



## S+SNZ Ethics Committee

**Meeting Date:** Thursday 4 November 2021

**Subject:** Ethics Committee Report for Period 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021

**Report from:** Malcolm Hanrahan (Chair, Ethics Committee)

### Summary

1. This is the full, end of year 2020/21 report from the Ethics Committee to Council.
2. The Ethics Committee considered 7 and resolved 5 complaints in the period 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021. None of these constituted a prima facie case for breach of *Policy A19-24 Conduct of Members*.

### Purpose

3. This report summarises the activities of the Ethics Committee for the full financial year 1 July 2020 to 30 June 2021.

### Background

4. Under the Constitution the Council of Survey and Spatial New Zealand (S+SNZ) is responsible for disputes, breaches of rules and penalties in relation to certain matters involving its members. The Constitution also establishes an Ethics and Standards Committee. The Council prescribes the Terms of Reference to deal with such matters and appoints experienced and respected surveyors as Committee members. In particular, the function of the Committee is to consider membership, discipline, ethics, appeals, policy and process issues and may make recommendations to Council for consideration and determination.
5. The Committee at 30 June 2021 comprised the following members:

- Malcolm Hanrahan (Canterbury) *RPSurv*
- Nicole Alexander (Napier)
- Chris Hopper (Canterbury), *RPSurv*
- Mike Morris (Wellington) *FNZIS*, *RPSurv*
- Rick O’Flaherty (Auckland) *RPSurv*.

Mike Morris took a leave of absence from the committee at the end of May for an extended period.

6. Administrative and processing support was provided by Jan Lawrence (National Operations Manager). Jan has brought assistance with administration processes and has become the main point of contact for complainants and members who are the subject of a complaint.

#### **Committee Vacancies**

7. The committee needs additional members, ideally somebody that would provide geospatial representation on the committee. Advertisement of the vacancy is in the process of being notified.

#### **Meetings**

8. Meetings are held approximately every two months. The Committee has met four times since 1 July 2020. All meetings are by Zoom/audio. The meetings have been reasonably well attended, but with reduced number of committee members, the risk of not meeting the required quorum increases.

#### **Complaint Metrics**

9. Three complaints from the previous year were closed out.
10. Six new complaints were received with the Committee closing out five in the period.
11. A number of enquires, that did not proceed to a formal complaint, were dealt with by Jan Lawrence.

#### **Nature of Complaints**

12. The complaints are diverse both as to what matters are covered and the quality/clarity of the complaints.
13. A couple of the complaints were complex involving various parties. One involved three members each from different firms.
14. The quality and nature of the information provided by complainants is variable. On occasions a large amount of information is provided, most of which is irrelevant to the specific issue at hand.
15. There has been a notable increase in expectation from complainants that the complaint they have made will see a timely tangible result to support their grievance.

16. It is clear many of the complainants have not been pleased with the outcome of the complaint, with some seeking further information and justification on the outcome. There are various reasons for this.
17. On at least one occasion an unwillingness from a member to assist dealing with matters raised by a complaint hindered resolution of the outcome.
18. Features of the complaints that were closed in the period included:
  - one complaint related to plagiarism of a planning report
  - One complaint related to an ambiguity over the identification of a boundary resulting in removal of a historic wall. This case was further complicated as there was possibility that cadastral work had been undertaken without adequate supervision of a Licenced Cadastral Surveyor.
  - One complaint related to misunderstanding of what was being requested by the surveyor
  - Others were of a general nature relating to how surveyors acted or didn't act. A couple were associated with fees.
  - One complaint was not progressed as it was associated with an unresolved legal dispute.
19. The committee found no prima facie case had been established on any of the complaints considered however one recommendation was made to Council for a formal reprimand.

#### **Other Work**

20. The introduction of Jan Lawrence has assisted with the required administrative tasks. The introduction of SharePoint has provided a more robust filing and file storage system.
21. The need remains to address several aspects, including providing better initial and more informative information to complainants. Doing so will assist in the quality and nature of complaints received and it will assist in the overall complainant expectations. Too many complainants show a frustration of the overall process.
22. One complaint processed in the year highlight the need to have greater structure and robustness around how complaints are addressed and reported. The current process is vulnerable to challenge from a dissatisfied party.

#### **Recommendation**

23. I recommend that Council **note** the contents of this report.

Malcolm Hanrahan  
Chair, Ethics Committee

