

Honorary Professor Peter Skelton, CNZM

Lincoln University Honorary Degree, Doctor of Natural Resources

2016

Former Environment Court Judge Peter Skelton, now an Environment Canterbury Commissioner, is considered a pioneer in his field.

In 1978, he became the first Environment Court Judge to be based in the South Island, with the expansion of a judiciary based in Auckland and Wellington.

He spent more than 20 years in the role, and more recently, his depth of experience has played a key part in developing water management plans for Canterbury.

Following his retirement from the bench in February 2000, he brought his high level of expertise to Lincoln, acting as the Associate Professor of Resource Management Law at the University between 2000 and 2008.

He taught undergraduate and postgraduate programmes, as well as supervising research students. He also wrote and contributed to many journal articles, and participated in conferences and seminars in New Zealand and overseas. His longstanding experience and breadth of knowledge is said to have put Lincoln at the forefront of environmental management education.

During Honorary Professor Skelton's time as an Environment Court Judge, he travelled the length and breadth of New Zealand hearing appeal cases. Amongst his most notable were the Clyde Dam appeals; the Kaitorete Spit sand mining application; the Ahuriri, Maitaia, Rakaia, Kawarau, and Buller River Conservation Order Inquiries; the Doubtful Sound water export proposal; the Christchurch metropolitan refuse landfill appeals and a series of declaration cases that set the scene for developing plans under the Resource Management Act in the early 1990s.

He also presided over the Environment Waikato hearings concerning the control of nitrates entering Lake Taupo as an Independent Commissioner, and following that a series of cases in the Lower Waitaki Valley. These included Meridian Energy's North Bank Tunnel hydro-electric generation proposal and the Hunter Downs Irrigation Scheme.

Honorary Professor Skelton has always had a strong interest in access to justice, both as a practising lawyer and as a Judge. In 2001 he was appointed the first Chair of the Environmental Legal Assistance Fund's Advisory Committee, which, administered by the Ministry for the Environment, enables community groups to obtain funding for resource management cases.

In 2010 he was appointed as one of seven Commissioners to govern the Canterbury Regional Council (Environment Canterbury). In this role he has played an active part in the implementation of the Canterbury Water Management Strategy and has led the development of the statutory plans for managing Canterbury's water resources under the Resource Management Act. He has also been responsible for the consenting and other regulatory functions of the Council. Following the Canterbury Earthquakes he has taken a leading role in developing recovery plans under the Canterbury Earthquake Recovery legislation.

In 2000 Honorary Professor Skelton was awarded the Alfred O Glasse Award by the New Zealand Planning Institute for outstanding services to planning by a non-planner.

In 2012, the Resource Management Law Association of New Zealand awarded him the prestigious Principal Judge RJ Bollard Lifetime Commemorative Award, in recognition of his outstanding contribution to resource management.

He is an Honorary Life Member of the Resource Management Law Association, and the Legal Research Foundation of New Zealand. He is also an Honorary Fellow of the Environment Institute of Australia and New Zealand.

In 2001 Honorary Professor Skelton was made a Companion of the New Zealand Order of Merit in recognition of his services to environment law.

It is with pleasure that I present Honorary Professor Peter Skelton for the degree of Doctor of Natural Resources *honoris causa*.

[571 words]