



GRAHAM BROWN FEIANZ  
PRINCIPAL | GRAHAM A BROWN  
& ASSOCIATES

Joined the Institute in 1988

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*“ [Joining EIANZ] was an opportunity to get to know like-minded professionals from a diverse range of disciplines and contribute...to the promotion of the environmental profession”*

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*What prompted you to join EIANZ?*

It was an opportunity to get to know like-minded professionals from a diverse range of disciplines and contribute through committee membership to the promotion of the environmental profession.

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

Being able to influence industry and government clients to improve their environmental performance, maintain compliance and reduce environmental risk. This has included in-house and public training programs (since 1994) and mentoring which provided exposure to many differing views, attitudes and capabilities which I was able to influence in a positive manner.

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

The need for environmental practitioners in government and industry to become more generalist with diverse skills that often range into health and safety and to be prepared to take on a broad range of responsibilities. I became Australia's first full-time independent environmental consultant in 1970 (and at that time one of the first in the world) and have seen environment go from end-of-pipe pollution control to today's environmental management systems. Environmental practitioners need to be competent in environmental auditing, conducting training, undertaking inspections, budgeting, presentations, influencing management, compliance reporting, regulatory requirements and many more. Of course, there is still a most important role for specialists in the whole range of environmental disciplines – the environmental manager or regulator cannot function without them. So while some environmental practitioners are providing expertise in specialist subjects ranging from, for example, ecology, heritage and contaminated land to environmental law and policy, environmental managers (or officers, coordinators, advisers etc) and regulators need to understand and be able to interpret them in order to manage environmental risk and compliance.

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

That there is no simple answer to the world's environmental concerns. Everything is interconnected, and even some environmental solutions that have a positive impact in one area can have detrimental effects elsewhere, beyond the influence of the environmental practitioner. Planning decisions often create more adverse environmental impacts than they solve (think building on coastal sand dunes), and engineering solutions can be disastrous (think building retaining walls to protect the property built on the sand dunes, that reflects the wave energy and erodes the beaches). Persuading management to implement environmental controls can be impossible unless it is a regulatory requirement or a prosecution has resulted in a substantial fine from not doing it. Environment, unlike health and safety, is regarded as a cost to the business and is often given a low priority, regardless of what the organisation's environmental policy says.

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

To provide opportunities through professional development and recognition to raise the profile of the environmental profession; to provide a forum for the exchange of environmental knowledge and experience; and to encourage more industry and regulatory practitioners to join EIANZ. Provision of specialist groups is an important role especially in providing recognition for those specialists through certification or other methods. Then it is necessary for EIANZ to widely publicise the existence of those specialists to industry and governments in order for them to be preferentially selected for projects when required.

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

Go for it! Be part of it and contribute as much as you can (not always easy due to the wide geographic distribution of EIANZ members).

**Celebrating**  
**30**  
**years**  
1987 - 2017