

## Department of Environmental Management Staff Profiles

Compiled by Jocelyn HENDERSON

*Master of Environmental Policy and Management student, Lincoln University, Christchurch, New Zealand*

---



### HAMISH RENNIE

Hamish Rennie has been teaching environmental management and planning at Lincoln University since March 2007. He started his career as a land resources scientist after gaining a BSc Hons in Geography from the University of Otago but, while employed at the Ministry of Works and Development Head Office, where he earned his practising certificate as a resource manager, he realised that they “had the science to address soil conservation, but couldn’t change behaviour.” This realisation sparked an interest in human geography which led him to Memorial University of Newfoundland to undertake research with an indigenous people’s fisheries cooperative.

After returning to New Zealand, he embarked upon a wildly varied career with the New Zealand government, working for the Ministry of Foreign Affairs and the Ministry of Health before moving to the Department of Conservation in 1990. Here he was involved with writing the coastal tendering section of the RMA, (blame him for any problems) and dealing with the interface between the RMA and fisheries and marine farming legislation, as well as developing the first NZ Coastal Policy Statement. He then moved to managing DOC’s International Unit, working on the Convention for Biodiversity and implementing the Antarctic Treaty Environmental Protocols. He describes this as a dream job, which he only left for another dream job as a geography lecturer at Waikato University. During his 12 years at Waikato he completed his PhD on the geography and planning of marine farming in New Zealand, and became a member of the NZPI. Amongst his

wide-ranging achievements, Hamish is particularly proud of arguing for the 2010 NZCPS to include provisions to protect surf breaks – a world first with real planning impact – and of creating the Lincoln Planning Review. Despite his full teaching schedule and the constant demands of caring for his wife’s beloved flock of Ryeland sheep, Hamish also does pro bono work as a hearings commissioner and expert witness to maintain the sharpness and connection with application that he feels is critical to the courses he teaches.

When asked for his perspective on planning today, Hamish was fairly dismal about it. He particularly worries about “the general level of ignorance about how the RMA is supposed to work among the public, media, politicians, and unqualified people required by employers to do planning work.” Hamish thinks that the potential of the RMA and the advances it made have been undermined by central government reforms, in 2017 especially, and by central government’s use of National Standards. Public participation has been stifled, democracy has been lost and instead, “it has reintroduced a political and allocative approach, while removing much of the transparency, and taken us backward to activities-based planning.” However, he thinks replacing the RMA is a bad move due to litigation and difficulties in setting in place the new approach, both of which will challenge planners. “It took two decades to get a strong NZCPS, two and a half decades before the Supreme Court fixed an early error by a lower court that had hamstrung the RMA, and three decades to get a strong National Policy Statement for Freshwater Management. How long will it take for the legislation to have working instruments and appropriate precedent-setting court cases? My guess – at least two decades. If all the people working on the reforms were working on implementing the RMA it would be a much better use of resources.”