

Opening Session Introductions

Welcome: Associate Professor Tom Fookes to NZAIA Conference.

Mihi: Rev Maurice Gray

Karakia followed by waiata - "*Ko Tenei Te Wa*"

Opening of Conference: Dr Bruce Hucker

Dr Hucker said that he had just come from a meeting with a British Cabinet Minister. In Europe, impact assessment was becoming much more prominent with social exclusion and inclusion being taken into account more formally. In the NZ context, we were developing more competence in impact assessment but it still needed to be performed with more vigour at local and central government levels.

Dr Hucker said he was reminded of an Auckland City policy initiative a few years ago to privatise their housing stock. The Council officer responsible for the social assessment did not consult with residents, and only took information from Council records and other officers. Dr Hucker and others from the Planning Department then undertook a more comprehensive survey. Their social impact assessment was developed by:

- listening to the stories of residents and what they thought would be the likely impacts;
- looking at whether residents' fears of adverse impacts were justified.

It was concluded that there would be significant negative impacts if the Council continued to pursue that particular policy.

In a broader context, social assessment is multi-disciplinary in approach and rests on the values of a pluralistic society. It takes account of peoples' values and attitudes and of the historical dimension. The Council's housing policy had taken no notice of these dimensions. The Treaty of Waitangi is also important in the New Zealand context. Impact assessment is a form of action research and hence a form of political activity. Analysis can empower groups of people. The ethical dimension is very important - impact assessment depends on an ethical framework. It is important not only to minimise harm but also for building a broader vision of respect for the person and for social justice.

Dr. Hucker said he hoped these issues would be addressed in the session on regional growth tomorrow, and that he was delighted to open the conference.

Panel Discussion and Opening Keynote Session

Chair of session: Ken Tremaine, Consultant planner and policy analyst, KPMG

Key Note Speaker: Professor Ian Shirley, Professor of Social Policy Massey University (Albany campus).

Panellists

- Reverend Maurice Gray, Chairperson of the indigenous people's committee of the IAIA, former member of Resource Management Institute at Lincoln, former director of Maori Resource Centre at Lincoln.
- Wiremu (Bill) Kapea, resource management advisor to Ngati Whatua hapu.
- Rev Dr Bruce Hucker - Deputy Mayor, Auckland City, Senior Lecturer, Planning Department, University of Auckland.

Ken Tremaine, in introducing the opening session, said the conference provided interesting opportunities to improve impact assessment techniques. One of the questions that many people at the conference would be asking was what implications the election of last week might have for the practice of impact assessment in New Zealand. He observed that as part of his preparations for participating in the conference he scanned the websites of all of the major political parties to see what they had to say on policy regarding impact assessment. Within the winning political coalition, he observed that the Labour party web site enunciated a view on the role of impact assessment in government, the Alliance Party site did not have stated policy, whereas the Green Party site had much to say about environmental assessment.

Professor Ian Shirley was then introduced as a practical and applied community worker of many years standing; a key adviser to Government, a practitioner; an international thought leader; and currently Professor of Social Policy at Albany campus.