

NZAIA Convenor's Report 2009

Over the last 12 months the Association has continued to consolidate its new, stripped down, look with the focus on the annual conference, and exploration of ways to strengthen our profile, develop links, and look for new opportunities to promote impact assessment.

The suggested location for the 2009 meeting came from new participants at the Nelson conference, and there was strong support to take the meeting to the Bay of Plenty. Organisation of the meeting has been smoother than in 2008, but we are probably still struggling to get early and meaningful publicity in front of the potential conference participants. However, we've benefited from a larger core group, with most members involved in conference organisation in one form or another and in my role as convenor I'd like to thank them on behalf of the Association: Sarah Cotterill, Christine Cheyne, Rob Greenaway, Julie Meade-Rose, James Newell, Hamish Rennie, Nick Taylor, Anna Wolterbeek and James Baines.

Following discussion at the last AGM, I made contact with Tom Burkitt, who heads the New Zealand chapter of the Environmental Institute of Australia and New Zealand (EIANZ) to continue the process of strengthening our links with that organisation. Tom and I had a long phone call, wide ranging in content, and very positive in terms of both organisations keen to have closer links. We have agreed to look for ways to improve communication about our respective events and activities, and to co-ordinate planning of meetings, etc. to avoid clashes or duplication of effort. One immediate outcome was that I was copied into the email discussion on draft Ecological Impact Assessment Guidelines then being developed by the Ecology section of EIANZ (a draft of which was circulated at the Intecol conference in Brisbane in August). It would be useful in the near future for two or three of us to meet Tom in Christchurch and take the conversations forward, perhaps to identify specific steps to bring the two organisations closer together in areas of mutual interest.

Last year I had high hopes for increased NZAIA involvement in Pacific impact assessment activities during 2009. However, the programme of training, and support meetings, that were envisaged a year ago by the SPREP Environment Officer did not take place, due to internal funding decisions. Hopefully we will be able to continue building Pacific linkages next year.

In the last report I foreshadowed an NZAIA contribution to the 3rd Asia-Pacific HIA conference, then planned for early 2010. However, shortly after the last AGM the Ministry of Health withdrew its offer to provide major funding for the conference. Since then the HIA Research Unit (Wellington School of Medicine, Uni Otago)¹ has taken on the task of organising the conference, though on a much more modest basis. Current thinking is to run the conference next November (possibly 17-19th Nov) on the Dunedin campus of the University of Otago. The International Association for Impact Assessment (IAIA) have agreed in principle to provide the main administrative support for the conference (registrations, international publicity, web support, etc.) leaving local organisers to focus on programme management and local logistics. The theme of the conference would be "making HIA work", focusing on the practical measures that can be taken to produce more effective HIAs. One aspect of this is working more effectively with the wider impact assessment community, especially social and cultural impact assessment practitioners, and this is an opportunity for NZAIA to play a role in the conference. District health board staff, for example, are often keen to use HIA but

¹ I am a member of that Unit, along with Louise Signal and Rob Quigley; Martin Ward is an associate member

have little experience of project level impact assessment processes under the RMA, and NZAIA could help develop sessions to address this issue.

The AGM might wish to discuss whether NZAIA should commit effort and resources to this conference; it may mean, for example, there is no separate NZAIA meeting next year.

On an unrelated topic, it was my pleasure to attend the IAIA AGM in Accra earlier in the year when our own Nick Taylor took over the full Presidency of the Association for the following 12 months. New Zealand members of IAIA continue to be prominent in the Association, being involved in committees at all levels of the organisation, being active in the various sections, organising sessions and workshops, etc. Having Nick as President is a source of pride for all the NZ members, and indeed for NZAIA.

Finally, my thanks to an enlarged and busy Core Group this year: we have benefited greatly from fresh views and fresh energy, and with more people involved it has been easier to hold teleconferences in the knowledge that a reasonable number will be available at any nominated time. It also makes workloads easier as we can spread tasks across a larger number of willing hands. And Jamie Newell again deserves special thanks for continuing the good fight to get our accounting systems in order, and generally keeping NZAIA operating as a registered charitable NGO.

Richard Morgan Convenor, NZAIA

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