



Earl Bennett: Citation for Life Membership of NZILA

29/05/12

Earl Bennett has made an outstanding contribution to the Landscape Architecture profession over the past 40 years. Earl gained a Bachelor of Science Degree (Hons) in Landscape Architecture from California State Polytechnic University (Pomona) in 1972. He then worked for a multi-disciplinary engineering and planning firm in California before coming to NZ in 1973.

It was while working at Ministry of Works and Development in the 1970's & 80's that Earl's grasp of the larger landscape was appreciated. He undertook landscape assessments, following the McHarg theory, for significant housing areas in Nelson and Wellington and guidelines for highway management on the West Coast. The 1981 Landscape Assessment of SH6 from Hokitika to Haast Pass and the subsequent design and management along the highway is some of his best work as it represents his philosophy that our work as landscape architects in these sensitive environments should become invisible. Later, his Canterbury United Councils landscape and visual assessment (VAMPLAN) for the Canterbury province became ground breaking as a method for identifying regional landscape types.

Between Earl's two stints at MWD he was a full time lecturer in the Landscape Section at Lincoln University. It was here that he influenced the many students who passed through those doors with his practical knowledge in landscape technology and studio projects. Even today Earl continues to assist with studio work and Major Design projects in the School of Landscape Architecture at Lincoln, giving sound advice and encouraging students to strive for higher standards.

During Earl's time since immigrating to NZ he has been heavily involved with the development of the NZILA. From being its first secretary-treasurer in 1973 and then vice president, he assisted in forming a solid foundation for the ensuing years of the Institute and the profession in general. In 1975 he formed and chaired the Canterbury Landscape Group. This was an association for all people involved with the profession in the Canterbury region including both professionals and contractors. For a further 15 years Earl was committed to either this group or, its successor, the Canterbury Branch of NZILA. He then served for four years on the organising committee for the IFLA Eastern Regional Conference in 1995, NZ's first international conference.

Following the conclusion of the Ministry of Works in 1988 Earl became a consultant in Christchurch with clients from government, and local and regional authorities. Much of this work has been in resource planning, (guidelines for Queenstown Lakes District Councils Plan), impact assessments (marine farms) highway design and management (SH6 Westland, SH1 Kaikoura, SH73 Yaldhurst and the Temuka and Timaru bypasses), and larger site planning and design projects (Denniston Historic Area, and Hokitika Gorge).

Other significant projects of Earl's includes the Ross Goldfields project which was a joint venture between DoC and the community, and the South Westland Visitor Strategy. Both projects still contribute to the traveller's appreciation of the landscape of the West Coast.

For the Christchurch City Council (Plan Variation 51) he established a threshold for overhead transmission cables. It is because of this Variation that Christchurch has a very limited amount of overhead powerlines. Then later in Earls career he spent six months teaching as a 'foreign visiting professor' at Awaji Landscape Planning and Horticulture Academy of Hyogo University in Japan.

Earl has also published work including 'Paths and Paving for New Zealand', guidelines for management of roadside vegetation, the future of SH73 in Arthurs Pass NP, a strategy for highway rest areas in Westland and Canterbury, and Canterbury Highway 2000 concepts.

Over the past 40 years Earl has given an enormous amount of time, wise counsel and support to the NZILA at both national and local levels. He has been a forerunner and an innovative practitioner with his landscape assessment methods and planning work, and in his role as lecturer, tutor and mentor to many students he has upheld high academic standards and given encouragement and guidance throughout his tenure at Lincoln University.

Earl is an eminent Landscape Architect who has made an immense contribution to the profession in New Zealand. He is deserving of the Life Membership of the NZILA.