
What if?
Future Seas Scenario Planning and the Establishment of a Marine Reserve Network

One of the most difficult tasks for planners is to get beyond the issues of the day and really plan for the future. A number of tools are around, but rarely do we find readily accessible well-explained examples of thinking 50 years ahead. On June 6th the WWF published “What if?” which uses a scenario planning method to try to understand how the biological, social, economic, and cultural aspects of the marine environment in New Zealand will change over the next 50 years, how it will be protected and used, and the role that a marine reserve network should play in that process. This is a timely publication in light of the recent announcement of proposals for marine reserves on the West Coast and the message from the Minister for the Environment that the long delayed marine protection legislation will progress in this term of government. The publication is readable and accessible and hard wearing, and contains very useful well-referenced information on a range of marine planning matters. It is a good source book. The effectiveness of the approach, facilitated by URS New Zealand, will depend in part on what one’s expectations are. As a participant in some of the scenario building processes, I have found the presentation quite interesting and the process helped to stimulate my thinking through the knowledge gained from experts in areas of the marine environment with which I was less familiar. It is also pertinent to note that the work was largely done in 2006/07. One scenario successfully conjectures the economic collapse that apparently blind-sided politicians, business and planners alike. Coastal and marine planners, especially those in environmental planning, should get hold of this for its direct relevance. Other planners may find the scenarios very useful to read in a more generic sense – hopefully it will get the creative juices flowing.


NZPI EDUCATION POLICY REVIEW
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The NZPI has decided to review its Education Policy, and a draft of a proposed new policy was circulated to planning programme heads on 3rd July 2009. As always, it will be a difficult issue. The educational needs of the profession are always hard to define because of the varied skills and knowledge that is required of a planner, and the many fields of professional planning. There is also the question of how much should be taught on the job and how much at University and the distinct differences between form of delivery of research-led education required by the government and the expectations of those not involved in tertiary education.

The Tertiary Education Commission, for instance, is heading toward adopting the international standard (the Bologna Agreement) which is based around a 3 year bachelors degree with options of plus 1 year, and plus 2 years for post graduate qualifications. This is the model that Lincoln has established and has recently been reaccredited by the NZPI. It means that if a student has not met the standard to advance from undergraduate to postgraduate study they will not be able to complete a professional planning qualification at Lincoln. The traditional planning programmes at Auckland and Massey, however, have four year undergraduate planning degrees. This means that their students do not need to meet the post graduate academic entry standards that the Lincoln students do. On the other hand, students at Lincoln can complete a BEMP with a professional planning minor after three years, but not be eligible for membership of the NZPI. Such issues are bound to form part of the discussion of the draft policy, as will the proposed content of the education programmes.

Planning education has not featured on the NZPI annual conference programme for some time. Consequently, Lincoln’s Prof Ali Memon has initiated a meeting of New Zealand planning programme representatives at the Australia and New Zealand Planning Schools’ annual conference which is being held at
Griffith University in Australia in August 2009. Fortuitously, the Australian planning schools are reviewing their equivalent accreditation procedures at the same conference. It is expected that this will enable useful comparisons of content and delivery.

NZPI membership A general reminder to folk to keep up their NZPI membership! Recent issues of Planning Quarterly have focused on Coastal Planning and Transport Planning. The upcoming issue will focus on the RMA reforms and the following issue will feature structure planning.