment?

Bachelor of City Planning (BCP)

Context

Background research of planning curriculum reviews/skills

- Scott & Roweis (1977)
- Lang (1983)
- Cuthbert (1994, 1994, 2001)
- Friedman (1996)
- Zehner (1979, 1984, 1989, 1996, 2002)
- Higgins & Forsyth (2006)
- Klosterman (2011)
- Freestone et al (2014)

Problem Setting

In Australia, planners have to work within a broad framework of legislation at the federal, state and local level; navigating a complicated network of policies and legalities and balancing competing agendas with various stakeholder groups; these are often the biggest challenges for the planner. Apart from acting as legal policy experts, planners often find themselves adopting other key roles in telecommunications deployment (i.e. EME specialist, negotiator, public relations representative for the carrier, and community consultation specialist and project manager). Planners often find themselves on the frontline engaging their interpersonal, legal and negotiation skills to ensure the successful deployment of telecommunications infrastructure.

Renaming, rebranding and reworking a few courses could just be the beginning of not only re-imagining a new degree but also re-thinking skills for planners.

Methods

10 In-depth interviews with:

Practising senior planners and managers in TELCO

- must have worked in the TELCO industry in NSW either as a professional planner or worked in a management role for a private Telco consultancy Telco carrier (i.e. NSW Police, Optus, Telstra);
- must have worked on Telco projects in NSW at some point in the past five years to ensure recent experience and relevance in keeping abreast with current policy changes in the Telco industry and planning practice;
- and also must have at least five years of experience working as a professional planner or in a managerial role.

Five planners and five managers were interviewed for this research.

5 Focus groups (36 students) with:

BCP students who just returned from 1 year work experience in planning practice

2 Focus groups (9 students) with:

BCP students who graduated from an accredited planning program at least two years ago and are currently working in planning



UNSW
A U S T R A L I A

Built
Environment

Dr Christine Steinmetz and Christina Papadopoulos from BE, UNSW invite you to put forth an expression of interest to take part in a focus group about skills that young planners need when entering into the planning profession. This research builds on a series of in-depth interviews conducted with professionals in upper management planning positions. Additionally, focus groups were carried out with students who have recently returned from work experience. We would like to add to that story with input from those who **have an accredited planning degree and have been working in planning for less than five years.**

When: Monday September 28th

Where: Trinity Bar (upstairs), 505 Crown Street Surry Hills

Time: Session 1: 5:45-7:00

Session 2: 7:15-8:30

Topics to be discussed will include: skills taught at university, work experience as a student, and current skill sets as a fully accredited practising planner. Focus groups will run for approximately 1 hour. Light food and refreshments will be provided.

If you are interested, please RSVP to christina.papadopoulos@unsw.edu.au by September 22 indicating a preferred session. We will respond shortly thereafter confirming attendance and time.

Thank you for your consideration.

Findings

Outcomes SPs & Ms

- 1) Project management, leadership ability....they have to be able to say this is how we'll do it...if a planner isn't prepared to that they will get railroaded especially in the Telco industry.
- 2) How to run a consultancy but also have empathy for the client
- 3) Advanced communication skills
- 4) "the ability to liaise it's a personality thing it's a confidence thing"
- 5) High level community consultation skills
- 6) Basic understanding of ER (int'l and nat'l regulation studies)
- 7) Know the equipment located on site
- 8) Radio engineering, radio frequency and associated equipment
- 9) "The planner needs to be a specialist planner"
- 10) "Telcos is going to keep evolving... the future of telco is in good hands from a planning point of view as long as you keep specialists doing a specialist role"
- 11) It is a very specialised field...just like urban designers, masters planners...Telco is very unique stream that I think has been ignored...ppl need to know what we are doing"

Outcomes Students

- 1) Communication: verbal, written
- 2) Working collaboratively
- 3) In-practice skills
- 4) Work experience
- 5) PIA

It is not about new skills, but rather making the ones we already teach, better

In Application

Our “Prac” year—already happening

Lecturers:

Cross-disciplinary

Assessments: More field-based combined with legislation

Evaluation: include industry for student critiques based on real world problem

Thank you!

Acknowledgement and thanks needs to be extended to the project's research assistant, Christina Papadopoulos, MRes candidate, for setting up all the interviews and organising all the focus groups and thematisicing the data.