



## NEW ZEALAND BRANCH PRESIDENTS REPORT 2009

This has been, in many ways an eventful year for the New Zealand Branch.

At a policy level the new National led government signalled that they intended to overhaul the Resource Management Act – a key piece of legislation that governs, among other things, air quality management and discharge permit processes in New Zealand. The proposed changes initially sought by the incoming government promised a substantial revision of the RMA with the intention of streamlining and simplifying both resource planning processes and the consequent discharge permitting processes.

Ultimately, while a number of the proposed changes did make it through the select committee process, it appears to me that a number of compromises were made. While some changes will streamline aspects of the RMA process, other changes will add complexity and increase the potential for delays. Overall, I was a little disappointed with the outcome which missed some real opportunities for improvement.

The New Zealand branch was fortunate to host some experienced guest speakers during the past 12 months with topics ranging from wood burners through to the lives of airborne particles. All our seminars have been well attended which is a credit both to the calibre of the speakers and the effort that Committee members made to organise these events. I was also recently delighted to present the 2009 New Zealand Branch Clean Air Award to John Watt whose research into palladium nanoparticles has significant implications for worldwide pollution control through catalytic reduction.

More recently the spectacular dust storms which affected Sydney in September made their way across the Tasman to impact the northern half of the North Island. Record 24 hour PM10 concentrations were reached in a number of North Island communities. This event has a number of implications for air quality managers and RMA practitioners due to both the widespread extent and high concentration of PM10 particles measured.

Continuing with the policy theme, earlier this year, the Minister for the Environment government announced a review of the National Environmental Standards for Air Quality and has formed a technical focus group who will provide expert advice to the minister. The focus group consists of a number of recognised professionals covering a range of disciplines. Their advice to the Minister on the implications of the air quality standards is timely given the recent dust events in the upper North Island and the findings of the NZ Institute of Economic Research which identified Air Quality as a key environmental priority for Central Government due to the effects on human health.

At a branch level, the Committee saw the departure of Dr Jeff Smith (Treasurer) who left last year to follow his passion for Hydrology and Janet Petersen who did such an outstanding job as secretary for the New Zealand Branch that she was seconded to work as secretary for the CASANZ Council. While both extremely talented individuals in their own right, they have been ably replaced by Jenny Simpson and Kathy Nieuwenhuijsen branch Secretary and Treasurer respectively who have both done an outstanding job in their first year.

I am particularly proud that the New Zealand branch was selected to hold the 2011 CASANZ Conference in Christchurch – largely due to the hard work put in by Tracy Freeman. This event promises to be a huge success and I strongly encourage all branch members to participate in the 2011 Conference.

Finally, this is my last report as branch President. I have thoroughly enjoyed my time as President and would like to thank the NZ Branch committee and for their hard work and support during the past three years. I would also like to thank the many New Zealand branch members who has contacted me over the past three years with ideas and suggestions. I hope you will continue to support Emily Wilton, the acting branch president who has kindly taken over the role of Acting Branch President. I intend to continue working with the NZ branch committee as time allows.

Paul Baynham  
Branch President