



ENVIRONMENT
INSTITUTE OF
AUSTRALIA AND
NEW ZEALAND

Meeting the Challenges of the Future

A blueprint for environmental practitioners



This Blueprint is built around three key messages:

- ▶ The new challenges of the future will require new approaches from practitioners
- ▶ Environmental practitioners are not well prepared to meet the future challenges
- ▶ The Institute is determined to help practitioners to rise to these future challenges

Three sets of actions form the basis for this Blueprint:

- ▶ Boost professional development and prepare for the future
 - ▶ Build trust in environmental practitioners
- ▶ Improve the communication of information about the environment



This Blueprint is built around three key messages:

- The new challenges of the future will require new approaches from practitioners.
- Environmental practitioners are not well prepared to meet the future challenges.
- The Institute is determined to help practitioners to rise to these future challenges.

Climate change, water, sustainability and energy are the major challenges of the future. Finding lasting solutions will need an even-handed consideration of the economy and society as well as the environment. Long gone are the days when solutions were a simple matter of trading off the environment against development interests – we now know we need both to prosper.

“The natural environment is the asset – it is society’s interaction with the environment that creates the economy”

Comment made at Auckland EP3 event

Developing and implementing solutions to these four priority issues represents an important test for society. We must find answers; a failure to do so will compromise our prosperity and lifestyles.

Environmental practitioners have a new and important role in addressing these challenges.

To meet future challenges decision-makers need to integrate consideration of the environment into the planning, development and operation of all activities. And they will rely on practitioners to provide accurate, timely and user-friendly information – about environmental sensitivities, vulnerabilities and carrying capacities – and advice on how to integrate this information into government policies, business strategies and operational practices.

Good information builds understanding, which underpins lasting solutions. Providing the required information will demand practitioners are more sophisticated in their approaches and more influential with decision-makers than ever before – this is step change rather than an incremental improvement.

This means practitioners will need to change – we need to move from being seen as part of the fit-out team to being an integral part of the architect’s team on any given project.

The Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand has been examining the future role for environmental practitioners, and how well prepared the profession is to take it on. The Institute is determined that practitioners can and should be ready for the challenges that lie ahead.

The Institute organised a series of events called *EP3: the Third Wave in Environmental Practice*, in late 2007. This was a fitting way to celebrate our 20th Anniversary year; discussing future challenges, how to play a constructive role in meeting them, and our preparedness. EP3 included eleven events across Australia and New Zealand involving 750 practitioners and 200 presentations.

This Blueprint brings together the main themes and actions that were discussed and agreed at the EP3 events.

Looking forward, the workload for practitioners is growing and expectations are rising – all practitioners will need to operate to the highest standards of professional practice, competently and ethically, to meet the challenges of the future. However there is an emerging view among practitioners that they should be better prepared to meet these challenges.

The Blueprint represents a forward agenda for all environmental practitioners. It sets out how they can rise to meet the challenges of the next twenty years and beyond, and in doing so, help secure good outcomes for the environment, the community and for future prosperity.



THE FUTURE FOR ENVIRONMENTAL PRACTITIONERS

Three themes stood out in EP3 discussions:

- The environment must remain a No 1 priority.
- Environmental practitioners will have to lift their game to meet the future challenges.
- Are environmental practitioners, as a group, up to the future challenges

“E = 1”

Ian Kiernan, Clean Up Australia, Townsville EP3 event

The environment should be No. 1

Our environment is finite, and should be No. 1 in the minds of the community, governments and business, now and into the future.

Practitioners are acutely aware that the environment provides the foundation for society’s current and future economic prosperity. They have an important role in ensuring the community, governments and business understand and respect this link.

Environmental practitioners must lift their game to meet the future challenges

“We need practitioners to have a good business understanding and be politically savvy”

Vanessa Guthrie, Woodside, Perth EP3 event

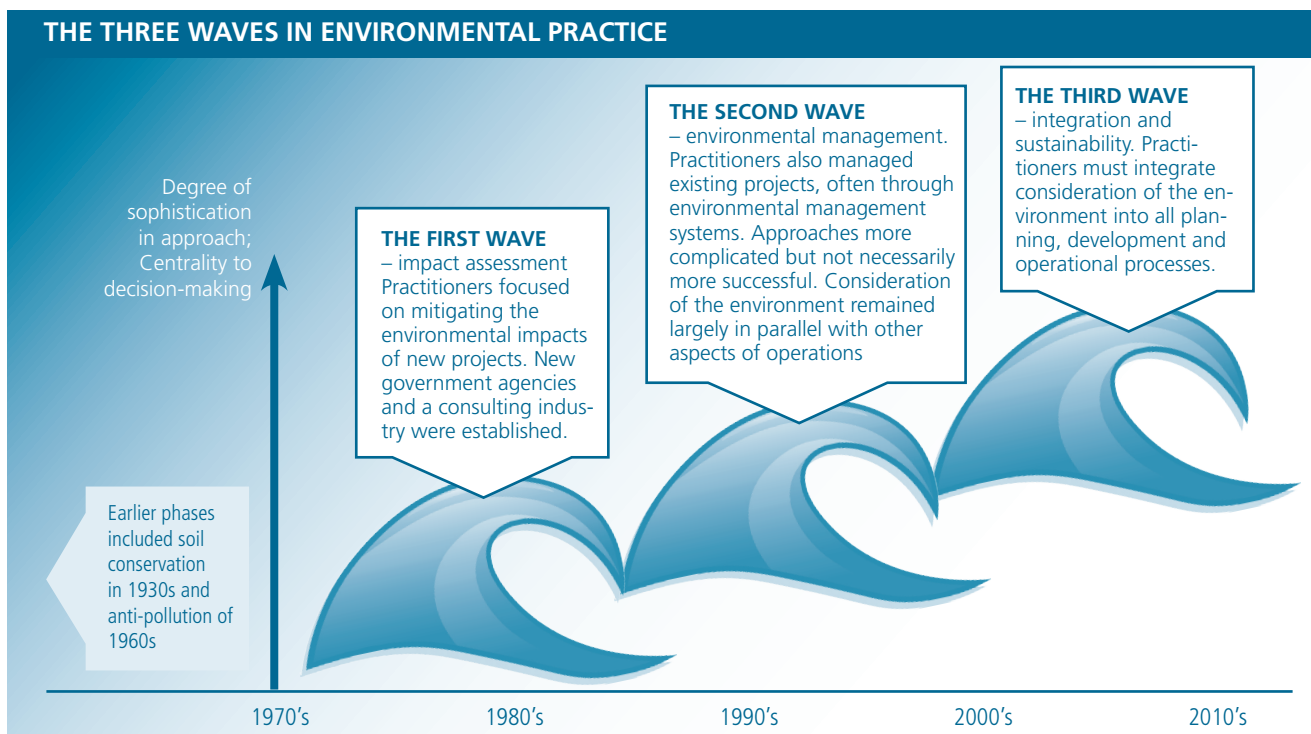
EP3, the third wave in environmental practice, is just starting to break. It brings the challenge of integrating consideration of the environment into the planning, development and operation of all activities across all government functions and all sectors of the economy.

Sustainability is a key concept that will dominate the third wave, and it embraces the priority environmental issues – climate change and energy, and water.

EP3 comes at a time when community awareness of the environment is at new highs. It will require practitioners to be more sophisticated in their approaches and more influential with decision-makers than ever before.



Practitioners will only be successful in the third wave if they develop new skills and better communicate information about the environment to decision-makers and to the community, to build trust in their abilities, and become more central to decision-making. That requires a substantive change in how practitioners operate – they need to move from being seen as being part of the fit-out team to being an integral part of the architect's team on any given project.



Are environmental practitioners up to the challenge

The workload for practitioners will grow as we ride the third wave of environmental practice. Expectations will also grow, driven by a better informed community and by the need to engage decision-makers at all levels of government and business.

“Specialist knowledge should be more accessible and more influential”

Barry Carbon, WA EPA Perth EP3 event

Are there sufficient practitioners, operating to the highest standards of professional practice, competently and ethically, to meet the challenges of the future?

The likely answer is no. Too few practitioners operate to the highest professional standards as Certified Environmental Practitioners. And although a larger number are bound by the Institute's Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct, many more are outside this code than bound by it.

Certified Environmental Practitioners have earned the trust of their peers. They have been formally recognised as practitioners of the highest possible standing in the profession. These practitioners have the skills and experience to operate at the highest levels and have their professional standing assessed by their peers on a regular basis.

Boosting the ranks of Certified Environmental Practitioners and of practitioners bound by a formal Code should be a priority for governments, business and the community, and of course the profession.

Higher standards in environmental practice can benefit all, but will not happen without a concerted effort.

The actions proposed in this Blueprint set out how governments, business, the community and the profession can work together to raise standards of environmental practice.

Certified Environmental Practitioner – CEnvP

The Certified Environmental Practitioner Scheme ensures that talented, skilled and ethical environmental professionals can be given due recognition in line with professional counterparts in engineering, accounting, planning and architecture.

Certification demonstrates competency and a commitment to ethical practice as an environmental professional. It also provides assurance to the community, employers, decision-makers and associates about that competence and ethical practice. By certifying practitioners that meet high standards of conduct, the scheme drives environmental practice to new levels.

More information: www.cenvp.org

The EIANZ Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct

All members of the Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand operate under a formal Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct. Signing up to this Code allows a measure of trust to be placed in the judgements and opinions of Institute members.

More information: www.eianz.org



A. Boost professional development and prepare for the future

- Agree what is needed. Practitioners, governments, business and the community should come together to agree bold long-term visions for the future. These can be at national, state/regional and local levels.
- Identify the gaps in meeting these needs. Practitioners need to cooperate with business, governments and the community to identify future needs in environmental practice across sectors and likely gaps in meeting these needs.
- Close the gaps. Practitioners should work with academia and other trainers to close any gaps in practitioners' preparedness.

It is never too early to think about the future

Agree bold long-term visions to drive EP3; without them environmental practitioners can under-imagine the future and allow themselves to become trapped by immediate issues.

Bold visions can be a great enabler of action, by helping practitioners picture the skills they will need and the role they can play to meet that vision. This is particularly important because practitioners hold the view that in the future it will be more difficult to address the priority issues than it is now (see chart).

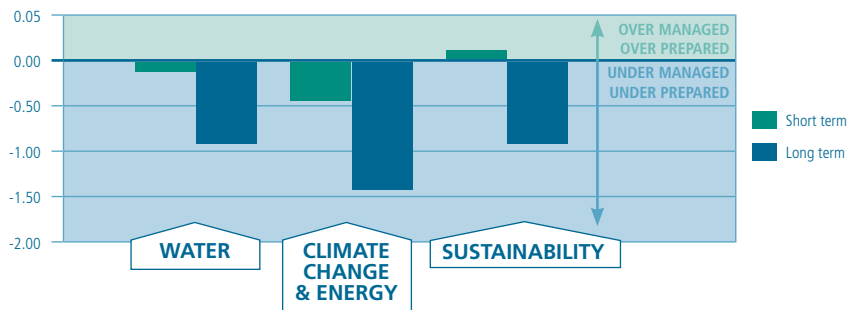
PRACTITIONER SURVEYS

At all EP3 events practitioners assessed the 'severity' of key issues (climate change and energy, water and sustainability), in the short- and long-term, and their level of preparedness for addressing these issues. A voting process with numerical values representing different levels of severity and preparedness was used so results could be compared across events.

PRACTITIONERS' SELF-ASSESSMENT OF PRIORITY AREAS FOR ACTION

WHERE SHOULD WE FOCUS

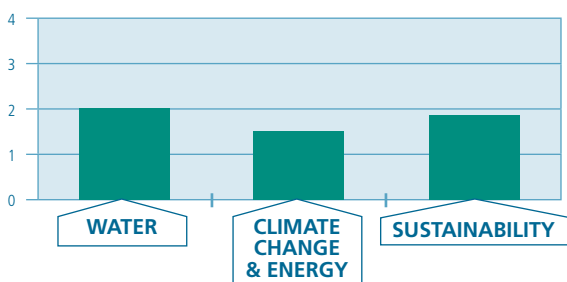
Practitioner surveys, undertaken at all EP3 events, identified the gap between the severity of an issue and preparedness for addressing that issue. Climate change and energy has the largest gap – this issue concerns practitioners most, now and into the future. Further, practitioners are more concerned about their ability to address all issues in the future, than now.



Upgrade and up-skill – the future demands it

Practitioners feel they are under-prepared to take on the key issues of the future – climate change and energy, water, and sustainable development. Climate change and energy is the area practitioners feel least well prepared to tackle. These are clear outcomes of the practitioners' surveys undertaken at EP3 events.

PRACTITIONERS' SELF-ASSESSMENT OF THEIR PREPAREDNESS FOR THE MAJOR ISSUES



PREPAREDNESS RATINGS

- Not at all ready – no substantive strategies or plans in place
- Somewhat ready – scope of problem understood, broad strategies are being prepared
- Ready, willing and able – effective strategies substantially complete, resource available to implement
- Already managing – effective strategies in place and being executed



B. Build trust in environmental practitioners

- Who is who? The Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand will raise awareness with the community and decision-makers of the different roles played by Certified Environmental Practitioners and practitioners bound by a formal Code of Ethics and Professional Conduct.
- Promote Certification. Certified practitioners should be recognised in legislation in the way other professionals have been.
- Ask questions. Decision-makers and the community need to understand the importance of asking practitioners about their standing before accepting their input and advice.

The community and decision-makers need to know who to trust when it comes to interpreting information about the full range of environmental issues.

Public trust = Best available science and knowledge + Highest professional standards

“There are millions of ‘so-called’ experts, however there are only twenty thousand or so environmental practitioners, there are even less who have signed a code of ethics (about two thousand), and only a couple of hundred who are certified to practice”

Bill Haylock, EIANZ President, EP3 events

Trust can be gained by applying the best available science and knowledge as well as the highest professional standards

When it comes to the environment many people have an opinion. It is important the community and decision-makers understand the level of trust that can be placed in the opinions of different practitioners.

C. Improve the communication of information about the environment

- Understand exactly what is needed. Environmental practitioners need to engage decision-makers and the community to better understand their requirements for information about the environment.
- Tell us what you need. Decision-makers and the community should make their requirements for information about the environment clear to practitioners.

Improve the clarity and credibility of information about the environment provided by practitioners.

The community and decision makers need information about the environment to meet their requirements, on different topics and at different times in the decision-making process. Practitioners need to improve their understanding of these requirements, and their ability to provide clear and credible advice on a timely basis.

Environmental practitioners will only ride the EP3 wave if they can provide decision-makers with clear and credible information that meets their needs.

By providing this information practitioners will create opportunities for the environment to be routinely considered in decision-making processes.

“We must put the environment into business language”

Terry A’Hearn, Victorian EPA, Melbourne EP3 event

“We need intelligent science communicated effectively. Practitioners create an incredible amount of knowledge but are poor in delivering it to the community”

Simon Smith, NSW Dept of the Environment and Climate Change Sydney EP3 event

THE ENVIRONMENT INSTITUTE OF AUSTRALIA AND NEW ZEALAND

Our transition to a sustainable society depends on achieving good environmental outcomes in everything we do, and how we do it. Improving environmental outcomes depends on continuously building the capacity of environmental practitioners and lifting standards in environmental practice.

The Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand is the peak professional body for environmental practitioners in Australasia, and promotes independent and interdisciplinary discourse on environmental issues. The Institute advocates that best environmental practices be delivered by competent and ethical environmental practitioners.

OUR VISION

A sustainable environment achieved through excellence in environmental practice.

OUR MISSION

We will lead all environmental practitioners, support their profession, set standards for best available environmental practices and enable practitioners to promote and achieve a sustainable Australia and New Zealand.

PRINCIPAL OBJECTIVES

**Facilitate interaction among environmental professionals
Promote environmental knowledge and awareness
Advance ethical and competent environmental practice**



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