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INDEPENDENT BOARD
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Joined the Institute in 1995

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Environment Institute
of Australia and
New Zealand Inc.

What prompted you to join EIANZ?

When I started work, I thought that the environment profession was so new in commercial business that its practitioners needed the protection of a framework so it could be a profession with the level of robustness that other (more established) professions have. Examples are medicine, law and architecture. So I joined the Institute because it was the professional association that embraced environmental practitioners from various categories, their issues and the need to be with others who did a similar role.

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

Over the last 30 years I feel my career in the environment sector has made a difference. During those pioneering years, it was a time when an individual's work could alter, reduce or prevent bad outcomes. My advice and activities in my early projects tackled pollution and contaminated land. My recent work holds commercial business to account at the governance level.

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

Originally, professional environment work reduced bad effects on the natural environment with a focus on preservation. After the concept of sustainability broadened the scope, environment work started earlier in the design stage of buildings, projects and products. It extended to the whole life cycle of materials and included social issues. Over the years the purpose of environment work has shifted from preserving what we have, to making a future that balances people, pollution and profits, even if that requires changes to the way things are done.

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

The environment profession has made big improvements in the way business is conducted. However, the amount of measurement and reporting required for the good name of a company or for scrutiny by a government agency has side-tracked the profession. This has hit hardest on the generation of professionals who came after the pioneers. I am wary of 'the more things change the more they stay the same'. Better paperwork has not moved us on from the difficult issues that professionals dealt with in the 1970s. The same difficult issues are still being discussed in the 21st century as the 20th century. One example is how to keep biodiversity across the planet as economic growth continues to be the priority in an increasingly crowded world. To the extent that there is a perceptible improvement, the difference is that options are more varied and answers are more informed.

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

EIANZ's key role is to maintain the framework, develop the profession and keep it as robust and independent as comparable professions. Just like other professions, its practitioners make decisions during their everyday work that need to be free of fear or favour. This ethical aspect means that environmental professionals need to know how to make judgements based on evidence and within social context. This is the skill that is the hardest to learn in a career. By providing professional comradeship, EIANZ gives practitioners a place to learn decision-making and be across the issues that the profession confronts and solves.

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

It's a lonely job. Having a degree is not enough to cope with what will be thrown at you during an environment career. By joining colleagues that also do environmental work for a living, you go beyond a career and join the profession.