

Standards are being normalised for environmental practice, offering greater security to the profession and comfort to clients, write EIANZ directors Nigel Murphy and Bill Haylock.

Setting the standard and reducing risks: EIANZ

The Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand (EIANZ) has launched Australia's first certification scheme for environmental professionals in a move aimed at boosting community and business confidence. The program, developed with support from the Federal Department of the Environment, has created a qualification so that skilled and ethical environmental professionals can be recognised along with their counterparts from engineering, accounting, planning and architecture.

It seems to have found its mark not just

with practitioners but also consultancy firms and government departments. More than 65 professionals from across the country qualified as Certified Environmental Practitioners (CEnvP) in the first intake. To encourage employees to seek certification, some consultancies are recognising it as an additional qualification, offering new CEnvPs similar pay increases to Certified Professional Engineers (CPEng).

Within the government sector, the Queensland EPA and the EIANZ SEQ Division has set up a joint working group

to review legislative procedures and identify opportunities to recognise CEnvP status. It will initially examine the range of EPA application forms – or the accompanying reports and submissions – requiring signature by “appropriately qualified persons”. The preferred outcome is a requirement that professionals preparing or signing such documents should hold current environmental certification (or equivalent), not only to guide applicants but also to provide a measure of quality assurance. Some government authorities have also embraced the certification program, with numerous applications from among its ranks.

The second round is currently underway and includes the first applicants from New Zealand. It is expected to attract more attention and applicants as the potential for savings on public liability insurance is realised.

Insurance expense prohibitive
Professional Indemnity insurance is a major issue for consultants. It is expensive

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and often has prohibitive exclusions, with many consultants believing the premiums are not justifiable based on the level of risk. Some cannot even obtain insurance, a problem for both them and potentially their clients.

The EIANZ has investigated creating its own scheme, leveraging the economies of scale available to a membership in excess of 1,750 – with the potential for more than 5,000 – and acknowledging the risk reduction aspect of CEnvP.

Some 132 members responded to a survey of PI issues, requirements, needs and past performance. We used the information to seek expressions of interest from brokers interested in managing a PI insurance scheme that was streamlined, competitive, specific and acknowledged the certificate qualifications.

Six responded, a good outcome given the difficulty many individual consultants have had in securing interest from insurers



at all. Part of the selection process included interviews, which required the brokers to demonstrate an understanding of the EIANZ and its members. From that process Jardine Lloyd Thompson (JLT) was appointed in early July and within four weeks had discussed a proposed scheme with the majority of recognised PI underwriters in Australia.

Four are very interested and JLT is currently negotiating the details of a proposed scheme. Their proposals were expected in early August, with details on risk categories (risk levels for practitioners vary from those involved in policy drafting to contaminated land assessments), amounts of professional indemnity (\$500,000 to \$10 million), restrictions/exclusions, CEnvP implications and the base rates and terms.

Once secured, the scheme will be available for all environmental practitioners throughout Australia and New

FACT FILE

Minimum certification requirements

- A relevant environment related degree
- Five years' full time experience within the past decade
- Statement of ethical conduct
- Nomination by three respected environmental professionals
- Evidence that the candidate is a respected member of the profession (referee statements, publications, citations, curriculum vitae, reports)
- Ongoing training and professional improvement (50 hours over two years)
- Certification will be reviewed on a two yearly basis

Zealand and will provide a base rate dependent on the categories and amounts insured. A discount will be available for EIANZ members and then a further discount will be made for those who are CEnvP certified. It could be ready as soon as mid-August.

More on the Certified Environmental Practitioners program at www.cenvp.org

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