

I am a Geographer ...



Rory Shannon

Town planner

I am an urban planner working with the Victorian State Government Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP). The department plays a critical role in caring for and protecting the environment while helping to respond to climate change and build more liveable communities. The department has environment, water, forest, planning, local government and emergency management functions. Each of these functions requires an understanding of the relationship between people and their environment.

My Geography studies include a Bachelor of Environments at The University of Melbourne. In my career I have had several roles that have included developing strategies to support people to rebuild homes and communities impacted by bushfires; facilitating native vegetation protection regulations to help support healthy, resilient and biodiverse environments; managing funding programs to support the recycling industry; and delivering infrastructure projects to design walkable neighbourhoods.

Our department uses population, employment and public health information to inform public policies and strategies. These policies include where we direct growth, support investment and manage development. We use Geography skills and knowledge to identify places for growth in housing based on services and infrastructure accessibility.

I work with communities to deliver programs to accommodate our growing population while designing more

liveable neighbourhoods. This includes housing, commercial, industrial and environmental initiatives. We work across government and the private sector on programs and work with other geographers including demographers, architects and transport, environmental and structural engineers.

Challenges of climate change, biodiversity and poor public health seem like impossible issues to understand and resolve. Through Geography studies in school/university, I was able to better understand the relationship between social, environmental, health and economic issues. My course focused on design and how we can design our cities to create more sustainable places. I believe that people need to feel oriented, to know where they live, not just in terms of a compass, but in terms of political, environmental, cultural and economic geographies. This allows people to be informed about where they've come from and to have a vision for a more sustainable future.

There are numerous career opportunities in town planning as it is a dynamic profession. It connects a range of industries and enables you to work on projects that help shape the built and natural environment. The profession is continually evolving to respond to public health, social and environmental challenges such as adapting to the impacts of climate change. As new technologies – including self-driving cars – are developed, there will always be new roles in government and private industry to plan and help design our cities and communities.