

# PUBLIC PLANNING INQUIRY



## ABSTRACT

The role play simulates a public planning inquiry through a role based case study. Participants learn to recognise and formulate a stakeholder perspective, and to critically evaluate the inclusiveness of a planning inquiry.

## KEYWORDS

Human Geography; Urban Planning; Community consultation; Stakeholder perspective

## CONTACT

Robyn Dowling, Department of Human Geography, Macquarie University  
[rdowling@els.mq.edu.au](mailto:rdowling@els.mq.edu.au)

## DESCRIPTION

The Public Planning Inquiry role play simulates a community consultation process based around a real-world urban development conflict. Students assume the role of stakeholders in the planning inquiry, conducting group research and discussions to formulate a stakeholder perspective. In the first stage they develop a formal written submission to a planning inquiry based around the current proposed redevelopment of Redfern – Waterloo (<http://www.redfernwaterloo.nsw.gov.au/>). In the second stage students adopt a critical perspective, evaluating the efficacy of the formal submission process as an example of community consultation.

## AUDIENCE/ GROUP SIZE

4 – 8 students per group. The Redfern – Waterloo role play was based around 8 stakeholder groups.

## LEARNING OPPORTUNITIES

The learning objectives of the Redfern – Waterloo role play are for students to develop and practice transferable skills, including:

- Ability to work effectively in a group in an online environment;
- Develop research skills, specifically using electronic databases and online resources;
- Identify and succinctly summarise a stakeholder perspective;
- Prepare a formal submission to a planning inquiry from the perspective of a specific stakeholder group;
- Critically evaluate the effectiveness and inclusiveness of a planning inquiry.

## TIME AND SETTING

The role play is the basis of a series of group and individual assessments for students enrolled in GEOS281 Managing our Cities, in the Department of Human Geography at Macquarie University. The role play runs for 6 weeks in the second half of the unit and is conducted entirely online.

## RESOURCES

The role play is conducted through the university's online Blackboard system which contains basic background materials and instructions for the role play, including a calendar of events. It also provides discussion boards and email facilities that are used for communication between members of the stakeholder

groups. Students additionally conduct independent online research using publicly available websites and research databases.

## ASSESSMENT

The role play is the basis of three assessments, comprising 35% of the unit's total mark. Assessments include group and individual components:

*Group components:*

1. Formal written submission to a planning inquiry that identifies and presents the stakeholders' perspective on the current state government Redfern Waterloo Planning Inquiry: (10%)
2. Peer assessment: (5%)

*Individual component:*

1. Essay that critically evaluates the planning inquiry conducted for the role play as an example of community consultation: (20%)

## LEARNING ACTIVITIES

*Stage 1.*

Students are allocated into stakeholder groups and begin to familiarise themselves with the Blackboard software and process of online group work, including formulating a plan for group work and allocating research roles. In this first stage groups conduct background research to understand (1) the role play context and (2) the perspective of their stakeholder. The Blackboard facility is used for group discussions and for students to post their individual research.

Groups submit a one page summary of their stakeholder perspective (not assessable).

*Stage 2.*

In stage 2 the facilitator announces a formal planning inquiry based around the Redfern – Waterloo development (<http://www.redfernwaterloo.nsw.gov.au/>). In stakeholder groups students expand on the research conducted in stage 1 to discuss their perspective on the proposed development and identify their groups' specific concerns.

Groups prepare and submit a formal written submission that identifies their stakeholder perspective and persuasively responds to specific issues in the Redfern-Waterloo plan.

*Stage 3.*

In this final stage students adopt the role of a professional planner to critically evaluate the efficacy of the formal submission process conducted for the role play as an example of community consultation. They use their knowledge of the proposed development and stakeholder groups to conduct online discussions using the Blackboard facility.

Students prepare and submit an individual assessment that critically evaluates the role play process and suggests alternative methods of community consultation. The assignment draws on the group discussions in addition to individual research of the relevant academic literature.

Students additionally submit a peer evaluation.

## FACILITATOR ISSUES

The convenor needs to actively moderate the group discussions to ensure all students participate.

## REUSABILITY

- The role play can be adapted to explore a range of urban planning issues as well as other public/community inquiry based processes.