



HELEN MARTIN MEIANZ
DIRECTOR | SHEARWATER
ASSOCIATES PTY LTD

Joined the Institute in 1988

“ [EIANZ’s role is as] a voice for the environmental management sector... and an organisation that stands up for the environment in a rational and science-based manner.”



Environment Institute
of Australia and
New Zealand Inc.

What prompted you to join EIANZ?

I have always been more interested in rural and regional planning than urban planning. My original training was as a geographer, but when I wanted to do post-graduate planning work, there was only one relevant course in Australia (a 1-year post-graduate diploma at University of New England). I chose instead to go to Aberdeen University in Scotland to do a Master of Science in Rural and Regional Planning. This was effectively a cross between planning and environmental science.

On returning to Australia, I found I was ineligible for membership of RAPI (as it was then) and in any case EIA seemed a much better fit. I did a 2-day training course on Social Impact Assessment prior to the 1988 EIA conference at Griffith University and attended the conference. I was inspired by the people I met there and applied (successfully) for membership.

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

Working with colleagues to strengthen the environmental basis of planning in Australia, especially in Victoria. In recent years, this has focussed on adaptation to climate change, particularly on the coast.

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

It is no longer a fringe activity, or a space populated by people who trained in something else, such as agricultural science, geology, or forestry. (No disrespect intended to my many former colleagues who graduated in these disciplines and were/are exceptional environmental professionals.)

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

There are many components to successful environmental management:

- An informed and engaged community / community groups to keep up pressure on decision makers
- Aware and competent public servants or local government officers who can carry out or commission relevant studies and provide appropriate policy advice to decision makers;
- Consultants and scientists who can undertake the research required and provide the evidence base for decisions
- Decision makers who understand the concepts of sustainable environmental management and listen to their advisors and their community
- Sufficient finances to implement effective environmental management
- Sufficient continuing resources for monitoring, evaluation and adaptive management.

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

A voice for the environmental management sector, a source of trusted professional development training, an organiser of professional conferences and events, a networking body and an organisation that stands up for the environment in a rational and science-based manner.

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

Just do it!

Celebrating
30
years

1987 - 2017