

## Editorial

Another year over and a year closer to the end of the millennium! As the new co-convenors of ASA we have several initiatives planned for the new year. Before explaining them, though, we would like to thank James Barnes for his efforts as the convenor over the last three years. He is looking forward to focusing more on Maori issues as a member of the core group.

We are currently going through the steps to register ASA as the New Zealand Chapter of the IAIA (International Association for Impact Assessment) as explained in previous issues. This move, ratified at the recent AGM, will allow us to benefit from being part of a broader, international organisation and network, while retaining our own organisational identity and strengths. It also paves the way for our organising an IAIA conference here in New Zealand before the end of the decade. This year the conference is in Lisbon, Portugal, and the following year in New Orleans. The prospect of a conference here is exciting. It will provide a strong impetus for ASA to make professional contact with other professional groups working in environmental planning and management.

We hope that these broader contacts will further promote integrated approaches to planning and management of projects and policy. We need approaches that account for the social, cultural, economic and bio-physical dimensions of change. Social assessment plays a key part in any integration, with our recognition that all issues are ultimately social issues, and the emphasis we place on participatory approaches.

A number of people have commented on the usefulness of regional initiatives by ASA. In Canterbury interested people meet together on a regular basis to talk with invited speakers, or to discuss ongoing work. Other regions have had more spasmodic efforts. We believe ASA should play a more active role in getting various

regional initiatives off the ground. One idea that is gaining momentum is a training day in the Auckland area, from which more local networks and initiatives may evolve. It will also be important to continue momentum in the Central North Island after the very successful Taupo conference, for which we note grateful thanks to Liz Fairlie and her team. Wellington people will be involved this year in organising the 1996 conference, for which we plan to have details out as soon as possible.

Another initiative started last year was to prepare a small training kit for introducing organisations to the basic concepts and approach of social assessment. We plan to have this completed and in use as soon as possible.

We will keep you informed about these various initiatives in following newsletters, and would always appreciate any comments, ideas or input that any of you might make. In the meantime we wish you every success and joy for the following year. We hope you had fun and a rest over the holidays. We look forward to meeting you at the next ASA conference.

*Julie Warren and Nick Taylor*

## ASA (Inc) membership

Please support the ASA by becoming a member!

Annual subscriptions are:

Waged members	\$40.00
New members (for 1996)	\$35.00
Low waged members	\$10.00

If you are already a member, please pass the enclosed membership form on to someone else that you think may be interested.

## *This issue*

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# Taupo notes

The 1995 ASA Conference and Annual General Meeting were held in Taupo on the 10th and 11th of November. Although the attendance was disappointingly small at around 30 this did mean that there was a greater chance for active participation in sessions by attendees, and there was no need for parallel sessions. A tragic boating accident, in which a local Maori was drowned, meant that the planned participation by the tangata whenua, Tuwharetoa, had to be curtailed. Nonetheless members of the local iwi made a wonderful effort to be present, to welcome us, and to participate as much as they could. ASA gives heartfelt thanks for their magnificent commitment in their time of great sorrow.

## Conference sessions

Full proceedings with the text of papers presented will be sent out to all ASA members early in the new year. A brief summary of key issues in each session is presented below.

### Credibility and false expectations

This first session was a case study of Taupo Bungy. It included presentations from both a local resident and a spokes person for the Taupo bungy company, which had sought local authority permission under the old Town and Country Planning Act to establish a bungy jump business from a bluff on the outskirts of town.

Comment was provided from a local resource management consultant. The local resident's perception was generally highly critical of a process which seemed to her to be complex with poor information made available to both parties. Local residents were unable to even attempt to follow the right processes, because neither information or resources were available for them to do so. The local entrepreneur seeking to set up the bungy company also complained of the expense of gaining approval from the local authority, both in time and money.

The overall feeling from the session was that this case was at least in part a fault of the old Town and Country Planning Act, exacerbated by being caught between that old regime and the new Resource Management Act.

### Consultation with rural communities and health needs assessment

A representative of the Midland RHA described the process followed by the RHA in consulting with small communities, especially Taumarānui, in the development of health services.

There was considerable discussion about whether the same individual could really gain community confidence while being responsible both for the RHA's public relations and for consultation over the scope of local health service provision.

The session concluded with a lively discussion of the meaning of consultation, compared with information provision on a narrow range of options.

### Is it the Government's mandate to govern?

Local area Member of Parliament, Mark Burton, gave a thought provoking address covering the scope of consultation which local political representatives should have with their constituent community. He clearly stated that consultation with the community is an integral part of the mandate to govern. Such consultation should be balanced, genuine, informed, and an active, open-ended process.

However, such consultation should be limited to broad issues, and not cover every issue. MPs, he said, are elected to represent their constituents, not simply attend as a delegate with instructions on how to speak, vote or think on every issue. Mr Burton was critical of the sort of "constituency over-consultation" which he perceived being carried out by some MPs, seeking too much direction from the electorate on too wide a range of issues. He sees a real danger that electorate referenda, rather than being consultation with community, represent an avoidance of responsibility by those given a mandate to represent their electorate.

### Natural Resource Use

Jeanette Fitzsimons, the Environment spokesperson for the Alliance, opened the Sunday sessions by speaking about the inherent tension or balance between the three year election mandate given to MPs, and the principle of the democracy of participation. Consideration of some of the consultation principles of the Resource Management Act were contrasted with the limited range of consultation 20 years ago, when a simple process of submissions and objections was the full extent of any consultation process.

Under the RMA, consultation involved in making planning or resource use decisions can be very time-consuming and expensive. The issue of whether the Planning Tribunal should call its own witnesses was raised, rather than relying solely on evidence brought by parties at their expense.

Ms Fitzsimons concluded with a call for national policy statements against which proposals can be objectively assessed, and by raising the question of what is real consultation, especially where future generations and other species are going to be affected by any decisions made. Her advice was that the key principles for genuine consultation were: those doing the consulting do not have their minds made up in advance, and have a willingness to listen; all information is available to all parties; all appropriate processes are observed; full explanation is given as to why any advice given, or option, was rejected.

## Maori consultation

This session was severely effected because of Tuwharetoa not being able to participate as planned. There was, nonetheless, a lively informal session. The general opinion of speakers was that consultation with Maori is not well done. The tangata whenua need to be involved from the beginning, not just half way through, they need constant feedback, and they should be given clear opportunities to participate.

## Bruce Hucker

Bruce filled in some of the gap left by the shortened Maori consultation session with a short paper on different forms of democracy, which compared and contrasted representative and participatory democracy.

## Final Open Space session

The final session was a spontaneous open session convened by Nick Taylor. All participants were invited to suggest topics for three 40 minute sessions. This presented an excellent opportunity to bring up any lingering issues, to further discuss issues raised by earlier papers, or for any participant to introduce some new thoughts not yet covered. There were six small group discussions, which provided an excellent rounding off to a successful get together.

## AGM key issues

Only 12 ASA members were present, a disappointing turnout from a total membership approaching 100.

Thanks were expressed to the retiring convenor James Barnes for his work for ASA over the past two years.

Reports for the 1995 year noted that paid up membership has fallen by about 20% to around 85 and that there is a need to revitalise ASA in the new year.

It was proposed that ASA concentrate on organising a good annual conference, publishing SIAN regularly, and promoting social assessment techniques and good practice. This will involve advertising existing training and education resources in social assessment, encouragement of more regional activity, and more focus on the networking concept with which ASA started. There is a fairly large rural network, and James Barnes is keen to work to establish strong Maori and Pacific people networks. Christchurch still has an active group of at least a dozen, and more action will be taken to get together a Wellington group on a regular basis.

## New Core Group

Those acclaimed to fill key Core Group positions for 1996 were:

Co-convenors:	Julie Warren and Nick Taylor
Treasurer:	Ann Pomeroy
Secretary:	Paul Lister
Membership secretary:	Diane Anderson

## Joining IAIA

The AGM agreed that ASA will set up as a chapter of IAIA — the International Association for Impact Assessment. We will work towards hosting the IAIA conference in 1998 or 1999. A proposal will be put together to take to the 1996 IAIA meeting in Portugal.

There was discussion of the perceived lack of social expertise in the Ministry for the Environment. A letter will be written from ASA to the new CEO of the Ministry, Denise Church, when she starts this year.

This year's conference will be held in Wellington, and a commitment was made to provide plenty of advance notice of the theme, dates and location.

Full minutes of the AGM will be provided with the proceedings later in the New Year.



# Involvement in RMA processes

Patterns, implications, impediments and solutions

As the Resource Management Act moves into its fifth year of existence, certain trends are becoming clearer. Firstly, lay people are finding it difficult to manage the process. The evidence is in the media and anecdotal feedback from interest groups. The given reasons are a lack of resources and knowledge to participate. Secondly, these groups see the process as uncertain and potentially expensive because of delays and the possibility of having costs awarded against them. That may be compounded by inadequate definitions of what constitutes a 'significant local effect.'

The RMA is predicated on wide public involvement. It may be that Parliament's intentions, which were arguably to protect the environment and encourage development in a cost effective way, are frustrated by people being unwilling or unable to be involved.

The definition of environment in the Act, including as it does the social, economic, heritage, ecological and physical, inherently relies on a huge range of data sources to inform standards, guidelines, rules and policies. The central theme in this article is how best to reflect this complexity in the ways in which the community can, or should be included and what could make it a more cost effective process.

## Who should be involved and why

The test of who is important in terms of who should be participating is not confined to the distinguished, privileged, or the institutionally enabled, but includes anyone who has something relevant to say about the nature of the local environment.

This occurs when there is a need to deal with specific questions arising out of the acceptability of the forms of planning-induced change in a community. In this

context, the reasonably held fears of people are relevant, as are the contributions of people who are knowledgeable and sometimes passionate about their locality, interests and ancestral turangawaewae, (place to stand).

Being an advocate for some aspect of the environment is not however a license to be irrelevant, obscurantist, misleading, frivolous, or vexatious. Just as there is no automatic right to be disrespectful in a legal forum, there is also no automatic right for anyone to use a resource, or be allowed to escape the effects of planning restrictions, eg, (s85[1] of the Resource Management Act), unless there are special reasons why an exemption should be made (s85[2]). A fundamental principle of the

Act is that development may occur unless its adverse effects are such that the environmental qualities that contribute to sustainable management for present and future generations are compromised. When describing the purpose of the Act, emphasis in all cases is logically on present and future generations; not

development, and not the resources themselves, unless it is in the context of their use (which can include appreciation of existence or intrinsic values) for people. It is therefore critical under such a framework to structure consultation in ways that various interests within a community can properly communicate their viewpoints on development and on other values.

The community, in providing information on possible effects, are the ultimate consumers. From social experience we know that not everyone will consume a particular product, and not everyone will be aware or feel the need to communicate their interest in it. This principle extends to the majority in our representative system. However, if the pool of active participants becomes too small, the informing or consumer feedback becomes secondary to expert process capture. The ‘unknown’ element of the community may in some cases be as important as more vocal or the representative interests, but the activist spokespeople are generally the basis for comprehensive feedback. This differential involvement is recognised by section 274(1), ie,

*“In proceedings before the Planning Tribunal under this Act, the Minister, any local authority, any person having any interest in the proceedings greater than the public generally.”*

These representative groups, which may be community driven and sometimes statutorily based, eg, Fish and Game or iwi (which are both customary and instruments of statute), provide another ‘constitutional’ check on the quality of applications and environmental and social effects assessments. The specialist and representative collective contribute a special quality of evidence on the acceptability of change and how one measures it. Their

evidence could be frequently mislaid in the process if it becomes too unfriendly or too expensive.

Although not all submissions are thought through, and some are based on ignorance, they are all valid in the sense that they indicate something of the communities attitudes. Having such wide ‘standing rules’ in the Act theoretically brings diversity of opinion and the ‘exceptional’ sources of knowledge into the mainstream process. The other side of diversity is however, that the procedures must be managed more carefully to ensure that input is rational and consistent throughout the process and not at the expense of others’ rights.

## The relationship between the type of evidence and planning interests

The dilemma of how much one should be responsive to community currents is epitomised by an interim decision on an Enforcement Order. The decision and comment related to the then pending demolition of the Otorohanga Town Hall.

Judge Bollard in *Otorohanga Heritage Assn v Otorohanga District Council A83/1994 Planning Tribunal* distinguished between that which was offensive to the wider community and that which was offensive to a sector within the community, but possibly not offensive to others.

By implication it pointed to the importance of assessing and measuring the differential effect of change proposals on a community, and weighing evidence gleaned in surveys and other formal studies, against that of personal and sometimes informal evidence of participants. It is clear that not all evidence is of equal worth, but sometimes the part of the community most concerned with an issue, place, social grouping may have a more cogent argument than others. These groups may validly function as a guardian of a thing or viewpoint.

The Kaitiakitanga in section 7(a), although generally regarded as applying to Maori or iwi authorities, can validly apply to other groups, although in a different cultural context. The guardianship or kaitiakitanga principle is also recognised in a general sense in the rights of registered heritage protection authorities, (s188) and in the more specific provisions contained in s273(1) & (2) allowing standing

*“on behalf of successors in title, if any to the rights or interests affected thereby.”*

## Maori interests

In Maori terms the present occupants of land and users of taonga are responsible to both past and future generations, and while it is likely that the dominant concept behind the phrasing in s273 was intended to be interpreted as successors in terms of a lien on a title, the trust arrangements covering iwi land holdings will in

general present a similar situation in terms of effect.

It may also be argued in some situations with respect to whenua (land named for the buried afterbirth which gives an individual and his or her descendants the spiritually sanctioned right of occupation or use of a place), and taonga (treasure or matter of utmost importance to the culture), that the “principles of the Treaty of Waitangi (s8) and the provision in s6(e) giving taonga and waahi tapu the status of national importance, will allow future interests to be represented

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authorities should consider the information supplied by iwi as necessary to inform the process and pay for that information

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in the same manner as if they had a specified right and person. The representation of this interest may then indeed have more force than other short term considerations, despite being a minority interest in terms of numbers.

Sections 6-8 and the requirement on all those who exercise powers and functions under the Act to collect information to

underpin the process (section 35), suggest that these authorities should consider the information supplied by iwi as necessary to inform the process and pay for that information and services in the same manner that they do for other services and consultancies not found within these organisations.

Iwi at times operate in a delegated manner with respect to consent applications when they vet the application. This should be clearly recognised as a cost in the process, as is participation of any party in working groups which requires a prolonged and in-depth participation in planning outside the submission process.

## Taking note of all special interests

At times, the descendants of those who created or provided for something to be built may have a valid interest marginally greater in respect of interpreting s5 than any other single interest within a community. If present, those interests should also be taken into account in deciding whether something reaches the effects threshold tests in s105.

Extending the principle further, relevant information such as the content of Treaties may also be brought through to give a sectorial case greater credibility in Part 2 arguments. For example, Agenda 21, the Bio diversity and International Conservation of Monuments and Sites (ICCOMS) Conventions, of which New Zealand is a signatory, require decision-makers to take all reasonable steps to ‘gift’ our cultural successors a biological and heritage inheritance or ‘estate’ that is no less than that presently existing. These treaties or ‘soft law’ lie alongside and inform the onus to “recognise and provide for” (s6) and “have particular regard to” (s7), and “take into account” (s8) on “all persons exercising functions and powers under” the Act. Arguments under

sections 5 – 8 necessarily import from outside other ways of framing or understanding these issues.

It is clear that ways of resolving Judge Bollard’s dilemma as to who represents the community’s wellbeing vary according to the nature of the interest. As a general rule the nature of the effect will also dictate the appropriate form of evidence, including recourse to treaties or other external documents and most importantly personal testimony. In some cases the act of making submissions will clarify the community feeling about a project and feed the community’s need for information. A well managed process is therefore a positive part of interactive planning, ie, feeding information across boundaries.

## Integrating different types of evidence

The problem of quantifying the effect of noise is a typical example of a complex problem requiring complex input. Anecdotal evidence can be important even in an apparently technical question. How much weight should be given to ‘objective’ noise standards and models, as opposed to so called soft evidence presented by the effected people? This example is apt because the effects of noise on people are differential and may only be fully assessed by recourse to qualitative evidence from those exposed, as well as quantitative modelling by an ‘expert.’ This doesn’t mean accepting wild accusations, but carefully analysed personal submissions on the effect on a receiving ‘environment’ can and do have the same validity as numbers. The issue of what is unacceptable becomes even more fraught when the question of spiritual values is covered in resource hearings.

## Informing the process in an inclusive way

The Act is clear in that it allows spiritual matters to be covered under section’s 6(e), 7(a) and 8. It is less clear on what constitutes cultural wellbeing and how it should be represented in respect of wider community understanding of nature, species, uses and landscape. But in a number of cases the Planning Tribunal has signalled that it is willing to consider these complex matters of culture as central issues, for example allowing a house to be used for laying the body out on the way to burial (Pai Marie).

While documents such as Conservation Management Strategies and policies set out some perspectives on attachments to an environment or use, they are often silent on the intensity of affection or attachment that people have to an idea such as species rights, equity, or place. To facilitate a better understanding of sustainable management in each locality, we must take account of what is sometimes less tangible. Examples of local landscape paintings of a view scape over generations, or readings from trampers’ diaries tell us about changes in the perceptions and real changes in a place. They add to

the collective ‘whakapapa.’ Sometimes the qualitative and the quantitative can be read together to generate a more satisfactory and holistic understanding of issues. Clear submissions from particular groups therefore have the potential to shed more light on the needs of the community as a whole than limited professional studies. The reverse applies when submissions are poorly conceived. However, despite its frustrations,

many groups are finding that gaps reflect institutional unwillingness to resource research or to take other forms of evidence seriously	maintaining a system which people feel comfortable in will outweigh possible delays, or the potential for grandstanding. The chief gain is an increase in the sum of knowledge and perspectives.
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The critical question must always be how do we manage a process that preserves the right of a community to participate, and yet allows relatively quick decision-making and certainty of process?

Treating the process as a marketplace based on adequate information is halfway to managing the process *as a process* instead of a series of issues. The management of the process must be more efficient than it is at present if it is to fulfil the statutory responsibility to promote sustainable management. Some of the possible coping mechanisms that may be used to foster an open and more efficient approach are:

- setting out clear guidelines on process and presenting evidence for participants at all stages;
- acclimatising decision-makers to various styles of presentation through training;
- asking planning authorities to sponsor a series of simulation workshops for all interests that may wish to be involved and use the exercises to familiarise people with talking to others and taking different quite different roles, while still keeping fundamental values;
- using experienced people as official mentors for people who are new to the process; sometimes this may mean that a staff member on a planning authority is employed to liaise with submitters and applicants and facilitate the process rather than act as a planner per se;
- offering appropriate information on process when an appellant lodges an appeal or when someone indicates an interest under s274;
- taking issues that are a recurring theme and dealing with them in a funded working party made up of representatives from interested groups and individuals, in order to negotiate objectives, policies and methods that could be acceptable to the wider community and represent sustainable management in a community;

- arranging hearings on marae and at other settings in order to increase the comfort of those involved;
- using the facilities under sections 99 and 268 to encourage discussion in pre-hearings;
- paying groups in the community to provide information that is complementary to other technical information, particularly where there is a statutory duty to provide for, or have regard to, or take into account;
- improving the quality of information available to decision-makers via a conscious programme to map and define the local receiving environment in a way that brings out the relationships between the different aspects to a greater extent than at present;
- encouraging participation in ongoing liaison meetings;
- training process participants (including industry and community groups) in monitoring and auditing key biological, social, or physical aspects of the environment in order to widen the information coming to planning authorities;
- paying special attention to duties under the Treaty of Waitangi to enable participation.

These are some of the available possibilities for improving iwi, conservation and community interest participation and preventing burn out from the complexity of what was seemingly designed to be a simplified process. The Plans and Policy Statements are on the whole not yet adequate to provide clarity in many situations, because they are not backed with a good information base.

Although the transition stage is in part to blame for the difficulty of properly directing submissions, it cannot receive all the blame, as many groups are finding that gaps reflect institutional unwillingness to resource research or to take other forms of evidence seriously. It is possible to extend the range of current activities and take in the legitimate aspirations of people and still ultimately develop a process that is cost effective for all the things that it is meant to do.

The above suggestions came out of a number of meetings with people involved in planning issues, such as iwi, conservation people, recreationists, developers and community activists. The common theme is that there must be better ways of handling the process which would reduce uncertainty and stress on a community, would be fair on other participants, and would underwrite better understanding of the ‘environment’ including the community. For such an important endeavour they seem such reasonable requests.

*Rob Harris, School of Natural Resources and the Environment, TOPNZ*

# Blackboard

- January 29 – February 1 1996 **11th Annual Conference of the Australian and New Zealand Society of Criminology**, Wellington, New Zealand.
- February 4 – 7 1996 **8th National Health Promotion Conference**, Politics and the practice of health promotion. Sydney, New South Wales. *Contact:* Jane Sheldon, Training and Development Officer, Health Promotion Unit, NSW Health.
- February 14 – 16 1996 **3rd Health Psychology Conference**, Okoroire Hot Springs Hotel. *Contact:* Kerry Chamberlain, Dept of Psychology, Massey University, Private Bag 11 222. Email: K.Chamberlain@massey.ac.nz
- March 28 – 30 1996 **Rape: Ten years progress? An interdisciplinary conference**, Wellington.
- April 22 – 26 1996 **6th International Interdisciplinary Congress on Women**, Adelaide.
- May 7 – 17 1996 **International Seminars in Britain**, Women and technology: making appropriate choices. Midhurst, West Sussex.
- May 13 – 22 1996 **International Seminars in Britain**, The management of local resources for local needs: sustainability in action. Newcastle.
- May 28 – 31 1996 **Asia Pacific Regional Conference of Sociology**, Phillipine Social Science Centre, Quezon City, Manila. *Contact:* Dr Corazon Lamug, APRCS Coordinator, College of Arts and Sciences, University of Philippines, Los Banos Laguna 4031, Philippines.
- May 29 – 31 1996 **The Association for Women in the Sciences 1996 Conference**, Science - women and our future. Wellington. *Contact:* 89 Daniell Street, Newtown, Wellington 6002. Email: hancox@actrix.gen.nz
- May 18 – 23 1996 **The 6th International Symposium on Society and Resource Management**, Social behaviour, natural resources, and the environment. The Pennsylvania State University, Pennsylvania. *Contact:* 6th ISSRM Symposium, Short Courses and Conferences, The Pennsylvania State University, 306 Agricultural Administration Building, University Park, PA 16802–2601.
- June 20 – 23 1996 **16th Annual Meeting of the International Association for Impact Assessment**, Improving EA effectiveness: research, practice and training. Estoril, Portugal. *Contact:* IAIA Executive Office, NDSU–IBID Hastings Hall, PO Box 5256, Fargo, ND 58105–5256 USA.
- July 1 – 4 1996 **4th International Conference on Social Science Methodology**, Essex, United Kingdom. *Email:* conf96@essex.ac.uk
- July 5 – 7 1996 **Australasian Gender and Science and Technology Conference**, University of Auckland. *Contact:* Liz Godfrey, School of Engineering, The University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland. Email: L.Godfrey@auckland.ac.nz
- July 3 – 5 1996 **3rd Australia and New Zealand Third Sector Research (ANZTSR) Conference**, Social cohesion, justice and citizenship: the role of the voluntary sector. Wellington. *Email:* david.robinson@vuw.ac.nz
- July 7 – 11 1996 **1996 South African Sociological Association Congress**, Southern Africa in global context. University of Natal, Durban Campus, Durban, South Africa. *Contact:* Prof Charles Crothers, Dept of Sociology, University of Natal, PB X10, Dalbridge Durban 4014, South Africa. Email: Crothers@mtb.und.ac.za
- July 22 – 26 1996 **9th International Congress of Rural Sociology**, Bucharest, Romania.
- August 5 – 10 1996 **28th International Geographical Congress**, Land, sea and human effort. The Hague. *Contact:* Congress Secretariat, Faculteit Ruimtelijke, Wetenschappen, Universiteit Utrecht, Postbus 80.115, 3508 TC Utrecht, The Netherlands.
- January 28 – 31 1997 **Institute of Australian Geographers and New Zealand Geographical Society**, Islands: culture, economy, environment. University of Tasmania, Hobart. *Contact:* Dr Les Wood, Conference Convener, Dept of Geography and Environmental Studies, University of Tasmania, Hobart, Tasmania. Email: iag97@geog.utas.edu.au

# Reviews

## Social impact assessment

### An extramural course

Course 72 297 *Social Impact Assessment* Open Polytechnic of New Zealand, Private Bag 31914, Lower Hutt, New Zealand.

The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand (TOPNZ) offers a range of extramural diploma and degree level courses. Its courses are designed to provide distance learning for people who, for one reason or another, are unable to attend other tertiary institutions. Moreover, courses like the one on Social Impact Assessment which is reviewed here, adopt a specific problem solving approach.

The social impact course was written and compiled by Julie Meade Rose and moderated by Dr Ruth Houghton. It is set at second year university standard (level 6) in the NZQA framework. Students are provided with an audio tape introducing the course, a learning guide, two volumes of readings, and a volume of case studies. They also need to purchase a copy of the set textbook (*Social Assessment: theory, process and techniques* by C N Taylor, G H Bryan, and C G Goodrich; Taylor Baines & Associates; Christchurch). Although TOPNZ allows students to vary the pace of their study, the 'Learning Guide' suggests a timetable that will enable a student to complete the course in 20 weeks.

There are four sections in the course; each containing an assessment for the student to complete and post to a tutor. These sections focus on the interrelationship between business and the community; sustainable development and the use of technology; integrating social principles and implementing a business policy; and social impacts of business development.

The four in-course assessments are used to evaluate a student's performance. There is no final examination. Each assessment examines a practical problem and is supported by a checklist and activities that provide practice and knowledge about that problem. The fourth assessment, for instance, requires the student to draw up terms of reference for the SIA of a proposed business development.

The three volumes of readings and case studies provide a useful resource of New Zealand and overseas literature relating to SIA. Consistent with its problem solving approach, however, the emphasis of the course is firmly on the local context.

The main disadvantage of this course, like other forms of distance education, is a lack of face to face contact between the student, the course tutor and others

studying the same subject. One way for students to overcome this handicap, however, would be for them to become involved with the activities of the local branch of the Association for Social Assessment.

TOPNZ is to be commended for producing this distance learning course on social impact assessment. The course is a valuable resource for community workers, public officials, business people, and other members of the public who may want to inform themselves about this specialised area. People wishing to become SIA practitioners, however, will discover that this course offers only a brief introduction to what is a rapidly growing field of study. For them it provides a foretaste of exciting things to come!

Any inquiries about this course should be directed to Jo Blakely, School of Natural Resources, Open Polytechnic, Private Bag 31914, Lower Hutt.

Wayne McClintock

## Publications

These reports are part of the on-going research programme of the Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries. They reflect the Ministry's interest in a broad range of rural policy issues including community development, employment, health services, and education.

### *Grassroots II: Community Development Initiatives at the Grassroots*

Kath Boswell, Denise Brown, Jo Maniapoto and Tamati Kruger. MAF Policy Technical Paper 94/10. Sponsored by the Rural Resources Unit, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Wellington. ISSN: 1171-4662, July 1994.

*Surgical Services in Rural Hospitals*  
MAF Policy Technical Paper 94/12. Rural Resources Unit, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Wellington. ISSN: 0-478-07373-9, December 1994.

*The Role of the School in Rural Communities in New Zealand*  
MAF Policy Technical Policy Technical Paper 94/15. Julie Meade Rose & Associates for MAF Policy, Ministry of Agriculture and Fisheries, Wellington. ISSN: 1171-4662, July 1994.

These reports can be obtained from the MAF Information Bureau, Box 2526, Wellington, phone (04) 472 0367, facsimile (04) 472 9071.

SIAN is compiled and published by members of the Association for Social Assessment (Inc.) and distributed **free** to SIA Network members.

Its aim is to encourage **contact** and **sharing** of information between all those interested in social assessment in New Zealand.

The views expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent those of their various employers or the Association.