

Planning Education *and the Profession*

in the Great White North and the Land Down Under

by Nancy Marshall, Ph.D. MCIP

Why do planners need to know about planning education in other countries? Globalization, among other reasons. Despite being on the opposite ends of the earth, Australia and Canada are not that dissimilar – beyond the socio-economic and geopolitical parallels, they share many ideas about the planning profession and planning practice, resulting in a connection between the Canadian Institute of Planners and the Royal Australian Planning Institute (RAPI).

Perhaps surprisingly, the two countries are geographically analogous. Canada's population hugs the forty-ninth parallel. Close to 85 percent of the Australian population lives along the east and south coastline, only 100 km from the shore. Both populations are concentrated in a linear pattern in their respective countries. Canada has a relatively sparse population in its harsh north. Australia has the "red centre," a huge desert area that is essentially uninhabited. Both countries have vast land areas that are sparsely populated (albeit for different climatic reasons), which offer interesting planning challenges and opportunities.

Politically, both countries are governed by the Westminster parliamentary system, and remain members of the British Commonwealth. Both operate through

federal-provincial/state relations. Socioculturally, both are becoming very multicultural and hold the mosaic in their cultural fabric.

These many similarities allow the two countries to be easily compared and contrasted, with the view of increasing the understanding that each has of the other. Much can be shared and learned, specifically within the planning discipline with regard to education and professional organization.

Planning education

Both Canada and Australia essentially have a public university education system. Despite the differences noted in Table 1, planners from the Australian system typically end up working in similar places to those where Canadian planners work. Approximately 4 percent of CIP accredited planners are employed in academia, compared to 3 percent in Australia. Private industry employs 37 percent of accredited Canadian planners – in Australia, 41 percent. The majority of the remaining members in both countries work for all levels of government. However, looking at Table 1, there is one notable difference between the two planning education systems: Australian universities offer far more planning and environmental design programs in the same number of universities.

A great difference is noted in the number of Ph.D. programs, whereby Australia offers that degree in four times the number of universities than does the Canadian education system. This may be explained by two structural differences in the Australian post-secondary education system. Most planners there start in baccalaureate programs, which feed the research-oriented Ph.D. programs. Also, many Australian universities export their education programs to international students, primarily from Asia. The demand is mostly for postgraduate degrees.

From a scan of the universities' curricula, it seems there is a much stronger focus on geography, economics, physical planning, law and urban development in the Australian education system. The "nuts and bolts" of planning are taught at the baccalaureate level, which focuses mostly on the built form and not emphasizing social planning and "soft" policy processes. The master's degrees are generally not seen as "professional degrees which differs substantially from the Canadian system. Many master's degrees in Australia are not course-based but instead are research-oriented, and students are expected to have a bachelor's degree in an identical or closely related program before undertaking a master's degree in planning (AEO 1998). Australian Ph.D. programs are only research-based.

Professional organization

Both the CIP and RAPI are "federated" organizations. There is one national body, but the day-to-day operations of the organizations occur at a provincial or, in Australia's case, a state level. Both national bodies "stimulate debate" within the planning community, offer publications and conferences to their membership, and contribute a united perspective on government policy issues of interest to the community at large where appropriate. Ideologically and practically, the two organizations are facing similar challenges and opportunities, given the profession's size and relative powers in the decision-making arena.

Table 1. A comparison of Canadian and Australian planning facts and figures

Facts and details	Canada	Australia
Professional planning organization	Canadian Institute of Planners (CIP)	Royal Australian Planning Institute (RAPI)
Inception of professional body	1919, reactivated 1952	1951
Planning journal	Plan Canada	Australian Planner
Accredited planners	about 5,000	about 3,700
General population	30 million	18 million
Accredited planners/10,000 pop.	1.7	2.1
Universities offering planning or environmental design programs	19	19 (16 are RAPI accredited)
Baccalaureate programs	8	19*
Master's programs	15	25
Ph.D. programs	4	16

* Includes bachelor's degrees (13) and diplomas.

Sources: AEO 1998, CIP web site 2001, Vipond 2000.

Some differences between CIP and RAPI

- Professional development is a mandatory component of RAPI, whereby a minimum of thirty hours per year is required of each member. CIP encourages but does not require ongoing professional development for its members.
- Table 2 indicates the differences between CIP and RAPI regarding the work experience required for full membership. Generally, RAPI requires more practical work experience from a person who holds a qualification other than an accredited planning degree. One notable difference involves potential members who hold a "related" degree: where CIP requires four years experience, RAPI requires nine.

Table 2. Work experience requirements for full membership

Type of degree held	Work experience required by RAPI	Work experience required by CIP
Recognized planning degree	2 years	2 years
Non-recognized planning degree	5 years	4 years
Relevant non-planning degree	9 years	4 years
No degree (long experience)	12 years	"grandfather clause"

Sources: CIP 1995, Vipond 2000.

- "Australia does not have registration of planners to protect the title or the practice of planning" (Melotte, 35). Five CIP affiliates (PIBC, AACIP, APCPS, OPPI, and OUQ) have provincial legislation that provides a registered title for planners. It is only in Quebec that planners must be licensed to practice.
- Parts of Australia allow for "private certification" of development applications (DA's), which can be conducted to fast-track council approval. In the state of Victoria planners can certify DA's, and in the state of New South Wales planners and engineers both qualify for this certification. I am unaware of any certifications like this one offered to Canadian planners.
- RAPI has just released a national policy document that identifies eight issues that it believes require a national framework for urban and regional development. It suggests that Australia lacks focus in these areas, which should be addressed in a national "planning" agenda (see Table 3). The document also identifies fourteen policy actions that the professional planning organization is prepared to become involved with. To my knowledge, CIP does not have a similar document or national vision. However, given CIP's recent articulation of national goals in the 1999 Williams and Associates Report, CIP should influence and shape public policy at the national level, perhaps starting with a national framework, as RAPI has done.

Table 3. RAPI's national planning agenda

National planning issues
Preserving Australia's ecological integrity
Adopting a "whole of Australia" approach
Creating a convergence of economic and urban policy
Addressing social exclusion through local area planning
Mitigating social polarization in the cities
Promoting an efficient housing market
Taking a responsible approach to Greenhouse (gases)
Fostering healthy communities

Sources: RAPI 2001.

Conclusions

In the May/June 1999 issue of *Plan Canada*, RAPI offered CIP an opportunity to work on a formal "memorandum of agreement," with the intent of arriving at a mutual recognition of accreditation between the two organizations. Given the relative similarities—and distinct differences—in planning education and the role of the planning profession, the Great White North and the Land Down Under have much to learn from each other, and much to gain from mutual cooperation. Moving forward with a memorandum of agreement would be an important step in this direction.

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Summary

Despite being at opposite ends of the earth, Canada and Australia are similar in their planning education systems and professional organizations. CIP and the Royal Australian Planning Institute (RAPI) each have much to gain from an increased understanding of the other, and from ratifying a formal agreement for the mutual benefit of their members.

Sommaire

Bien qu'aux antipodes, le Canada et l'Australie se ressemblent quant à leur formation en urbanisme et à leurs organisations professionnelles. L'ICU et le Royal Australian Planning Institute (RAPI) peuvent tous deux gagner à mieux se connaître et à homologuer une entente entre les deux organismes professionnels au profit de leurs membres.