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INTRODUCTION

The New Zealand Institute of Forestry is a national organisation of people involved in forest management, utilisation, research and consulting. Incorporated in 1927, the Institute now has about 750 members. In recent years there have been an increasing number of opportunities and challenges for the Institute to offer an increased level of "quality assurance" on the quality of advice and practice offered not only by its membership but by others in the industry as well. The unprecedented level of interest in private investment in forestry in New Zealand in the last five years has attracted a large number of investors and potential investors to the industry, including an increasing number of professional people who have a perceptive interest in the quality of advice and practice being offered by an industry in which they have little knowledge.

The 1993 NZIF AGM and conference in Napier brought some strong calls for the NZIF to offer higher standards of protection for the public, including those interested in investing in the industry as well as those using forestry services for harvesting and marketing of existing investments. Unfortunately there have been a number of regrettable cases of substandard advice and practice brought to the attention of the Institute, involving not only non-members but also some members of the Institute itself.

Many of these concerns and their solutions are addressed in the aggregation of personal qualities known as "professionalism", i.e.:

- competence, arising from:
  - education
  - experience
  - application
  - intellectual ability
  - attitudes and values
  - ethical standards.

While all of the above are individual qualities, they need to be part of and supported by a body of like-minded individuals constituting a "profession", which offers and supports:

- specialised education to acquire knowledge and skills
- a unique and essential service, recognised as such by the community
- an emphasis on social responsibility and public service
- autonomy, responsibility and individual accountability
- codes of ethics and performance standards, normally maintained by a self-governing association of colleagues (NZIAS, 1994)

These then constitute the qualities that our individual members must exhibit and the support that the Institute must provide, if it is to offer the standards and levels of quality assurance sought by the public.

CURRENT NZIF STRUCTURE AND FOCUS

The current NZIF membership structure and membership requirements is illustrated in Figure 1. Full Members are required to have experience in forestry and in the Institute and to have completed a formal course in forestry or an allied discipline. The latter requirement is non-specific and has not been rigorously applied by Council.

The current membership structure is more oriented towards an inclusive and collegial society and is only partly prescriptive of professional qualities and standards. This is in line with what the current membership want. A 1994 survey of members (which drew a very high 80% response) asked members to rate the relative importance of reasons for belonging to the Institute. Keeping in touch with trends in forestry rated most highly, followed by opportunity to exchange ideas/networking. Allied with these reasons, receiving New Zealand Forestry was also highly rated. Professional image was also seen as important by nearly 50% of respondents but trailed the other reasons above in relative importance. These results are likely to be as much a reflection of what the Institute is currently delivering as what members might desire.

In 1993 the NZIF Consultants Recognition Committee advanced proposals for converting the current recognition scheme to one of registration, to strengthen the scheme in terms of both title and underlying process. The proposal also advanced an option that ultimately a registration scheme should apply to all members of the Institute.

In the 1994 survey of NZIF member-

* This paper was presented at the Canterbury University School of Forestry 25th Anniversary Conference.

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Figure 1. Current Membership Model

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ship, members were asked to indicate their level of support for the consultant registration proposal and they were also asked if such a registration scheme should be made available to full members as well. The results of this survey showed strong support for the first question and reasonable support for the latter.

Members were also asked for their agreement to the proposition that continuing professional development should be a requirement of consultants and of full members. While there was good support for CPD as a requirement for consultant members, the support for the same for full members was ambivalent.

The level of awareness of the NZIF Code of Ethics was also surveyed. Of concern is the fact that less than half the membership outside of the recognised consultants are aware of the requirements of the NZIF Code of Ethics. This should not be taken to infer that many members do not recognise or exhibit ethical behaviour; rather it illustrates that the Institute does not promote its own code effectively.

Of interest too from the survey was the relative level of qualifications held by the current membership. Seventy per cent of members hold a University degree or diploma.

A brochure describing the proposed model was circulated to all NZIF members in March 1995 for consideration prior to the AGM. The proposed model was debated at the AGM and narrowed passed in principle, to be further developed and presented again for ratification at the 1996 AGM.

Discussion at the AGM and communications received by the Task Group and Council since has identified the following main issues and areas of concern:

- effect on the current membership categories, especially on Full Members
- Other issues which are being advanced in parallel are:
  - consultant recognition
  - revision of the NZIF code of ethics.

Qualifications
As anticipated, the level of qualification required to progress through to registered status is the most contentious.

1) Forestry qualifications – the essential debate here is whether the qualifica-
As alluded to previously, the use of the word "Forester" does have both prejudicial connotations and also doesn't recognise the connotations we need to rather than being perhaps too narrowly disciplined. These professions work from a much narrower discipline base and it is easier to set and identify the relevance of different levels of qualification. However, we do need to accept that we need to phase out of the "Full" membership category after the transition period. This does seem to be more than just resistance to change, as people value their full membership category and don't see why they should lose it if they choose not to pursue registration. One of the reasons for getting rid of the full membership category was to avoid confusion in the minds of the public as to the meaning of full versus registered members. We could sell this distinction within our membership, but to the public it will always tend to be their inherent understanding of the titles, rather than what we would like them to think. The Task Group then commissioned a survey, targeted at public on the fringe of the profession to test their existing perceptions.

Consultants
The whole issue of registration for NZIF members grew out of the intention to convert the current Consultants recognition scheme to a registration scheme. The conversion of the Consultants recognition scheme is relatively straightforward and would probably have been achieved by now if it hadn’t been decided to incorporate a revision of the basic membership structure leading up to registration and registration as a Consultant. There is now some urgency to proceed with at least a registration option for consultants.

Code of Ethics
Underpinning any development of professionalism in the eyes of the public will be the code of ethics that our members accept and adhere to. The intention of the current revision of the code to promote self-regulation in working within one’s own sphere of expertise (or rather not working outside of it) will be an important aspect to the debate on the importance of qualifications.

ALTERNATIVE MEMBERSHIP MODEL
To address some of the concerns raised by members, an alternative model was developed which essentially retains the existing membership categories but provides a registration category as an additional qualification for those who desire it (Figure 4).

The current survey of "external customers" will help us assess whether a recognisably fully professional membership category can be provided alongside the existing structure.

The issues noted in the Development of Membership/Registration Model section above and the alternative models are being discussed with each of the NZIF sections prior to putting an emerging membership model to the membership at the 1996 AGM for ratification and introduction.

DISCUSSION
Consultation with Local Sections
To date meetings have been held with six local sections (Northland, Rotorua, Hawke's Bay, Nelson, Canterbury, and Otago/Southland). The meetings have consistently supported retention of the existing membership categories and have

![Diagram](Figure 4. NZIF Model Alternative Membership)
emphasised the membership values expressed in the 1994 survey, i.e. networking and interaction in things forestry. No meetings seemed willing to "sacrifice" full membership status for what could be a relatively small number of future members, to make the changes envisaged in the original proposed membership model.

Only one meeting, Canterbury, showed reasonable support for moves to improve the expertise, professionalism and public recognition of foresters.

Other themes arising from the meetings have been:
- experience as a key criterion of competence
- use of peer review in membership advancement
- strengthening disciplinary procedures for consultants.

Public Perception
A postal and telephone survey of public on the fringe of the profession was carried out in October/November 1995. Targeted for the survey were a sample of people who have used or may use the advice or services of forestry professionals, e.g. solicitors and accountants who in turn advise others, farm foresters, investors and forest owners.

The 23 respondents held generally quite consistent perceptions of the meanings of "member" and "registered" designations. Membership of NZIF was seen as a positive attribute in a forestry specialist and advisers and potential clients view previous experience as a key criterion in selecting a specialist, with some also taking note of formal tertiary qualifications.

Designations of "Registered Forestry Professional" and "Registered Forestry Consultant" have positive connotations of greater significance to survey respondents than the designation of "member", inferring standards set by NZIF and some obligations on the part of NZIF to redress problems and offer protection.

CONCLUSIONS
The perceived need for the NZ Institute of Forestry to provide an enhanced professional status within its mainstream membership categories is not widely supported by the current membership. Members primarily value the opportunity to network and interact with forestry colleagues through the Institute over professional image.

As a result a membership structure which retains the current progression through to Full Membership without the need for specific academic qualifications, and then offers optional registration categories for forestry professionals and consultants, is preferred.

A survey of potential clients and customers of forestry professionals shows that these people are likely to correctly perceive the emerging distinctions between "member" and "registered" categories.

REFERENCES

NZFRI’s 50th Jubilee
World forestry and timber industry leaders, practitioners, and researchers will converge on Rotorua from April 1 to 4, 1997 to join with NZFRI past and present staff in celebration of 50 years of research and support to the forest industry of New Zealand. The jubilee celebrations will include a major international conference titled "Forestry Research to Meet Future World Needs: the Mid-Point in our Century of Change", allied field tours, and an NZFRI Open Day.