

Where to for NZIF?

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A review of NZIF undertaken in 2007 demonstrated that members wanted NZIF to be a more organised and active professional association. Since then the Council has:

- Moved administration from Christchurch to an office in Wellington in premises shared with Forest Owners Association, Wood Processors Association, Farm Forestry Association and Woodco. This has helped lift the NZIF profile in the forestry community and beyond;
- Completed a comprehensive overhaul of the financial accounts;
- Implemented a new membership database;
- Introduced graduate and retired member categories;
- Tightened general administration including paying more attention to collecting subscriptions from members, acting more quickly to strike off members who are in arrears and requiring members on hold and student members to confirm their status at the start of each financial year. This has improved the quality of the accounts and membership data.

Membership Database

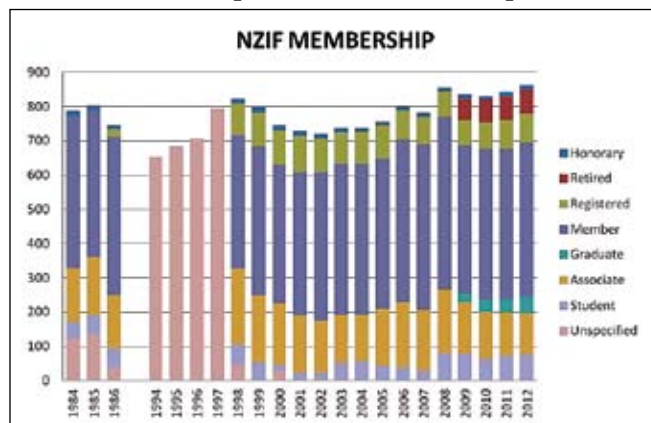
Features of the new membership data base, which is integrated with the web site, include:

- Members can access and correct their own records on-line saving administration effort and expense;
- Ability to grant or restrict access to different parts of the web site and database to specific groups of members and the public;
- Ability to set up distribution lists and for members to have control over what information they receive. Some local sections are using the database to distribute notices of events and are able to include interested non-members in that distribution. This means the section and NZIF administration use one set of data, rather than separate lists, neither of which may be up-to-date;
- Ability to distribute the weekly newsletter directly from the data base, overcoming many of the issues that existed with the previous process;
- On-line booking for workshops and other events;
- On-line payment of subscriptions, event fees, etc.;

- On-line survey and voting facilities (still to be tested).

Membership

An important consideration during the changes was to attract and retain members. Loss of members would have threatened the viability of NZIF, just as not making changes also threatened viability. Success in recruitment and retention is demonstrated by the record membership of 862 reached in September.



(Date for most years at or around 31 March except 2012 which is at 19 September 2011).

But there are still many forestry professionals in NZ who are not members. For example 60% of those attending a recent ETS field measurement approach workshop and 25-35% at four other workshops were not NZIF members.

Registration

The 2007 review was very critical of the registration scheme. Issues included cost, procedures for applying for registration and aspects of the administration of the scheme. Changes have been made in all three areas and in the way complaints against Registered Members are handled. The changes were achieved without compromising the standards expected of registered members. The maximum number of registered members was 106 in 2001 but this had dropped to 73 in 2009. There are now 85 registered members plus a number of applicants or intending applicants.

Registration is not just for consultants. NZIF owns the trademark "Registered Forestry Consultant" and allows Registered Members to use it. The rules also allow a Registered Member to call themselves a Registered Forester. Most of us will use a chartered accountant, registered surveyor, registered architect or

registered medical practitioner if we need assistance from such professions, so why don't we (including employers) specify Registered Members of NZIF when we need a forestry professional?

The Registered Member status can be qualified as having general skills in forestry, having general skills in forestry but with specialist skills in a specified area or having specialist skills in specified areas (but without general skills in forestry). This provides opportunities for Registered Members to have their particular skills recognised.

As President I receive calls from members of the public complaining about the actions of a "forestry consultant". I explain that if the person is a Registered Member they can lodge a complaint with the Board. If an unregistered member we may be able to take some action, particularly if there has been a breach of the Code of Ethics. If not an NZIF member there is little we can do except suggest that in future they should seek advice from a Registered Member as this will give them some protection.

Accounts

NZIF income in the year to 31 March 2010 was \$203,000 - \$107,000 from membership fees, \$40,000 from the Nelson conference and \$16,000 each from Journal sales and workshops.

Operating expenses were \$199,000 - the Journal cost \$45,000, the conference at Nelson \$22,000, publications stocks were written down by \$20,000 and general administration cost \$23,000.

Overall there was an operating surplus of just \$3,000. The previous year was over \$50,000, but this was helped by the surplus from the Palmerston North conference and the inclusion of local section funds for the first time.

Net assets are around \$250,000. This is grouped into Registration Board funds (\$60,000), special funds (Life members, awards and bequests) (\$133,000) and local section accounts (\$19,000) leaving just \$36,000 of general reserves.

Local Section Funding

The NZIF Articles of Association provide that each NZIF member belongs to a local section without payment of any further fee, although they are expected to pay the fees associated with specific events that they attend. In the past the Council provided for a capitation fee to be paid to local sections from NZIF funds to help cover the costs incurred by local sections. But this was only being claimed by three or four sections and for smaller sections the capitation fee was of little practical use. Council has now moved

from capitation payments to providing financial assistance to sections where needed to host events and activities.

Activities

The NZIF Council continues to be active in promoting professional forestry:

- Submissions and representations in the 2010/11 year included:
 - The field measurement approach for carbon assessment;
 - Cost of bush tax reform;
 - National energy strategy
 - National Environmental Standard for plantation forestry;
 - National standard for certification of plantation forest management in NZ;
 - A Scion application to undertake a field trial of genetically modified pines;
 - Review of afforestation schemes;
 - The use of methyl bromide;
 - The emissions reduction target 2050; and
 - Overseas reports that NZ was second on a list of the world's ten worst conservation hotspots – our action resulted in a correction being issued by Conservation International that put NZ at 22nd rather than 2nd;
- We have had discussions with other professional bodies on the Real Estate Agents Act and Financial Advisers Act, both of which have the potential to impact on NZIF members who give advice to others;
- The President represents NZIF on the Land and Water Forum, the Royal Society Vice President's Advisory Panel for Biological and Life Sciences, the NZ International Year of Forests Coordinating Committee and the Social Chamber of the standards development group preparing the NZ National Standard for certification of plantation forest management;
- The weekly newsletter and quarterly Journal of Forestry continue to be produced;
- NZIF awards continue to be made, there is an active Fellow's Committee and Registration Board and a number of active local sections;
- Recent conferences have been well attended, have received favourable comment and the last four (Palmerston North, Nelson, Rotorua and ANZIF in

- Auckland) have been financially successful;
- The 2012 AGM and conference will be held in Christchurch from Sunday 1st to Wednesday 4th of July. The theme is on forest engineering with sections to be devoted to growing forests, harvesting and timber engineering.

International Liaison

NZIF is working with the Institute of Foresters of Australia and others to improve links and liaison between international professional forestry associations.

At this year's ANZIF Pacific forestry conference in Auckland, delegates agreed a recommendation that more be done to support and assist Pacific foresters. As a result Pacific forestry professionals are now able to receive the NZIF weekly newsletter and this is carrying items of relevance to Pacific forestry.

Such international links are extending networking opportunities for NZIF and its members.

Charitable Trust

The AGM at Nelson in 2009 approved a motion for NZIF to establish a charitable trust. This will fund awards, grants, prizes, etc., particularly related to education in and about forestry. It is intended that the Trust will take over the existing NZIF awards (and the funds associated with them) and the charitable nature of the trust should encourage members and others to make donations (eligible for tax rebates) to it.

Concluding Comments

The progress towards a more professional association has so far been achieved with minimal changes to membership fees, but it has required very significant voluntary input from some members. Councillors are collectively putting many hundreds of hours a year into NZIF business. This effort is unpaid and is made at the expense of family and recreation time. Some employers are very tolerant of the time that Councillors spend on NZIF business and so are some families. For self-employed councillors time spent on NZIF business is time when they are not earning.

Some members want NZIF to do more and what they want are activities commonly expected from professional associations. But is it fair for most members to expect a relatively small group of council, working party and board members to make even more sacrifices to do this?

The alternative is for NZIF to make a step change in its approach. This would mean more staff and servicing costs. One full time person (very modest compared with IPENZ and its more than 60 staff) will require significant additional income.

What if we don't aspire to make such a change? One scenario is that NZIF will continue to achieve what it currently does. But Council members will struggle to find the time needed for those services and will not undertake any of the extra activities desired by members. A more likely scenario is that it will be harder to find Councillors willing to put in the long hours needed to maintain the current position. There will be fewer submissions and it will be harder to run annual conferences, workshops and local section events. Members will continue to ask for more, but will actually get less and membership will suffer as a result.

The 2007 review indicated that members would support a move to a paid executive, but that they would prefer that it was funded through increased membership, rather than increased subscriptions. Membership has increased and subscription increases have been largely confined to meeting inflation. But the modest financial surpluses achieved in recent years and incorporating massive voluntary but unsustainable efforts could not cover the annual costs associated with a paid executive.

The time has come for NZIF members to make a decision. Are we prepared to build on the base that has been consolidated over the last few years and turn the Institute into a fully professional body or will we reject that challenge and allow it to drift and wither? The options are there, but it is us, the members, who must make the decision.

Significant changes are not made lightly. I have made these comments in the hope that members will debate the issue over the coming months to enable a clear direction on the way ahead to be decided at the 2012 AGM. This meeting will coincide with the biannual election of Council, enabling the new Council to proceed in whatever direction that meeting decides.

I encourage all NZIF members to enter into the debate necessary to make this decision.