

I am a Geographer ...

Yan Gaoulil

Policy Officer at the Department of Environment, Land, Water and Planning (DELWP)

In my role at DELWP as a planning policy officer, I work as part of a team to maintain and improve planning policy and regulation in order to protect communities and the environment. Some of the planning policy areas I am involved in include responding to bushfire risk, planning for coastal adaptation, managing contaminated land and preventing land-use conflict. Working on planning responses to natural and built-environment hazards is about protecting human health and safety while promoting the liveability of our cities and regional areas.

I have been interested in Geography for as long as I can remember. When I was younger I was the (strange) kid who read the atlas cover to cover, and I loved looking at maps and creating them myself. Through school I was passionate about Geography, cities, travel and transport, but didn't realise there was a career perfectly suited to those interests until later into high school. Overseas travel furthered my interest in understanding the workings of cities and landscapes, and inspired me to pursue these interests at university.

I completed a Bachelor of Urban and Regional Planning (Honours) at RMIT University in Melbourne. This provided me with background in environmental sustainability, Geography, social policy and research, as well as practical knowledge of strategic and statutory planning mechanisms and policy implementation. Natural resource management and responding to climate change were key elements of the program.

As part of my work, I often need to interpret spatial data and analyse mapping. Broad knowledge of Geography is incredibly useful in planning for natural hazards such as bushfires and managing the use and development of land. Probably the most valuable lesson that Geography study has offered me is learning how to understand the world through its many layers – environmental, economic, social and cultural. This is crucial because, as a planner, you are often faced with many competing issues and need to balance these to achieve the best outcome. It's not always easy, but it's certainly not boring!



The future is bright for geographers looking to get into the field of urban and regional planning. Planners regularly deal with professionals across diverse fields, so the interdisciplinary skills that Geography study provides are a huge asset. With these skills also comes a wide range of available career pathways, so there are opportunities to find the right fit for you. Geographers in planning will be needed more and more to help understand and respond to some of the most pressing challenges we're facing, such as climate change and population growth. I'm lucky enough to work with experienced geographers across the department, including experts in risk assessment, GIS analysis and mapping.

Broadening Geography and other skills on the job remains important. My goal is to continue using these skills to have a positive impact on the urban and regional landscape we live in.