

NZPI Canterbury – Westland Branch 2020 AGM: Chairpersons Report

When I took on the role as Chair, I set myself three main objectives. Firstly encourage experienced planners to become full members of the NZPI; secondly continue to build an effective partnership with the Lincoln University Planning School, and thirdly to increase to level of engagement with our colleagues on the West Coast. I feel there is still a long way to go to meet the first objective, especially with planners whose tasks evolve around resource consent processing and for whom the strategic nature of planning becomes a distant memory from planning school (if they went there). I don't really have an answer to this other than to continue promoting the importance of being a Full Member.

Having the Lincoln Planning School in our area is a tremendous asset for the local planning profession particularly for recruitment and knowledge transfer (both ways). Suz Vallance attends the Branch Committee meetings, and is also on the Conference Organising Committee so the communication channels are there. The Emerging Planners organised a great evening with the current students who presented their research topics. I think a focus for next year should be on more active partnership in for example promoting planning as a career, and providing more support through the Lincoln University Planning Advisory Board.

Regarding the third objective I acknowledge the efforts of Alyce Melrose in maintaining contact with planners on the West Coast. I urge the incoming committee to continue to engage with and support Alyce to ensure our colleagues on the other side of the Alps have the opportunities they need to enhance their planning skills have access to any support they need and eventually become Full Members of NZPI.

There were some excellent events this year including the Senior Planners' Breakfasts where we hosted Dawn Baxendale (organised by Melanie Foote and Clare Piper) and the joint Xmas function with RMLA (thanks to Mark Stevenson). We also hosted the NZPI Chief Executive David Curtis to explain upcoming changes to the Constitution. Melanie also arranged a tour around the Arts Centre which was a fascinating experience.

The next couple of years promise to be a very busy but exciting period for our local planners. Irrespective of the outcome of the General Election, the review of the RMA, in whatever form it takes, will be near the top of the political agenda. This will be a once in a lifetime opportunity (for most planners anyway) to show some leadership in developing whatever new legislation emerges.

The 2021 National Conference at Te Pae was to be the highlight but has now been postponed to 2022. I am sure Clare Piper and her team will use the extra time to refine a few things make the Conference an even better event.

I would like to use this opportunity to say a special thanks to our Secretary Jess Bould for the countless hours she has put into her role. A special thanks also to Adele Radburn our diligent treasurer, Melanie Foote, Clare Piper for the support they have given me, to Alice Burnett for her outstanding work with the Emerging Planners and all the Committee generally for their contribution over the past year.

I also would like to acknowledge the sad passing of Professor Ali Memon late last year. I, along with a large number of Branch members, attended a memorial service for Ali at Lincoln which was a very humbling experience for all of those present. His immense contribution to NZs planning profession will be with us for many years to come.

It is broadly known that I am retiring from the City Council in mid- April (17th to be precise) and while still considering my future options in planning generally, I will be still taking an active interest in the profession. I would like to wish the Branch all the best over the coming years and, as I will not be seeking re-election, wish my successor (Duncan Whyte in the interim) and the new committee well.

Ivan Thomson