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LTD

Joined the Institute in 1995

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Environment Institute
of Australia and
New Zealand Inc.

What prompted you to join EIANZ?

The EIANZ was, and still is, the only professional association that represented all cross-discipline environmental practitioners. I felt a need to be more exposed to professionals beyond my immediate work environment, which as a consultant, can feel very isolating. Involvement in the EIANZ, and particularly on the National Council and later Executive, allowed strong inter-relationships with a range of very dedicated individuals from all states across the country, and later New Zealand. Active involvement at a Divisional level brought more face to face interactions with individuals across disciplines, corporate sector and government agencies, and organising conferences and seminars brought interactions with professionals from beyond the EIANZ.

What have you found most rewarding about a career in the environment sector?

I recall one of my career objectives that I articulated at management system training workshops being ‘to do myself out of a job’ whereby environmental practices became mainstream throughout industry and government. I think this has largely been achieved when looking at internalised processes through adoption of AS/NZS 14000 standards, compared with the 1980s and even well into the 1990s. These processes would include adoption of environmental management plans as integrated components in project management processes.

I think I have failed miserably when looking at some practices, and still seeing attitudes and actions in absolute defiance of critical environmental needs, such as conservation of habitats from terrestrial through estuarine and coastal zones and into the marine environment. Again, while seeing the failures, there have been tremendous positive changes in attempts at addressing these needs over the past 20 to 30 years but the effects of those changes do not seem to always have been transformed to improved environmental outcomes. There is still too much antagonism between development and conservation, too much loss in environmental quality (animal population declines, almost new extinctions, water quality threats, ground contamination and waste).

What is the biggest change that you have seen in the environment profession over the years?

Crass commercialism and exploitation by environmental professionals, especially in the larger corporate sector, of their roles as environmental practitioners. The development of environmental business has been astronomical, which is not really surprising given the explosion of regulation by all levels of government. Such regulation has been, and always will be, necessary to bring about the necessary changes to find avenues to improved environmental condition (or quality) but a balance is yet to be found between dealing with opportunities for real improvements and simply adhering to regulation through a compliance regime.

What are some of the most important lessons you have learned (so far) over the course of your career?

The greatest lesson is ‘to get into the head of your client’ (whether that client is professional, inter-departmental, within corporations) to see the issues that need to be dealt with, and apply your best judgement based on your professional training and experience. Where the latter is lacking, bring in the right person to assist.

The other lesson is to avoid personalising failures at bringing about the changes that you have tried to make through your professional endeavours.

What do you see as EIANZ’s key role in the environment sector?

The key role is to be an effective conduit between environmental practitioners across industry and government, and between the various areas of practice. This requires greater initiatives to enrol environmental professionals from these sectors.

What advice would you give a colleague thinking of joining EIANZ?

Join the EIANZ and then exploit as far as possible the opportunities offered by the EIANZ (mostly through the website), and then be involved with activities in your Division and in initiating new ideas and ventures. (I have to acknowledge that, while I followed my own advice previously, that advice has fallen by the wayside in recent years!).