

## President's comment

## 2009 AGM and Conference

Despite the financial recession, the Institute's AGM and conference in Nelson in June was very well attended with over 100 people registered for the conference and over 60 turning out for the AGM. A feature of the AGM was the election of a new Honorary Member, Prof Tom White of South Australia, and 11 new Fellows: Peter Clark, Garth Cumberland, Russell Dale, David Field, Hamish Levack, Piers Maclaren, Chris Perley, Kit Richards, Hugh Stevenson, Phillip Taylor and Richard Woollons. This brings the number of Honorary Members to 12 and Fellows to 38. While some questioned the large number of Fellow nominations, we must remember that 36 Fellows were elected at the AGM of 1988, when the membership of the Institute was about 100 less than it is now. It was not until 2002 that additional Fellows were elected, by which time there were only 27. This year's election was really a catch up after some years of neglect by the Institute in recognising eminence in our profession.

I was delighted to be able to announce a number of awards and scholarships at the conference dinner. They were:

- NZIF 2009 Forester of the Year - awarded jointly to George Asher and David Bergin
- Chavasse Travel Award - Wade Cornell
- Grant from the Mavis Davidson Bequest - Stephanie Rotarangi
- Frank Hutchinson postgraduate award - Alwyn Williams a PhD student at the University of Canterbury
- Undergraduate award - Amanda Farrell, a fourth year B.For.Sc student at the University of Canterbury
- Mary Sutherland award for a polytech student - Rowan Monk, a National Diploma in Forest Management student at Waiariki Institute of Technology.

The AGM considered a number of motions which had been precirculated to members:

- The motions to amend the NZIF Articles of Association were passed without amendment
- The motions relating to the establishment of an NZIF Charitable Trust were passed
- The motion to amend the NZIF Code of Ethics was defeated.

## Past wisdom still relevant

I have been enjoying delving back into the history of the Institute to answer questions from Vivien Edwards who is conducting research into Mary Sutherland, one of the charter members on NZIF when it was formed in 1927. I am constantly reminded that while knowledge may have advanced in the intervening 82 years, wisdom is

much the same. In his paper to the second annual general meeting in May 1929, President of the Institute Arnold Hansson said:

*"Our work ... can be said to be from a general point of view, obscure. This to a great extent is due to the fact that the work and the results are available only in places which are not frequented by the average person. This position is, of course, not a desirable one, as we can only expect public support - that is professionally speaking - to the extent which the public finds we deserve. It does not matter whether this public opinion is right or wrong, our support from that source depends only on the construance which people put on our efforts. It is not a case of what our own opinions are about ourselves, but what other people think of us and our work."*

*"The public support for our profession can only be built up by ourselves, by clearly demonstrating the fact that the work of our profession is both valuable in pounds, shillings, and pence, and also valuable from a national economic point of view."*

We can put Hansson's comments against those of the Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry in its 2009 Forestry Sector Study "The New Zealand Institute of Forestry has always been restricted in its ability to connect beyond the forestry profession". After 80 years we are apparently still failing to demonstrate the value of the work of our profession.

We have much to do.

Andrew McEwen

