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Planning for Indigenous Communities – Do communities really reap benefits?

Should planning for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities continue in its current processes of addressing a larger strategy, or do we review and modify it to seek genuine support and collaboration of our Indigenous communities, as it's the morally correct approach?

When considering planning for Indigenous communities, many often assume Indigenous communities are based in remote locations and fail to recognise the Indigenous communities within our urban and regional geographies.

Many Victorian government departments are in the process of implementing Inclusion Plans, whilst many local councils have developed Reconciliation Action Plans. Both types of plans prompt us to develop and build a greater level of respect, understanding and acknowledgement of our local Aboriginal communities and their cultures.

How do we ensure higher level planning policies are developed into actions that filter down to the community level and provides genuine community benefit? To ensure not only the appropriateness of the outcome, but also of the process involved?

A challenging aspect of successfully developing and achieving a culturally appropriate planning process is to ensure an Indigenous led approach. How do we address the challenges of a dramatically increasing demand on communities to have an adequate number of members with a strong level of understanding of planning policy requirements?

Understanding these challenges provides opportunities for the planning industry to better develop their own relationships with Indigenous communities, as well as developing a deeper level of understanding of local Traditional Owners and communities. I found myself in exactly this role, some 20+ years ago when I began my journey as a Landscape Architect. My shared experiences provides insights and opportunities to greater educate the wider Built Environment profession.