

Neil Cooney - CV

216/88 Trenerry Crescent, Abbotsford VIC 3067

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PROFESSIONAL PROFILE

I am a passionate and experienced town and environmental planner with over thirteen years' experience in Australia and Ireland, encompassing the areas of land use and development, urban, regional and coastal planning, natural resource management, environmental assessment, strategic policy and planning enforcement.

My experience ranges across local government and the private sector in the following roles: Company Director / Urban Planner, Acting Planning Coordinator, Principal Planning Enforcement Officer / Team Leader and Town and Country Planner.

I have extensive experience working within and leading teams in the delivery of projects, facilitation of new enterprises and interpretation of policy. I have in-depth knowledge and understanding of the Victorian planning system and legislative instruments, with extensive experience working on sustainability projects and improving the liveability of our environment.

This hands-on planning experience is complimented by a strong technical approach developed through the preparation of environmental impact statements and environmental reports [i.e. climate change research and environmentally sustainable design (ESD)] and review of traffic, acoustic, land capability and waste management reports.

PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

COMPANY DIRECTOR / TOWN & ENVIRONMENTAL PLANNER

Trí Spatial Planning Pty Ltd, 36-38 Gipps Street, Collingwood | December 2015 (Note – recent career break 1st January – 30th June 2020).

Key responsibilities and achievements:

- As the sole director of this firm, I managed all business operations including budgeting, preparing quotations and invoices, workload management, business administration, accounting, website design and networking.
- I co-led the preparation of ESD guidelines for a Growth Area Council, which are the basis of a future planning scheme amendment. This work facilitated innovative sustainability initiatives across a municipality that integrated neighbourhood liveability improvements and soft engineering techniques into the design of buildings, suburbs and infrastructure.
- I led multi-disciplined teams associated with use and development projects, managing consultants such as architects, acoustic engineers, traffic engineers, environmental scientists, waste management consultants, landscape architects and building surveyors.
- I researched and prepared site feasibility reports, development and land use reports, ESD assessments and provided planning and environmental advice to various stakeholders.
- I advocated for and achieved planning approval for new business enterprises.
- I have considerable experience in managing and assessing liquor licence applications and worked on bar and brewery projects in the suburbs of Abbotsford, Fitzroy and Brunswick.
- In conjunction with Chris Mackenzie Planning Lawyer, I researched and prepared submissions for over 200 VCAT cases and I regularly presented at VCAT. Through this work I gained extensive experience presenting at forums, influencing outcomes, negotiating with stakeholders and defending the position of Councils, applicants and the community.
- My VCAT experience includes agriculture and winery operations, rural accommodation, multi-unit developments, mixed-use multi-storey buildings and commercial enterprises.
- I contributed to two award-winning placemaking projects at Wilson Avenue and Saxon Street, Brunswick that included planning and delivering social and land use initiatives.
- Throughout the planning permit process, I mediated with objectors, Council officers and referral authorities to achieve balanced and agreeable outcomes.

SENIOR URBAN PLANNER

City of Whittlesea, South Morang | May 2019 – December 2019 (Part-time Contract).

Reporting to: Robert Cobolli (Team Leader, Statutory Planning)

Key responsibilities and achievements:

- Assessed and determined land use and development planning permit applications relating to residential, commercial, industrial and subdivision projects.
- Assessed and determined planning permit applications relating to native vegetation removal and bushfire management overlay requirements.
- Mentored junior planners and assisted with their strategy and approach to VCAT hearings.
- Prepared submissions and represented Council at VCAT.

ACADEMIC TUTOR

RMIT University, 445 Swanston Street, Melbourne | March 2016 – June 2016.

Reporting to: Dr. Stephen Rowley (Lecturer in Urban Planning)

Key responsibilities and achievements:

- Academic tutor responsible for sixty students studying 'Statutory Planning and Environmental Regulation'.
- Taught and engaged with students to increase their understanding of the subject and prepare them for practical work situations.
- Undertook administration duties such as critiquing presentations, attending to student queries and marking of assignments and exams.
- Contributed to the planning enforcement section in the book '*The Victorian Planning System: Practice, Problems and Prospects*', authored by Dr. Stephen Rowley.

PRINCIPAL PLANNING ENFORCEMENT OFFICER / TEAM LEADER

Moreland City Council, 90 Bell Street, Coburg | September 2012 – December 2015.

Reporting to: Mark Hughes (Statutory Planning Coordinator)

Key responsibilities and achievements:

- Supervised and mentored two planning enforcement officers and provided statutory planning advice to junior statutory planners in the team.
- Resolved highly contentious planning disputes on behalf of Council such as the assessment of environmental audit requirements and planning permit conditions associated with contaminated land, in conjunction with the EPA.
- Gained extensive social planning experience working within a multi-discipline Council / Victoria Police task force tackling crime, alcohol issues and anti-social behaviour. This involved extensive collaboration with Council's Building Surveyors and Environmental Health officers.
- Mediated outcomes between landowners and members of the community, enhancing my communication, negotiating and influencing skills.
- Investigated and resolved the unauthorised use of warehouses and industrial buildings, including applying strict investigative procedures and laws and undertaking numerous site inspections with owners and occupiers.
- Created a new pro-active planning enforcement system, including associated procedures and internal policies, that pro-actively enforced planning permits to ensure compliance.
- Reformed Council's planning enforcement system through the development of internal procedures and policies, producing a streamlined approach that was fair, consistent with the legislation and met the expectations of the community.

- Gained extensive experience working with the Planning and Environment Act 1987, Environment Protection Act 1970, Public Health and Wellbeing Act 2008, Building Regulations, State and Local Planning Policy and VCAT case law.
- Prepared submissions and represented Council at VCAT, the Magistrates Court and community consultations.

ACTING STATUTORY PLANNING COORDINATOR

Moreland City Council, 90 Bell Street, Coburg | April 2013 and July 2013.

Reporting to: Phillip Priest (Group Manager of City Development)

Key responsibilities and achievements:

- Supervised of a team of six statutory planning officers, responsible for their attendance, performance and results.
- Assessed and allocated planning permit applications to members of the team.
- Reviewed and prepared committee reports for Councillors.
- Contributed to daily panel discussions with fellow coordinators, reviewing complex and contentious planning permit applications.
- Provided daily advice to statutory planners regarding procedure, planning permit applications, enforcement cases and planning legislation.
- Assessed and revised draft local planning policy for Council's Strategic Planning Branch.

STATUTORY URBAN PLANNER

Moreland City Council, 90 Bell Street, Coburg | August 2011 – September 2012.

Reporting to: Narelle Jennings (Statutory Planning Coordinator)

Key responsibilities and achievements:

- Quickly adapted my previous four years Irish experience to the Victorian planning system in areas such as application assessment, contaminated land, existing use rights, restrictive covenants, Aboriginal heritage, project management and community consultation.
- Assessed and managed planning permit applications for development proposals ranging from single storey to seven storey mixed use buildings, use applications and heritage alterations.
- Assessed and determined planning permit applications from pre-application stage through public notice and to decision stage.
- Processed internal and external referrals, including detailed discussions with Council's Heritage Advisor, Urban Designers and Sustainability Officers.
- Prepared submissions and represented Council at VCAT and formal mediation meetings.
- Prepared Councillor reports and presented at Council's Urban Planning Committee meetings with the elected Councillors of Moreland City Council.
- Critically analysed strategic planning policy and VCAT decisions.
- Maintained a high-quality assessment standard of planning permit applications while also meeting key targets and timelines of the planning department.

TOWN AND COUNTRY PLANNER

Sean Lucy & Associates Town Planning Consultants, 23E Lough Sheever Corporate Park, Mullingar, Co. Westmeath, Ireland | June 2007 – May 2011.

Reporting to: Sean Lucy (Director)

Key responsibilities and achievements:

- Facilitated consultations with clients, providing specific advice relating to planning projects and planning and environmental legislation.

- Prepared detailed and comprehensive planning and environmental reports relating to road infrastructure, residential, commercial and industrial projects, waste disposal facilities and waste recycling sites.
- Project managed inter-disciplinary teams of ecologists, engineers, geologists and hydro-geologists associated with the preparation of environmental impact statements for quarry developments, waste facilities and agricultural operations.
- Contributed to the design and implementation of residential/mixed-use masterplans incorporating road and communications layout, urban design, water infrastructure, open space, and sequential staging.
- Undertook retail impact assessments, considering the feasibility of new retail enterprises and determining their impact on the viability of existing town centres.
- Researched and interpreted planning and environmental legislation, technical reports, case law, and statutory planning frameworks.

CAREER BREAKS: June 2011 – July 2011 and January 2020 – June 2020.

During these times, I travelled across Australia and more recently South America.

EDUCATION

2013 – 2016 Master of Science in Coastal and Marine Spatial Planning, University of Ulster, Northern Ireland (E-learning), First Class Honours.

2003 – 2007 Bachelor of Science in Environmental Planning and Management (Spatial Planning), Technological University Dublin, Ireland, Higher Honours.

AFFILIATIONS / TRAINING

- Member of the **Victorian Planning and Environmental Law Association (VPELA)**
- Corporate Member of the **Irish Planning Institute (IPI)**
- Member of the **Living Future Institute of Australia (LFIA)**
- Accredited **Built Environment Sustainability Scorecard (BESS) Trained Professional [2017]**
- **Building Sustainability Course (Module ABPL90120) – The University of Melbourne [2017]**
- **Green Infrastructure Tier 2 Training – Facilitated by: Do it on the Roof [2017]**
- **Understanding ESD Training – Facilitated by: The Planning Institute of Australia [2017]**
- **Biophilic Design Training – Facilitated by: LFIA [2017]**
- **Climate Change Short Course – The University of Melbourne / Coursera [2014]**

VOLUNTEER EXPERIENCE

Australian Coastal Society, Victorian Chapter | January 2016 – July 2019 | Committee Member – Communications and Policy Advice.

Irish Surfing Association | May 2010 – April 2013 and April 2016 – September 2016 | Planning and Environmental Consultant regarding coastal infrastructure projects.

REFERENCES

Chris Mackenzie, Planning Lawyer. Planning Appeals Pty Ltd.

Phone: 0438 355 641 Email: chris@planningappeals.com.au

Mark Hughes, Statutory Planning Coordinator. Moreland City Council.

Phone: 0439 448 802 Email: mhughes@moreland.vic.gov.au

Sean Lucy & Associates Ltd. – Please find below enclosed reference from this firm.



**SEANLUCY
& ASSOCIATES LTD**
Town Planning Consultants

12/05/2011

To Whom It May Concern:

This is to certify that Neil Cooney was employed as a Planning Consultant with this office from 01st June 2007 to 12th May 2011. Prior to that he also worked as a Student Planner with this office for the summer of 2003.

During his time here with Sean Lucy and Associates, Neil has been an important member of staff and has contributed significantly in many projects. He has been involved in project management of EIS applications, appeals to An Bord Pleanála, Retail Impact Assessments, Visual Impact Assessments, Planning Appraisals on a wide range of planning projects including, agricultural, commercial, residential, retail, industrial, roads, tourism and waste.

Neil is an excellent planner with the ability to work under direction as part of a team as well as working independently on different projects. Our clients have always found him efficient, courteous and knowledgeable in his area of work.

We would have no hesitation in recommending Neil for a position as a planning consultant and wish him well in his future career.

Yours sincerely,


Sean Lucy and Associates Ltd.

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Sean Lucy B.E., C. Eng., F.I.E.I., Dip in TP, M.I.P.I. - V.A.T. Reg No. 6412461M