

## 8. NZPI CONFERENCE REPORT

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The purpose of this item is to report on the Australia-New Zealand Planning Congress held in Wellington in the second week of April.

The Congress was the first joint planning conference held by the Royal Australian Planning Institute and the New Zealand Planning Institute. It was attended by 750 delegates, including over 200 from Australia. There were also delegates from Britain, Canada, the United States and Indonesia.

The theme of the congress "Impacts", focussed delegates attention on the effects of changes in technology, resource use and development, law, values and governance structures on the management of our natural and physical environment. Four key areas were examined, namely, governance, innovation, the natural environment and the built environment.

From the Council's perspective, the highlight of the conference was being presented with the NZPI Nancy Northcroft Planning Award. This prestigious award was won by the (former) Environmental Policy and Planning Unit, Design and Heritage Team for the Charleston Community Plan.

The conference provided a unique opportunity to compare and contrast planning in Australia and New Zealand. The most notable difference is the leadership and financial assistance provided by State and Federal Government in areas such as urban regeneration, urban design and infrastructure planning. Australian local authorities are better placed to take a proactive and positive role in creating positive social, economic and environmental outcomes, compared to our local authorities under the current reactive, effects based system.

Of the keynote speakers, two in particular stood out. Paul Farmer, Executive Director and the American Planning Association espoused the 'smart growth' concept, which he sees as being critical to achieving triple bottom line objectives. Graham Jahn, one of Australia's leading Architects focussed the spotlight on and then analysed the traditional building blocks of planning: order, consistency, amenity and the associated notions of 'character' and 'community'. His presentation wasn't an attack on planning, but a plea for more tolerance of diversity.

A special local government planners workshop outlined the key competencies currently required by planners and stressed the need for greater visioning, integration, community engagement, accountability and outcome delivery. Stephen Hains (City Manager of Salisbury Council, Australia) noted a significant problem in recruiting and retaining experienced planners in Australia as planning was no longer a "course of choice" in Australia. It could be said that a similar situation is evolving in New Zealand

Another interesting workshop was the 'Innovation' theme workshop on Subdivision and Urban Design. Stuart Kinnear, a New Zealand Planning Consultant, highlighted the inadequacies of many local authorities to encourage innovative subdivision design due to the prescriptive nature of the traditional Standards and Codes of Practice for Subdivision followed in many district plans. A Handbook for Sustainable Land Development was introduced as an alternative, providing best practice guidelines for alternative designs including co-housing and eco-villages.

The conference proceedings will be published on the Institute's website ([www.nzplanning.co.nz](http://www.nzplanning.co.nz)).

### **Chairperson's**

**Recommendation:** That the information be received.