

ANZAPS 2010 – A climate for Change

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The annual gathering of the New Zealand and Australian Planning Schools Association (ANZAPS) was held in Christchurch from the 17th-19th April. Hosted by Lincoln University staff and students the three-day conference proved to be a successful, collegial event that generated lively debate and discussion. Visiting delegates were warmly greeted to the conference first by Ali Memon, followed by a moving Maori welcome by Hirini Matunga in which the themes of community, collaboration and caring were strongly emphasized. The modest but cosy environment at the YMCA conference centre, and the single track session helped to knit folk together to achieve a sense of shared purpose and collegiality.

Presenters were asked by the organizers to contribute papers on planning that were 'provocative, creative, relevant and stimulating'. They did this around a range of important topics including: indigenous and cross cultural issues; planning pedagogy; urban planning and design; liveable cities; and climate change. Not all views were the same but it was the depth and richness of the discussions, rather than pressure for consensus, that bodes well for future planning education and policy action. This was most clearly evident in the final sessions of the conference which focused predominantly on the future of ANZAPS and planning school accreditation.

What could have been a lightning rod for potential divisions and factions (see Australian federal election), resulted in a better understanding – at least by those present - of the historical context of ANZAPS as a voluntary organization, the range of issues involved in formalizing ANZAPS and the need for wider and more inclusive debate and deliberation around the key issues. The collective challenge is how best to maintain the momentum around what was agreed and communicate this to the wider ANZAPS membership cohort well before the next conference meeting.

On the social and cultural side of the conference there was much feasting and festivity. The walking tours were a favourite with many as was the fine drinking establishment in which all seemed to end. An amble down the main street of town in the mornings after such fun would find conference delegates popping up in all sorts of delightful bookshops, coffee shops and cobbled laneways. A favourite moment was Hamish Rennie in front of the Dux De Lux restaurant (and brewery) in full flight about the controversial conservatorium development proposed for the University of Canterbury. Halfway through his impassioned talk a lady came rushing out of the restaurant to hug, kiss and thank Hamish profusely for his activist/educational efforts on the site. After much cheering (us), blushing (Hamish), smiling (the lady) we continued on our merry tour. Never a dull moment in Christchurch it seems. Grand.

Postscript 1: The proposed development was eventually overturned by Council.

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