

A review of NZIF Registration Practice

Peter Berg, Chairman of the Registration Board

Introduction

Members will recall that a little over two and a half years ago, the NZIF reviewed its consultant recognition process and established new registration procedures. The Chairman of the Registration Board at the time, Dr Bruce Manley, described the process and its objectives in a paper published in the Journal.

Recently the Board met to review its practice and procedures, and as part of that process, considered the results of a confidential survey of recent registrants undertaken by Kathrine Frazer of Kinetics. Some of the details of that survey that indicate the way the process is viewed by applicants are

reproduced here. These results will be an important guide for the Board in improving its performance in the registration process.

The Survey

People who had been through the new registration process were contacted by post with a questionnaire that was to be returned by fax. A total of 29 surveys were sent out and 24 were returned (83 per cent response).

The questions asked and responses are shown in Table 1

Comments

On the basis of the survey and some telephone discussions, there are a number of observations and

comments about the registration process.

Scheme and Benefits

- A number of those surveyed were neutral on the advantages of registration, either because their employer did not require it or because the professional standing of their employer assumed more importance than their own professional standing.
- Some would like to see the title “Registered Forester” or “Registered Professional Forester” used (as is the case with the Canadian and US Societies).
- Some of the benefits of the registration process were

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Don't remember or can't answer
1. I found the Registration procedure a useful professional exercise	7	14	2	1		
2. The application form was clear and easy to complete	2	12	2	1		7
3. The Registration interview was conducted professionally	11	11	2			
4. The Registration interview assessed a good range of my work skills	3	14	3	3		
5. The Registrar and Secretary are approachable	13	11				
6. The administration of the Registration scheme is efficient	4	13	6	1		
7. Being Registered has assisted my career progression	2	7	12	2	1	
8. Being Registered has enhanced my attractiveness to clients	3	8	11*	2		
9. The CPD requirement sets a good professional standard	4	13	4	1	1	
10. I have benefited from promotion of the Registration scheme		9	10	1	1	2
11. I recommend other Forestry Professionals to become registered	7	14	3			
12. I receive good value from my registration	1	15	5	3		
* (irrelevant for some)						

Table 1: Survey Questions and Responses

considered to be:

1. Being made aware of liability issues and the need to carry PI insurance.
 2. The assessment process was a good opportunity to take stock of work to date, and provided some personal insights.
 3. The interview was a useful discussion with senior professionals about professional issues.
- “As a specialist consultant almost all my work comes from professional contacts. Most already know my skills and experience. From this point of view registration is less important to me in developing client relationships. However, I strongly support the scheme and believe my registration contributes to a common interest and the principle of professional accountability”.
 - “I have only done one job where the client required a ‘Registered Forestry Consultant’ to do the work. It would be good if 80 per cent of clients demanded that the consultant be registered, particularly for technical forestry work.”
 - “Probably attractiveness to clients has been enhanced, however this has been negated a little by the need to recover PI costs through increased fees.”
 - “The process has been worthwhile and could be developed further. Can contribute to the image of forestry consultants by showing that standards are met.”
 - “What the Registration Board has done is very good... it takes a lot of commitment, so I am pleased the Institute has done this. I am impressed by the professionalism of the process.”

Promotion of Registration Scheme

- Several respondents stressed the need for targeted marketing/PR to ensure the forestry-professional-using public knows that there is such a thing as a Registered Forestry Consultant, and what the benefits of using one are.
- MAF (in some regions), some local authorities, NZFFA branches, etc. already advise people to use a RFC.
- Some respondents suggested the

NZIF promote the registration scheme (e.g. by articles in the forest industry magazines and the NZIF Journal) covering benefit and protection for users and for members.

CPD

- Views about the CPD requirement were mixed, with some respondents noting that identifying specific training opportunities was not always simple. Others felt that the description of CPD could be further improved.
- The profession needs a better appreciation of CPD, with more emphasis given to provision of specific CPD opportunities (courses, seminars), quite possibly jointly with other professions.
- It was widely acknowledged that CPD is a key component of the Registration process, important to maintaining professional capability.
- CPD requirements for NZIF are acknowledged as not being particularly onerous. It is good that a minimum level of performance is set, however those who are serious about their professional development will probably exceed it significantly.
- “Can get most of year’s requirement just by attending the NZIF conference”.

Interview Process

While respondents identified issues with the interview process these were generally specific to individuals (eg. should have provided a wider range of reports, felt that panel focused on quite a narrow range of my

expertise, panel were possibly a little picky, etc). However a couple of wider issues were identified for the Board to give greater attention to in the future.

- Confidentiality can be a problem (i.e. where work submitted in support of application is privileged), and also commercially sensitive as consultants from other firms sit on the panel (Note however that all members of the Board are already required to sign a confidentiality agreement).
- Feed back on strengths and weaknesses after the interview was seen as a positive process, although this would probably need to be provided later after the panel had an opportunity to discuss their separate views. Perhaps follow-up by telephone after the result was notified would provide further value to applicants by giving them advice on how they might further develop their careers and widen their professional capability.

Summary

Although the Board has had limited opportunity to discuss these issues it believes most can be readily addressed within existing practices.

Probably the single most important issue is that of promotion of the registration scheme, and its registrants to the forestry and wider communities. The Board has already taken steps in this regard, having appointed a promotions committee and endorsed a strategy developed by this group. It is likely this will be the Board’s major activity (outside the registration process) over the next twelve months.

Local Section News

Rotorua (Neil Geerkens)

Two successful events this month. A beautiful day for 25 people meeting at Minginui Village, and heading into Whirinaki forest to view and hear about a selection logging trial established in 1979. This is a magnificent high density podocarp/hardwood forest, but which is over mature and in decline. Every storm event removes some of the standing volume. Conclusion was best management for wood production in this forest would be windthrow

salvage, not selection logging. Second event included a BBQ for 35, followed by demonstrations of the TimberTech log making tool and a GPS unit. Further activities this year have yet to be planned.

Manawatu (Mike Smith)

In practical terms attending or belonging to the local branch of the NZFFA is still the best method of keeping up to date with what is happening locally on the ground in that most branches meet on a regular