



# NZ Chapter NEWSLETTER

An Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand Publication

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## AGM

The AGM of the New Zealand Chapter will be held in Christchurch in the week commencing 28 July 2008. We will confirm the date, location and details of events around the AGM in the next newsletter, but do start planning for a gathering at Christchurch in that week. If you have any suggestions for ways of making the most of the day or evening please let Judith know on [judithrl@boffamiskell.co.nz](mailto:judithrl@boffamiskell.co.nz)

## Upcoming Conferences

### IAIA08 - The Art and Science of Impact Assessment

4-10 May 2008, Perth: EIANZ is co-hosting this international, week-long conference, which is organised by the International Association for Impact Assessment. For full details and online registration for the conference, visit <http://www.iaia.org>

### 2008 EIANZ Annual Conference

30-31 October 2008, Melbourne: This year's EIANZ two-day conference will be followed by the Gala Dinner for the EIANZ Merit Awards, to be held on the night of Friday 31 October. Details will be advised shortly, but keep the dates free in the meantime.

## Branch Activities for 2008

### Christchurch

Will Doughty from MWH Christchurch "Undertaking EIA on Projects from around the World" at the Waiiau Theatre, Environment Canterbury, Kilmore Street, Christchurch on 14 May 2008, 5 pm.

### Wellington

A few of the long-standing Wellington members met recently to discuss how to build on the success of the EP3 forum last September and deliver professional development and networking opportunities to all Wellington members. I was also seeking someone to take over the role of coordinating Wellington events as I'm moving to Auckland in April. I'm very

## Events/Important dates

### May

*Perth:* 4-10 May, IAIA Conf

*Christchurch:* 14 May, 5pm  
Will Doughty talk

### July

*Christchurch:* week of 28 July  
AGM

Next EIANZ newsletter deadline  
- Monday 2 June, 5pm  
eianznews@gmail.com

### October

*Melbourne:* 30-31 October,  
EIANZ Conference

pleased to advise that Vanessa Browne (URS Corp) has agreed to take on the main coordinating role, with assistance from Michael Hall (SKM), Ljubica Mamula-Seadon (a past NZ President) and Jo Buckner (NZ Councillor).

The Wellington branch will focus on bringing 1-2 flagship professional development events to its members each year within the Certified Environmental Practitioner programme – primarily offering events that other professional bodies don't cover. These will be supplemented with networking opportunities, where possible participating with complementary organisations.

The professional development events will be organised by the National Events Coordinator (NEC), a position that is currently being advertised. We expect that an Ethics Workshop will be the first event. The networking events could include linking up with Green drinks, Young Professionals, NZAIA Wgtn members, Wgtn SBN, or activities such as tree planting through Project Crimson, a guided tour through Karori Sanctuary, or a trip to Kapiti Island.

While we await the appointment of the NEC we are planning to undertake the following:

- Compile a list of what events the various professional and environmental organisations in Wellington are doing, to determine who we can work with for networking opportunities and identify what isn't being provided on the professional development side of things.
- Find out from our members what they need and want in order to develop further. This will inform the professional development offerings.
- Link up our existing members so they know who each other is and what everyone's area of expertise is: Email Wellington members, asking if they're happy to have their details circulated to each other. Also ask them to provide a couple of sentences on what they do and are interested in.
- Arrange EIANZ branded name badges for all Wellington members so they can identify themselves and each other at any events they attend.
- Contact the Green Drinks coordinator to get this up and running in Wellington. See <http://www.greendrinks.org/>

So, there are exciting changes coming up in Wellington that will provide members with professional development and networking opportunities, both within the Institute and with other, complementary, organisations. I'd like to take this opportunity to thank Vanessa, Jo, Michael and Ljubica for stepping up and agreeing to move the Wellington branch forward. I hope that all our Wellington members will respond to our email asking what you would like from EIANZ, and that you'll support the events that will be organised for you. Good luck everyone.

*Susan Chapman*  
*Outgoing Wellington Coordinator*

## EIANZ NZ Chapter Sub-Committees

Publicity and Promotion  
Coordinator:  
*Vacant*

Policy and Program  
Coordinator:  
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## Information for environmental decision making

*Article by Ross Cullen*

The 2001 Nobel Prize in economic sciences was awarded to George Akerlof, Michael Spence and Joseph Stiglitz for their work during the preceding 30 years on 'analyses of markets with asymmetric information'. Their work covers a diverse range of issues including adverse selection, signalling theory, and the screening of participants in markets (<http://nobelprize.org/>). Environment practitioners are likely to find plenty to agree with in Joseph Stiglitz's Nobel acceptance speech, particularly his comment that "...Information imperfections are pervasive in the economy: indeed it is hard to imagine what a world of perfect information would be like." (Stiglitz, 2002, p 69). In his speech Stiglitz expounded his view that a paradigm change had occurred in economics and there was widespread recognition of the ways information effects behaviour and decision making.

EIANZ in 2007 released a blueprint for environmental practitioners entitled 'Meeting the Challenges of the Future'. Three sets of actions were listed as forming the basis for the Blueprint, including: 'Improve the communication of information about the environment'. This would not have surprised many EIANZ members as information is a fundamental requirement to enable good decisions on any issue, and better communication of information is essential for informed debate.

Strenuous efforts are often applied to generating and assembling information to enable or support decision making. In New Zealand EIA studies, s32 reports, s42 assessment of environmental effects and doubtless many other reports are completed to aid decision making. These major efforts to generate information by highly skilled professionals undoubtedly aid decision makers, but provide no assurance that decisions reached are beyond criticism. I suggest there are a couple of reasons why despite those lengthy, costly efforts, environmental outcomes may be less than perfect. Current debate over water allocation and use can be considered to illustrate the point.

A recent workshop debated if there is a need for a central clearing house for information on water. At least one person commented that it is important to distinguish between data, information and uptake of information. Data and information on water quantity, quality and use, it was asserted, is not lacking. Arguably there is also plenty of public interest in making use of the data and information that is available and communicated via various media. If those views are correct, then explanation for the widespread debate over water allocation and its use must be sought elsewhere. An alternative explanation is there is a paucity of information on the value of water in alternative uses, and this vacuum allows poorly informed comment to thrive. Markets for water are as yet embryonic in New Zealand. Individuals or firms who wish to purchase water rights in most case have to purchase a farm. Prices - a versatile indicator of value - are rarely visible to observers, who include environmental

professionals. In the absence of information on the value of water that employs a common metric such as dollars, or of water prices, decision making on water allocation seems an unenviably challenging task, and public debate unsurprisingly contentious.

Decision makers on water allocation can of course request information on the value of water, and as noted earlier, strenuous efforts are applied to that end. However, generating useful information requires first asking the right questions. If the issue is how to allocate water in a way that assures us net benefits to society are maximised, information is needed on the benefits that can be gained from alternative potential uses of water. If there are competing uses for water - for instream habitat, recreation, hydro power, irrigation, municipal, stock water, for example - then use of water for any of those purposes has an opportunity cost. First-in-first-served allocation processes coupled with absence of any charges for use of water negate concern over opportunity cost. Decision-making processes that are not alerted to opportunity cost are likely to gain a false impression of the net benefits to be derived from a specific use of water.

Greater use of water markets would mean more information would be available on the value of water in some uses and would contribute to better informed debate. Greater recognition of the importance of opportunity cost would assist decision makers who have to wrestle with water allocation decisions.

#### *References*

Stiglitz, J. 2002. "Information and change in the paradigm of economics" *American Economic Review*, 92(3), pp. 460-501.

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#### **EIANZ Member Profile**

**Name:** Rochelle Hardy

**Location:** Otautahi (Christchurch) Aotearoa

**Organisation work for and position:** Boffa Miskell  
Senior Planner



**How does your work contribute to sustainable management of the environment?** Boffa Miskell's approach to its projects stems from a commitment to delivering environmental quality. Sustainability is achieved through taking a 360 point of view - considering all perspectives and understanding each project's connections with the wider world. It's about the right outcomes rather than going through the motions of the process.

**Biggest environmental challenge currently facing Aotearoa and why:** Distance. I believe that as changes in the global environment pick up pace, our distance, isolation, size, and levels of consumption will have significant impacts on how we survive environmentally, socially and economically.

**How do you think EIANZ can help to meet these challenges?** By ensuring environmental management tools and practices are integrated so that people seek to work collaboratively in finding solutions.

**Environmental superheroes and heroines:** Rachel Carson, Mardy Murie, Lucy Deane, William Rollins, Gro Harlem Brundtland.

**Glass half full or half empty view of future of Earth and why:** Depends whether it's recycled glass.

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### **So what is this I hear about Green Drinks?**

Green Drinks is a worldwide phenomenon currently active in around 245 cities across the globe. Every month people who work in the field of environmental sustainability can meet up for a social drink and a chat. Everyone is welcome and there is usually a diverse bunch of people attending, including those from NGOs, academia, government, and private enterprise. There is also often a short speech about a hot topic or an interesting business.

It's a great way to network, share information and ideas and catch up with colleagues and friends.

There are currently a number of Green Drinks events throughout New Zealand in the following centres: Auckland, Christchurch, Hamilton, Hawkes Bay, Opotiki, Rotorua, Tauranga and Wanaka.

Check out [www.greendrinks.org](http://www.greendrinks.org) for the latest information on your nearest event.

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### **Wellington Hosts World Environment Day**

Eleven special environmental events and projects around the country have been awarded grants so far as part of the lead-up to New Zealand's first ever hosting of World Environment Day on June 5, Environment Minister Trevor Mallard announced today.

"It is great to see communities, organisations and individuals getting behind World Environment Day 2008 and helping to make New Zealand's hosting of the event a memorable one," Trevor Mallard said.

This is the first time New Zealand has hosted the United Nations Environment Programme event since its establishment in 1972 - and Wellington is the host city. The World Environment Day theme this year is 'Working Towards a Low Carbon Economy'. As well as a formal programme, community events around the country are also being planned.

A number of events throughout New Zealand have already been confirmed and planning is underway for these over the next two months. The first round of funding sees grants totalling around \$171,000 going out. A second round of funding for more community events will follow shortly.

The community events to be funded so far include a Weed Swap - where the public can swap weeds for native plants in Wellington's Civic Square; a celebratory expo/auction and promotion of sustainable transport by Environment Canterbury in Christchurch; a community-wide tree planting project in Raglan; and a carbon crusade in Hamilton where people run or walk a 4km circuit, each planting trees about 2km in.

"In addition to this, Conservation Volunteers New Zealand will be arranging for non-traditional volunteers (i.e. travellers, backpackers and corporate staff volunteers) to implement a range of practical conservation projects and activities in Auckland, Wellington, West Coast, Punakaiki and Hokitika," Trevor Mallard said.

"The interest that councils, business, communities, interest groups and schools have displayed in World Environment Day 2008 highlights New Zealand's increasing focus on the importance of the environment and stimulating eco-friendly actions. I encourage more people to get on board to mark this important internationally recognised annual event," said Trevor Mallard. More information on the event is at ([www.world.environment.govt.nz](http://www.world.environment.govt.nz)).

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### **Call for submissions on the proposed National Environmental Standard on Ecological Flows and Water Levels**

MFE are calling for submissions on the proposed National Environmental Standard on Ecological Flows and Water Levels. The proposed standard promotes consistency in the way decisions are made to ensure there is sufficient variability and quantity of water flowing in rivers, ground water systems, lakes, and wetlands. It sets interim limits on the alterations to flow and/or water levels for rivers, wetland, and ground water systems that do not have limits in place through regional plans. It also provides a process for selecting the appropriate technical methods for evaluating ecological flows and water levels in rivers, lakes, wetland, and groundwater systems.

The Ministry is holding workshops on the proposed standard starting on 30 April 2008 in eight locations around New Zealand. For more information about the proposed standard and for dates and times of the workshops please visit [www.mfe.govt.nz/laws/standards/ecological-flows-water-levels/index.html](http://www.mfe.govt.nz/laws/standards/ecological-flows-water-levels/index.html).

Please rsvp to [waterprogramme@mfe.govt.nz](mailto:waterprogramme@mfe.govt.nz) with your intentions to attend a specific workshop. Alternatively you can ring or email Whitney Bouma on 04 439 7512 to lodge your intent.