



NEW ZEALAND ASSOCIATION FOR IMPACT ASSESSMENT (NZAIA)  
Annual Conference: 24<sup>th</sup>-25<sup>th</sup> Nov 2011,  
Lincoln University, Christchurch

## Natural disasters: impact assessment for sustainable recovery

Following natural disasters such as the Canterbury Earthquakes in September 2010 and February 2011, impact assessment can play two particular roles. One is to identify the diverse social, economic, environmental and health impacts that follow from the more obvious and immediate physical impacts. The second is to help inform options and decisions about reconstruction activities.

After the immediate needs of damage assessment and emergency response, the approach of impact assessment encourages us in the weeks after a disaster to look beyond negative social impacts such as loss of lives, homes and livelihoods (rescue and recovery) toward stronger and more sustainable communities in the future (rebuild and adapt). It helps build strength and resilience in local communities by providing a participatory framework for their input and helps to reinforce trust between communities and layers of government, by supporting informed decision-making that recognises the wider implications of policies, plans and projects. It is vital to develop a strategic approach to understanding and managing impacts rather than falling back on a “business-as-usual” mentality. This strategic approach encourages flexibility and the prior assessment of options from a variety of perspectives and then requires the progressive evaluation of outcomes (interim and cumulative), so that decision makers and affected groups can learn and adapt as the future unfolds.

As with previous NZAIA conferences, we are inviting a variety of speakers (planners, policy makers, consultants, academics) to discuss case studies and practical approaches to assessing the impacts of natural disasters on environmental systems and on the social, economic, cultural and environmental wellbeing of people and communities. With Christchurch as a primary case study, the focus will be on how we assess impacts of all types, from ecological and physical, to social, cultural, and health, in a way that recognises the integrated nature of human and natural systems. The scope of the conference also includes the strategic assessment of reconstruction policies and plans, as well as the assessment of specific response and recovery projects, and of cumulative effects. Community and iwi perspectives are emphasised, to complement the views and approaches of national, regional, and local authorities.

The conference will be of interest to anyone involved in planning for and making decisions about urban recovery and reconstruction following a natural disaster, and environmental planning and management that recognises natural hazards and increases resilience and sustainability at the local and regional level (including government agencies, policy planners and consents officers in local and regional councils), iwi, environmental and public health staff, environmental consultants, academics, and local community groups.

### ***Conference venue:***

Lincoln University, Christchurch. The registration form and information on accommodation options will be posted on the NZAIA web site: [www.nzaia.org.nz](http://www.nzaia.org.nz)

### ***Further information:***

Prof. Richard Morgan (Chair of the organizing group)

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