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1 **Bordering on neglect: ‘environmental justice’ in Australian planning**

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19 **Bordering on neglect: ‘environmental justice’ in Australian planning**

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23 **Abstract**

24 Australian environmental justice research is limited, with scant planning literature on this
25 topic. The Planning Institute of Australia’s core business omits environmental justice
26 concerns. State and local governments are silent on the matter. Few Australian planners
27 would recognise the term. Yet the basic ideals behind environmental justice underpin the core
28 principles of accessibility, equity, social inclusion, and participatory democracy which, in
29 principle, inform Australian planning policies and practice. In this paper we begin the
30 important task of crossing the borders of ignorance to engage with environmental justice in
31 Australian planning. We review the US origins of the concept, discuss the processes behind
32 the formation of unjust environmental landscapes (built and organic), and overview some
33 contemporary Australian environmental justice issues warranting closer scrutiny. We
34 conclude by charting a research agenda and pointing to changes for planning practice. In so
35 doing, we seek to bridge borders across history, places, disciplines, scholarship and practice.

36

37

38 **Keywords:** environmental justice, land use planning, Australia, equity, urban development

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42 **Bordering on neglect: ‘environmental justice’ in Australian planning**

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45 **Introduction**

46 Australian planners have wrongly assumed they can protect urban residents from pollution by
47 designating some areas as sacrifice zones for noxious and polluting land uses (Troy, 2000, p.
48 142). The problem with such reductionist thinking (Haughton, 1999) is that marginalised and
49 vulnerable groups are typically relegated to places with low environmental quality (Forster,
50 2004; Gleeson and Randolph, 2002). These places may exhibit chronic air, water, noise, heat
51 and light pollution, substandard housing, higher crime rates, more liquor stores, poor quality
52 or absent fruit and vegetable markets and green-spaces, and can be flood-prone (James, 2009;
53 Laidlaw and Taylor, 2011; Giles-Corti et al., 2003). In Australia, such places are frequently
54 home to Indigenous people, migrants, working poor, homeless, welfare-dependent and other
55 vulnerable populations, partly because they cannot live elsewhere (Arcioni and Mitchell,
56 2005; Lloyd-Smith and Bell, 2003). This inequitable concentration of vulnerable people in
57 hazardous places is called *environmental injustice* (Low and Gleeson, 1998).

58 In the United States of America (US), activists have spent three decades combating
59 environmental inequalities and promoting ‘environmental justice’. This social movement has
60 been less influential in Australia. Australia lacks easily identifiable environmental justice
61 organisations and Australian planning has virtually ignored environmental injustice problems
62 (see Fincher and Iveson, 2012), partly because environmental health typically falls outside
63 the jurisdiction of planning (Lloyd-Smith and Bell, 2003). Australian land use planning
64 schemes lack environmental justice provisions; national and state environmental legislation is
65 similarly silent. State and local government planning departments have no environmental

66 justice bureaus. Few Australian universities teach their planning students about
67 environmental justice; awareness of the issue is not required for the accreditation of planning
68 degrees. Nonetheless, environmental injustices exist in Australia, injustices which spatially
69 reproduce and express inequality between socio-economic and socio-demographic groups.
70 Planning is often complicit in processes that create environmentally unjust outcomes.
71 Australian planning's failure to engage with environmental justice warrants attention.

72 In this paper we seek to better understand why Australian planning seemingly
73 neglects environmental justice concerns. We begin by explaining the concept of
74 environmental justice and briefly reviewing its US history, establishing Australian relevance.
75 We then consider planning's role in environmental justice issues internationally, discussing
76 socio-political processes that create environmental injustices, and giving Australian
77 examples. We examine Australian historical and contemporary environmental justice
78 problems, and how Australian planners have engaged with them. We conclude by identifying
79 opportunities for research and action. Limited space means we can only begin this
80 conversation.

81

82 **What is environmental (in)justice?**

83 Built and organic environments are highly differentiated between places, across scales, and
84 across time (Harvey, 1996). Environmental injustice refers to the inequitable spatial
85 distribution of environmental harms and benefits (Low and Gleeson, 1998) arising from land
86 and property development, unjust planning processes, uneven law enforcement, and limited
87 public participation in decision-making. Environmental justice specifically refers to the
88 concept that: "everyone has the right to inhabit clean, healthy and safe environments, and to
89 enjoy equal access to safe and healthy workplaces, schools, recreation areas and nutritious

90 food, irrespective of race, ethnicity, gender, class, disability and other ‘axes of difference’”
91 (Byrne, 2010). It is sometimes called ‘social justice environmentalism’ (Rose-Johnson, 1994)
92 and is allied with the idea of ‘just sustainabilities’ (Agyeman *et al.*, 2003).

93 Arising from the US Civil Rights Movement, environmental justice first grew to
94 prominence in the 1980s (Bullard, 1990). The movement began at the neighbourhood and
95 community scale when groups of African-Americans, Native Americans, Latinos and other
96 ‘people of colour’ protested the disproportionate concentration of unwanted land uses around
97 their homes, workplaces, schools, shopping places and recreation areas (Bullard, 1993).
98 These land uses included: polluting factories, landfill sites, waste incinerators, medical waste,
99 sewage treatment plants, toxic waste dumps, power stations, and cement batching plants
100 (Bullard, 1996). Rural areas exhibited other environmental problems, such as pesticide and
101 herbicide contamination, which disproportionately impacted migrant and non-White farm-
102 labourers (Arcury *et al.*, 2002; Perfecto, 1993). Affected people joined together with church
103 leaders and politicians of colour to form a powerful social movement which initiated
104 investigations into the spatial concentration of harmful land uses within non-White
105 communities, and began to catalogue instances of environmental discrimination (Bryant and
106 Bryant, 1995).

107 Studies by government and religious organisations such as the United States General
108 Accounting Office (1983) and the United Church (1987) found that so-called ‘minority’
109 communities were unequally burdened by environmental harm. These investigations
110 catalysed a vast research effort. The co-location of people of colour and environmental harm
111 became known as *environmental racism* (Pulido, 1996). Activists recognised that socio-
112 spatial environmental injustices stemmed from what US geographer Laura Pulido (2000)
113 termed ‘White privilege’. Pulido argued that Whites can use their privileged social status
114 (gained through ethno-racial systems of oppression) to secure better incomes, better

115 education, and political power, enabling them to occupy the highest quality environments
116 (e.g. near the ocean, on hilltops, next to forests and parks) and thus escape pollution, heat and
117 oftentimes natural hazards (Pulido *et al.*, 1996). In turn, many people of colour (non-Whites)
118 have been relegated to contaminated, hot, polluted and dangerous environments. Forster
119 (2004, p. 120) has noted similar patterns in Australia.

120 Class plays a role too. Research shows that pollution and hazards are often
121 disproportionately concentrated in places where poor people live (Holifield, 2001). Often
122 race and class are intertwined. In recent decades though, the environmental justice agenda has
123 expanded to embrace a broader definition of marginality and vulnerability, beyond race,
124 ethnicity and class, to include age, gender, disability, health-status and other axes of
125 difference (see Powell and Stewart, 2001; Walker, 2009).

126 Environmental injustice claims and environmental justice research have not escaped
127 criticism (Kevin, 1997). Early critiques focused on methods used to prove that co-location of
128 environmental harm and vulnerable people were more than coincidence (Boer *et al.*, 1997).
129 Later criticism focused on the scale chosen for environmental justice research, suggesting
130 that injustice was an artefact of the unit of analysis (e.g. neighbourhoods, postcodes, census
131 collection districts or regions) (Cutter *et al.*, 1996; Williams, 1999). However, researchers
132 and activists quickly demonstrated through improved methodologies across varying scales
133 that the co-location of vulnerable people and harmful places was real. A growing body of US
134 scholarship has since focused on the role of planning in creating and perpetuating
135 environmental injustices (e.g. Maantay, 2002; Sturm and Cohen, 2009; Wilson *et al.*, 2008),
136 revealing that different but interrelated processes can produce environmentally unjust
137 landscapes (Richardson *et al.*, 2010).

138

139 **Mechanisms of environmentally injustice**

140 Environmental justice research in the US and Europe has identified that injustices are
141 produced through various mechanisms (Wilson *et al.*, 2008). These mechanisms include:
142 intentional targeting, market factors, differential law enforcement, biased decision-making,
143 and limited opportunities for public participation (Byrne, 2010). Different conceptions of
144 justice are involved here – intentional targeting and market mechanisms invoke ideas of
145 *distributive* justice; differential law enforcement and biased decision-making raise issues of
146 *procedural* justice; and a lack of public participation suggests that *participatory* justice is
147 absent (Low, 2000).

148

149 *Intentional targeting*

150 Planning has been implicitly and often explicitly involved in the siting of unwanted land uses
151 (National Academy of Public Administration, 2003). Researchers have found examples
152 where planners, policy makers, developers and public officials have collaborated to locate
153 unwanted and toxic facilities in neighbourhoods occupied by disproportionately higher
154 numbers of marginalised and vulnerable people. In one example well known to planning
155 scholarship, a grassroots group called the Mothers of East Los Angeles (MELA) successfully
156 resisted an attempt to site a waste incinerator in their community (see Sandercock, 1998).
157 Document searches revealed that their neighbourhood was targeted for this facility because it
158 was thought residents would offer lower resistance than political powerful, White
159 communities (Bullard, 1999; Schlosberg, 1999).

160 The other side of this coin is malign neglect, where planners, politicians, policy
161 makers and decision makers intentionally disregard marginalised and vulnerable
162 communities. In Los Angeles, a transit-racism case was brought before the courts and

163 succeeded, when the Bus Riders Union successfully demonstrated that the Metropolitan
164 Transportation Authority had allocated its oldest and most polluting buses to poor and
165 coloured inner-city neighbourhoods, whereas new cleaner buses and new light-rail
166 infrastructure were provided to wealthier, White, suburban communities (Burgos and Pulido,
167 1998; Martin, 2005). In Australia, limited service provision and substandard infrastructure in
168 remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander settlements is an example of malign neglect
169 (Green et al., 2012).

170

171 *Market mechanisms*

172 Many environmental justice studies have sought to document ‘which came first’ – the
173 polluting facilities or the vulnerable people (Been, 1994). A ‘market effect’ appears to
174 operate in some cases. For example, property values are lower around unwanted land uses,
175 such as mining and smelting activities in Mount Isa, Queensland (Neelawala et al., 2012).
176 Marginalised and vulnerable people, who are attracted by more affordable housing in these
177 locales, can become spatially concentrated near polluting facilities and contaminated sites
178 (Pastor Jr. et al., 2001; Richardson et al., 2010). Market mechanisms can also operate to
179 ‘price people out’ of neighbourhoods when unwanted land uses or environmental
180 contaminants are removed, either by natural attrition or through planning intervention, as in
181 the case of urban redevelopment projects (Gamper-Rabindran and Timmins, 2011).

182 As an instrument of capitalist governance, planning is complicit in many of the
183 political-economic processes that cause environmental injustices (Wilson et al., 2008;
184 Arcioni and Mitchell, 2005). For instance, urban renewal projects may ‘clean up’ degraded,
185 urban land to facilitate redevelopment for high-end apartments, housing, shopping and
186 entertainment. Seldom is attention given to the consequences of displacing populations who

187 once occupied these spaces (Searle and Byrne, 2002). In their study of the impact of the East
188 Perth Redevelopment Project in Perth for example, Byrne and Houston (2005) found that
189 Aboriginal people, migrants and low-income earners were displaced as redevelopment
190 occurred – even though they bore the burden of decades of pollution. Some may argue that
191 planners have limited capacity to strongly intervene in property markets (Gleeson and
192 Coiacetto, 2007) and thus cannot be held responsible for injustices arising from property
193 markets. Yet the spatial concentration of vulnerable people in hazardous places is inequitable.
194 Surely planners have a duty of care to prevent such harm.

195

196 *Differential law enforcement*

197 Environmental justice problems can also occur when planning laws are not applied
198 uniformly. Researchers have shown that planning and environmental agencies may take
199 longer to respond to nuisance complaints in poor and coloured neighbourhoods compared to
200 wealthier, White, and politically powerful neighbourhoods (Bryant and Bryant, 1995; Bullard
201 and Johnson, 2000; Shapiro, 2005). It is also more difficult for marginalised and vulnerable
202 people to pursue legal action because they may: lack the financial wherewithal; be politically
203 marginalised; or fear retribution if they raise a complaint (Bullard, 1993, 1996).
204 Consequently, some companies can evade environmental regulation in vulnerable
205 communities, which they cannot do elsewhere (Mennis, 2005).

206 Coal mining in the Hunter Valley, NSW is arguably an Australian example.
207 Cumulative airborne particulate levels in the Hunter Valley can significantly exceed health
208 standards, despite individual mine-sites complying with regulated air quality. Higginbotham
209 et al., (2010, p. 260) suggest that authorities have done little to remedy this situation because

210 many communities in the Hunter Valley are comparatively disadvantaged ‘in terms of
211 income, education, access to services and lack of electoral power’.

212

213 *Biased decision-making*

214 Callewaert (2002) has argued that environmental justice is a “socio-historical process.” In the
215 United States, housing discrimination practices (e.g. racially restrictive covenants) and the
216 failure of permitting agencies to monitor the compliance history of facilities and their
217 cumulative pollution impacts, has disproportionately impacted people of colour (Callewaert,
218 2002). In a similar fashion, Pulido, et al. (1996) argue that deep-rooted patterns of socio-
219 spatial exclusion have underpinned historical town-planning in Los Angeles. They found
220 neighbourhoods zoned exclusively for residential purposes were located near the ocean and in
221 hilly areas (above air pollution) and were occupied primarily by wealthier Whites. Places
222 zoned for industries and polluting land uses were located inland, alongside neighbourhoods
223 occupied predominantly by Latinos and African-Americans.

224 As we shall show in our historical review of environmental justice in Australia,
225 similar patterns of decision-making may have shaped places such as Kwinana in Western
226 Australia and Elizabeth in South Australia. During the 1960s, public housing agencies
227 constructed housing in close proximity to newly developed outer metropolitan heavy
228 industrial estates – spatially concentrating working class people in areas of higher pollution,
229 many of whom were southern European migrants (Forster, 2004; Randolph, 2004).

230

231 *Limited public participation*

232 Power relations and decision-making processes within lending institutions, corporations, and
233 enforcement agencies can favour the interests of elites over others, leading to

234 environmentally unjust outcomes. The interests of marginalised communities can be
235 subordinated to those of powerful corporations and landholders, not only through choice, bias
236 and markets – as noted above, but because the voices of the vulnerable are simply not heard.
237 Kurtz (2007) for example, considered citizen participation in planning decision-making
238 processes in New Orleans. She found inadequate public involvement excluded marginalised
239 and vulnerable communities, contributing directly to the concentration of vulnerable people
240 in hazardous places – not just in flood-prone areas and in poor quality housing, but also
241 alongside polluting factories and waste storage areas (also see Fielding and Burningham,
242 2005; Maantay and Maroko, 2009). Even in cases where ‘public’ participation is actively
243 sought (an acknowledged trend of the last few decades), most common planning strategies for
244 doing this appear to heavily favour those with good financial resources, knowledge, and
245 political networks, that is, wealthier educated classes (Rydin and Pennington, 2000).

246 In Australia, Lane (1997) and Moran (2004) have found that planning systems and
247 planning education ill-equip planners for managing effective Aboriginal and Torres Strait
248 Islander participation in environmental planning and natural resource management. Through
249 detailed case studies of planning in Mapoon, Queensland and in the Queensland wet tropics,
250 these two scholars show how Indigenous involvement in planning has been either cursory and
251 transitory, or worse still insensitive, ignorant, and ultimately exclusionary. Tan et al. (2012)
252 argue that similar problems plague planning for coal seam gas extraction in Condamine,
253 Queensland. They argue that public involvement in decision-making about mining impacts is
254 negligible, despite potentially environmentally unjust outcomes for rural communities.

255

256 **Historical Australian environmental justice issues**

257 As we noted at the beginning of this paper, comparatively little has been written about
258 environmental justice in Australia. Nevertheless, an examination of Australian literature
259 about historical patterns of pollution and immigration suggests that mechanisms similar to
260 those described above also appear to have shaped environmental inequality in Australian
261 cities.

262 From the nineteenth century until the mid-twentieth century, industries tended to be
263 located in inner city areas in Australia, clustering around rail transportation and ports (Logan,
264 1966). Housing was more affordable closer to industrial areas, but of lower quality (Lewis
265 and MacLeod, 1987). In Australia, inner city and suburban industrial areas at this time were
266 contaminated with a range of environmental pollutants – some of which could readily be
267 dispersed to surrounding residential areas, and which we now know are associated with
268 increased morbidity and mortality (Simpson *et al.*, 2007; Wang *et al.*, 2009).

269 Working-class residential areas were often located close to noxious industries
270 including: tanneries, wool scouring, soap, candle and brick making, paint manufacturing,
271 furniture manufacturing, gas works, blubber rendering, lumber mills, breweries, abattoirs,
272 smelters, fertilizer production, and textile manufacturing (Cushing, 2009; Zierer, 1942).
273 Moreover, steam-driven rail transportation generated smoke, ash, particulates and carbon
274 monoxide, later to be replaced by particulates from diesel engines. These pollutants were
275 readily dispersed to nearby working-class residential areas. By the middle of the twentieth
276 century, inner-city industries included oil refining, asbestos products manufacturing, tyre
277 manufacturing, chemical production, food production, steel refining and production of
278 electrical goods, and impacted on lower-income communities (*op. cit.*).

279 Mid-century, industries began decentralising into suburban areas specifically zoned
280 for light or heavy industrial development. Lead pollution was common, especially in paint
281 manufacturing. Until unleaded petrol was mandated in Australia, highways and other

282 transportation corridors also exhibited relatively high levels of lead pollution (Laidlaw and
283 Taylor, 2011; Simpson and Xu, 1994). Furniture production and goods manufacturing
284 generated volatile organic compounds. Manufacturing of goods and chemicals also produced
285 soil and water contamination, typically from chromium, arsenic, boron, copper, among other
286 pollutants. Noxious odours from wastewater treatment plants and sulphur dioxide from power
287 stations also impacted working-class residential areas (Tiller, 1992). The paradox of
288 development at this time is that as heavy industries decentralised into specially designated
289 industrial zones on the outskirts of cities, workers followed – often living nearby in public
290 housing. Suburbs like Kwinana, Western Australia and Elizabeth, South Australia are
291 examples.

292 Class was a notable environmental border in Australian society at this time. Until the
293 Second World War, it was mostly poor Whites, and to some extent Indigenous groups, who
294 lived in pollution-prone urban areas. The White Australia Policy, which operated until the
295 mid-1960s and was not fully disbanded until the early 1970s, was a significant racial border –
296 it meant that ethno-racial discrimination in land use planning was focused on Aboriginal
297 populations (Grimes, 1993). Until the late 1960s, Aboriginal people were subject to spatial
298 segregation policies and curfews, and often lived in remote reserves or ‘town camps’ near
299 unwanted land uses such as landfill sites (Byrne, 2003; Jackson, 2012; Taylor, 2008).
300 Aboriginal concerns about traditional practices and cultural sites lay outside the ‘proper’
301 scope of environmental governance. Following the Second World War though, the Australian
302 immigration literature shows that ethnicity became a new environmental border.

303 From the 1950s, ethnicity played a growing role in Australian experiences of
304 environmental inequality, as large numbers of low-skilled southern European immigrant
305 groups (Greeks, Italians, Maltese and Yugoslavians) became spatially concentrated in inner

306 city areas with dilapidated housing and nearby industries (Burnley, 1971).¹ Higher-skilled
307 non-Anglo immigrants were also spatially concentrated, but more often near the newer
308 suburban industrial estates (Burnley, 1986, 1999). Both migrant groups worked
309 predominantly in industrial and manufacturing jobs but there is little evidence showing that
310 pollution exposure translated into higher mortality; some even suggest that better diets among
311 southern European immigrants groups may have offset some impacts of environmental
312 pollution (Young, 1987).

313 Following the Vietnam War, race played an increasing role in environmental
314 inequality. Large numbers of Asian (Vietnamese and Chinese) immigrants became spatially
315 concentrated in Australian inner city areas, often close to polluting land uses. From the mid-
316 1980s they were joined by Middle-Eastern immigrants from Lebanon and Turkey, who were
317 similarly segregated. Public housing policies meant that these new immigrants were
318 frequently relegated to poorly serviced, higher density locations, oftentimes with obsolete and
319 dilapidated infrastructure (Burnley, 1998). While this new wave of migration coincided with
320 structural economic forces that led to deindustrialization and a downturn in manufacturing,
321 new immigrants were nonetheless exposed to a range of environmental harms such as air
322 pollution from heavy traffic and light industries (e.g. automotive repairs, automotive painting,
323 dry cleaning and metal plating), soil contamination from past industries, exposure to asbestos,
324 and lead paint in older, low quality housing (Murphy, 1993). Yet evidence suggests that some
325 immigrant groups (including Indians, Indonesians, Malaysians, Filipinos and Taiwanese) may
326 have achieved higher social mobility and better environmental quality, thus transcending the
327 ethno-racial border in environmental harm (Burnley, 1998; Zang, 2000).

328

¹ Following the conventions of critical race theory, we take race to refer to purported physiognomic differences between individuals whereas ethnicity refers to purported difference on the basis of religion, culture, language etc. (see Omi, M. & Winant, H., 1994). Both are social constructs; there is no biological basis to race.

329 **Contemporary Australian environmental justice challenges**

330 The dynamic nature of Australian cities may partly explain Australian planners' slow to
331 response to environmental justice issues. When environmental justice was rising to
332 prominence in the United States during the 1980s, Australian cities were in a state of flux.
333 Locations that were being contested as sites of environmental injustice in the US were being
334 remediated and redeveloped in Australia. Factories were progressively relocated from the
335 urban core to special-purpose industrial estates on the metropolitan periphery, so pollution
336 levels began to decline in the inner city. And with de-industrialisation, which began in the
337 1970s, came improvement of sorts (Fagan, 1986).

338 During the late 1980s and early 1990s, under the aegis of the Commonwealth
339 Building Better Cities Program, specially commissioned government redevelopment
340 agencies, supervised pollution remediation and facilitated redevelopment in inner city locales.
341 Former inner city rail yards and industrial areas were assembled into large land holdings for
342 upper income housing (Forster, 2004). Previous residents who included the poor, migrants,
343 Aboriginal people and the working class were displaced in the process (Byrne and Houston,
344 2005; Searle and Byrne, 2002). Areas developed to serve light manufacturing and service
345 industries in suburban locations came under severe financial stress (Randolph, 2004). Some
346 of these housing estates like Kwinana, Western Australia and Mitchell Park, Adelaide, were
347 subsequently semi-privatised and sold off by state government housing agencies, diluting the
348 spatial concentration of vulnerability (Forster, 2004).

349 New areas of disadvantage have formed within Australian cities in the twenty-first
350 century – on the suburban periphery. Marginalised and vulnerable residents are now spatially
351 concentrated away from easy access to public transportation. In an era of rising oil
352 vulnerability, they are isolated from essential services and increasingly dependent on the
353 private automobile (Dodson and Sipe, 2007). New forms of environmental inequality have

354 emerged too. Researchers have identified various contemporary issues that constitute
355 environmental justice problems in Australian cities, including: access to green-space (Byrne
356 *et al.*, 2010), food deserts (Burns and Inglis, 2007), and obesogenic environments (Giles-
357 Corti *et al.*, 2003). Some old problems persist; they too are receiving increasing scrutiny,
358 including: childhood lead poisoning (Laidlaw and Taylor, 2011), exposure to asbestos
359 (Hunter and LaMontagne, 2008), exposure to particulates from coal mining (Higginbotham *et*
360 *al.*, 2010) and exposure to persistent organic industrial pollutants (Arcioni and Mitchell,
361 2005; Brown, 2009; James, 2009; Lloyd-Smith and Bell, 2003). A compelling new
362 environmental justice issue in Australian cities is the disproportionate impact of climate
363 change (e.g. heatwaves, flooding) on marginalised and vulnerable communities; some
364 adaptation measures may even have pernicious consequences (Gross, 2007; Steele *et al.*,
365 2012).

366

367 **Conclusions: How should Australian planners respond to environmental (in)justice?**

368 Environmental justice emerged from the US Civil Rights movement in the 1980s. Although
369 Australian planning systems have a long history of engaging with ideas and ideals of social
370 justice (Fincher and Iveson, 2012), Australian planners have been late to act on
371 environmental justice issues. This is partly because environmental quality management
372 emerged slowly in Australia, and partly because environmental health issues like air pollution
373 only began to be regulated during the mid-twentieth century, mostly outside the jurisdiction
374 of planning (Cushing, 2009; Trumbull, 1972).

375 Australian planners have made some efforts to engage with environmental protection
376 and management, but have tended to regard environmental health as outside their control
377 (Cleary, 1969). Social justice and environmental protection have thus been treated as separate
378 concerns. While there are Australian environmental justice researchers, they are based in the

379 disciplines of law, medicine, public health, environmental management, public administration
380 and environmental science – not planning. Moreover, the connections between these
381 disciplines have received far less attention in Australian planning, presenting a significant
382 border to be surmounted.

383 Environmental justice requires a holistic approach to planning, crossing the ‘borders’
384 of class, ethnicity, place, environmental quality, services and amenity – and this is the
385 challenge currently facing Australian planners. Yet there are promising signs that an
386 environmental justice research agenda has begun to emerge in Australia, and Australian
387 planning may slowly be awakening to the importance of this issue (Environmental Defenders
388 Office Victoria, 2012; Gleeson and Memon, 1994; Harris *et al.*, 2009). The task ahead is how
389 to incorporate international environmental justice experiences into Australian planning
390 systems, practice and scholarship, and cross disciplinary silos and boundaries of ignorance
391 and neglect.

392 An obvious step would be to follow the US lead and enact federal legislation to
393 protect marginalised and vulnerable people from environmental injustices. The Planning
394 Institute of Australia (PIA) could also integrate environmental justice issues into its
395 accreditation process for Australian planning degrees – especially around planning for
396 Indigenous communities. Practitioners and scholars could use PIA as a vehicle to lobby local,
397 state and federal governments to develop environmental justice guidelines, policies and
398 scheme provisions. Identifying examples of best practice would also be a good start.
399 Obviously more work lies ahead if Australian planners are to cross the boundary from passive
400 and/or complicit observers of injustice to becoming advocates for environmental equity.

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