



Peter Skelton

**NZPI® Honorary Membership Award
31st August 2017**

The New Zealand Planning Institute (NZPI) is pleased to grant Peter Skelton Honorary Membership of the Institute.

The Institute acknowledges Peter's earlier statutory planning and Environment Court activities from 1978 to 2000 and the previous awards made to recognize those contributions to planning.

The Honorary Membership goes further to recognise Peter's sixty years of legal, environmental, and resource management experience including his more recent contributions to planning practice, plan development and plan implementation. Most particularly these contributions have been demonstrated over the past sixteen years in his lectures at Lincoln University (2000-2007) and in his lead role as a commissioner/councillor for the Canterbury Regional Council (ECan) (2010 -2017).

Peter was for 10 years a partner in a legal firm from the mid1960s to the mid1970s and, following general legal practice, became a barrister specialising in planning and environmental law. He was appointed a Judge of the New Zealand Environment Court in 1978. The following 22 years saw him preside over many significant cases in many parts of the country.

Amongst these were the noteworthy cases of the Clyde High Dam and the River Conservation orders for the Buller, Ahuriri, Maitai, Rakaia and, Kaitiaki Rivers. He also presided over the Doubtful Sound water export proposal, the Christchurch Metropolitan refuse landfill development and the Christchurch Northern Arterial. More recently as an Independent Hearing Commissioner he chaired the hearings on the Waikato Regional Plan Variation 5 proposals to establish a planning regime to control the loss of nitrates into Lake Taupo. The Lower Waitaki Valley hydro-electric proposal hearings were also in his care.

As a Judge in these Environment Court cases and managing statutory planning appeal processes he earned the respect and acknowledgement of his peers, friends and colleagues in both the legal and planning professions, and his care and attention was appreciated by all participants

(appellants, applicants or submitters) in the cases under his authority. His work was recognised in 2000 when Peter was awarded the New Zealand Planning Institute's Alfred O. Glasse Award. Furthermore, Peter's contribution to environmental law, resource management and planning was nationally recognised in 2001 when he was made a Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit.

Peter's current sixteen year phase of working directly in the areas of planning for natural resources began in 2001 when, in recognition of his explicit concerns for access to justice in the determination of these natural resource issues, he was appointed as the first chair of the Environmental Legal Assistance Fund Advisory Panel for the Ministry for the Environment. He filled that role for six years.

In 2000 Peter was appointed an Associate Professor at Lincoln University so contributing to training and education of students. On his retirement in 2008 Lincoln University awarded him the position of Honorary Professor. As recently as 2016 he also received the Honorary Degree of Doctor of Natural Resources from Lincoln University.

NZPI Honorary Membership recognises his planning work and its influence on the content and format of the Canterbury Land and Water Regional Plan and the Canterbury Air Regional Plan. Peter was involved as a member of the team undertaking the development of the complex, catchment by catchment policy framework, leading up to the notification of these instruments. Then, as a commissioner/councillor receiving and responding to the recommendations of the independent hearing commissioners. His commissioner/councillor role of overseeing such a major regional planning exercise has been undertaken in a collaborative, even handed and professional manner. All involved, be they technical officers, community groups, councillors or commissioners have respected his open commitment and wisdom shown in this path-finding project.

In 2010 when the Environment Canterbury Councillors were dismissed by the Government and commissioners were appointed to undertake all the regional councils functions in accordance with the special legislation, Peter Skelton successfully performed the functions of a commissioner while also being a key adviser to the Canterbury Regional Council. This has resulted in more successful outcomes for the range of regional functions now being undertaken by Environment Canterbury and is reflected in his continuing contribution following his renewed appointment as a councillor in 2016.

During his professional career Peter has also contributed to many other institutions. He was one of the founders of the Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand (EIANZ) and its first Vice President (New Zealand). He has also been a member of the International Bar Association (Committee F Environmental Law). He has presented papers and participated in international conferences in Washington DC on mining law; Hobart University on enforcement; and Montreux in Switzerland on enforcement.

In New Zealand he has presented many papers on planning and resource management issues at legal and other professional conferences and been guest speaker at a number of functions involving environmental professionals. He has also written numerous articles and commentaries for peer reviewed journals.

His previous professional affiliations and awards include being an Honorary Life Member of the Resource Management Law Association of New Zealand and also the Legal Research Foundation of New Zealand. In 2012 he was awarded the Principal Judge R J Bollard Lifetime Commemorative Award by the Resource Management Law Association for an exemplary contribution to the field of resource management theory and practice over a lengthy and distinguished career as a practicing lawyer.

Peter's core respect for the law, for the environment and his support for effective and relevant planning are evident in all his professional dealings. His quiet manner extends a friendly co-operation to all in the technical, professional, political and community identities involved in these programmes. He has shown a willingness to undertake extraordinarily difficult and at times new path finding planning techniques. He has progressed the prudent management of the Canterbury Regional Council's research, reporting and programmes so as to maintain regionally based strategies and environmental standards.

Peter's experience reflects the essence of the NZPI Constitution's five key Goals and his actions have fostered the Constitution's accompanying seven working Objectives.

Peter Skelton has travelled a long way in his sixty year professional pilgrimage. A journey that began as a lawyer and over time through specialising in planning and environmental law, has become an ever increasing concern for conservation and the environment, and in particular the planning processes that protect and provide for them. He continues that extraordinary career in the role of a regional councillor. This range of experience is unique and it is fitting that he be a full member of both the legal profession and the planning profession. Consequently, the NZPI Board has resolved that Peter Skelton should join the small group of distinguished members and become the seventh Honorary Member of the New Zealand Planning Institute.

Planning is a valued profession, essential to achieving a better New Zealand

New Zealand Planning Institute (NZPI) is the voice of planning in New Zealand. It is the professional organisation representing this country's planners, resource managers, urban designers, and environmental practitioners. Planners have a critical role in shaping New Zealand's future by helping to develop solutions to key issues, such as population growth, infrastructure needs, pressure on natural resources and environments, demographic change and transport.

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