



Survey and Spatial New Zealand

2022 Registered Professional Surveyor (RPSurv) Member Survey

Analysis Report

including reference to

Certification Initiative RPSurv Reports

and

Vision NZ Ltd Report to the NZIS Council

on

RPSurv Certification

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1 Introduction

This report presents findings and recommendations from an analysis of the results of the 2022 *Registered Professional Surveyor* (RPSurv) Survey for the consideration of the CEO and S+SNZ governance.

2 Report Summary

The RPSurv survey shows a wide diversity of perspectives among respondents regarding its purpose, its value to respondents, and its prestige in general. These perspectives range from very negative to very positive, with a roughly even distribution that looks to be more or less a typical 'bell-shaped' curve (though this can't readily be statistically confirmed). That is, there is a large middle ground in which the majority of respondents see value to some greater or lesser degree, accompanied by doubts or concerns - often in comparison to the effort and cost to acquire and retain RPSurv. Also, some responses indicated that holding RPSurv is no guarantee of competency.

The major theme across the responses is that respondents consider that RPSurv does not have sufficient prestige, or gravitas, in the industry or marketplace and associated with that, there is little or no real public awareness. This perspective appears to widely drive attitudes in regard to its inherent value, and in acquiring and/or retaining it, given effort that is required to do so.

In the great majority of responses, and perhaps quite naturally, the perceived value is connected with a respondent's personal situation (as opposed to taking a wider, more holistic perspective). That is, how RPSurv facilitates, or might facilitate, their job opportunities or enhance their career and position in the industry. Many see no inherent value in RPSurv, with some either retaining it or intending to acquire it only because it's required by other entities for job/career prospects (e.g. Auckland council, employment requirement).

A few respondents mentioned possible alternatives to RPSurv, and showed an interest in the outcome of the Accreditation initiative.

Despite adverse perspectives about RPSurv, many of the respondents see value to differing degrees, and this would presumably be reflected in the wider S+SNZ membership. Even the more critical feedback indicates that if RPSurv had a higher profile, well promoted and supported in the marketplace by S+SNZ, and with good public awareness, its prestige will naturally increase, and hence its intrinsic value to members to some considerable degree.

3 Recommendation

RPSurv is retained, but enhanced. How this would be achieved is beyond the remit or scope of this analysis. There is discussion about RPSurv administration and processes, website presence, etc. in the Certification initiative paper *RPSURV & CPD REVIEWS - Main Report* - (J. Albiston October 2020).

Retaining and enhancing RPSurv would presumably tie in with the current Certification initiative (or perhaps more accurately, vice versa). This aspect is covered a little more in the Discussion section of this report.

The *REPORT to the Council of the NZIS on RPSurv CERTIFICATION* by Professor J. Hannah of Vision NZ Ltd (discussed in *Section 8.2* below), provides what I believe is excellent historical context and a useful roadmap for enhancing RPSurv. The conclusions and recommendations provided in that paper appear to me to align very well with the recent survey feedback.

4 RPSurv Background

Professor Hannah's *REPORT to the Council of the NZIS on RPSurv CERTIFICATION* provides an excellent narrative on the history of RPSurv. However, in a nutshell, the government originally required surveyors to be a fully *Registered Surveyor*. However, this statutory protection was removed in 2002, replaced with a cadastral-aligned construct.

However, NZIS as it was known then recognised the need to accommodate the expertise of non-cadastral surveyors, so in 2005 introduced RPSurv, intended as being similar to the *Chartered Professional Engineer* (CPEng) by the *Institution of Professional Engineers New Zealand* (IPENZ).

Those members who already held the *Registered Surveyor* title and had at least 3-years post registration experience were then "grandfathered" (well, "grand-parented") across to the new S+SNZ RPSurv title, without needing additional assessment. And from that point, applicants for RPSurv needed to apply for the title, going through proof of competency that took effort to complete, and a cost. However, my understanding is that the execution and administration of RPSurv over the years led to growing concerns by members about the value of RPSurv.

A Certification initiative was established as a pilot, and which is in progress. However, S+SNZ wanted to survey the members for their views on RPSurv as they stand now, and to get any insights about the best approach to resolve the issues for the members, and for the wider industry.

5 Analysis

5.1 Introduction

Just over 600 members answered an initial question about their current RPSurv status, creating three categories: **Current**, **Previous**, and **Never Held**.

The survey was qualitative in nature. It provided broad answer options and encouraged respondents to explain their perspectives on RPSurv, rather than prescribing more granular yes/no response options that would have furnished quantitative statistical data. As such, the survey structure makes it difficult to readily map responses back to the respondents' RPSurv status, which a more quantitative statistical approach would likely have enabled. However, this is no drawback: the approach the survey has taken has very successfully furnished high quality information for S+SNZ.

After providing their RPSurv status, many respondents didn't proceed further, mostly those who don't hold RPSurv (perhaps not surprisingly). However, this still left approximately 490 respondents who completed the survey to greater or lesser degrees, with excellent representation across the three categories. See the table below.

(Note that precise numbers through this analysis would require a lengthy mapping of each respondent to every question answered, as respondents variously skipped questions. Any additional value that might be gained in doing so would very unlikely justify the effort required.)

Category	Initial: RPSurv Status	Respondents (approx)
Current holders	185	160
Previously held RPSurv	48	40
Don't Hold RPSurv	368	290
TOTALS	601	490

For an organisation of ~1300, this turnout would appear to be excellent - a ratio that would satisfy any organisation. (The turnout was in fact much higher than for the general member survey earlier this year.) The information provided by these respondents in their extensive narrative feedback is highly informative, even illuminating.

The turnout, and the huge amount of feedback indicates a very high interest in RPSurv, and should reasonably, even accurately, reflect that of the wider S+SNZ membership base. There is a high degree of consistency, the information is unambiguous, and there are strong patterns - themes.

The information provided should enable a very useful understanding of how members view RPSurv and how it sits within the wider industry and general public. The information here suggests an opportunity, and direction, for S+SNZ in regard to treating RPSurv going forward.

The Discussion section of this report presents a representative sampling of the feedback, including some well-considered thoughts or that is otherwise quite compelling anyway.

This analysis and the findings presented were based on the documents provided below by the National Office.



5.2 Approach

There is considerable symmetry in the narratives provided by respondents *across the RPSurv status categories*. That is, perspectives of those who currently hold RPSurv can also be seen in the other status categories and vice versa.

- For instance, there are respondents who are thinking about letting their RPSurv lapse because they don't see any useful value - *the same reason* why other respondents have not applied for it. Understanding and resolving that aspect would then not only minimise lapses from happening but encourage non-holders to apply.

This analysis therefore took an holistic approach across the three holder status categories, reviewing the narratives collectively, rather than per category. This has enabled good insight as to what members think of RPSurv generally, despite whether or not they currently hold it or previously held it.

5.2.1 Negative Feedback

Typical for any survey, some of the feedback is quite negative, with one or two that put the boot into "NZIS" as well.

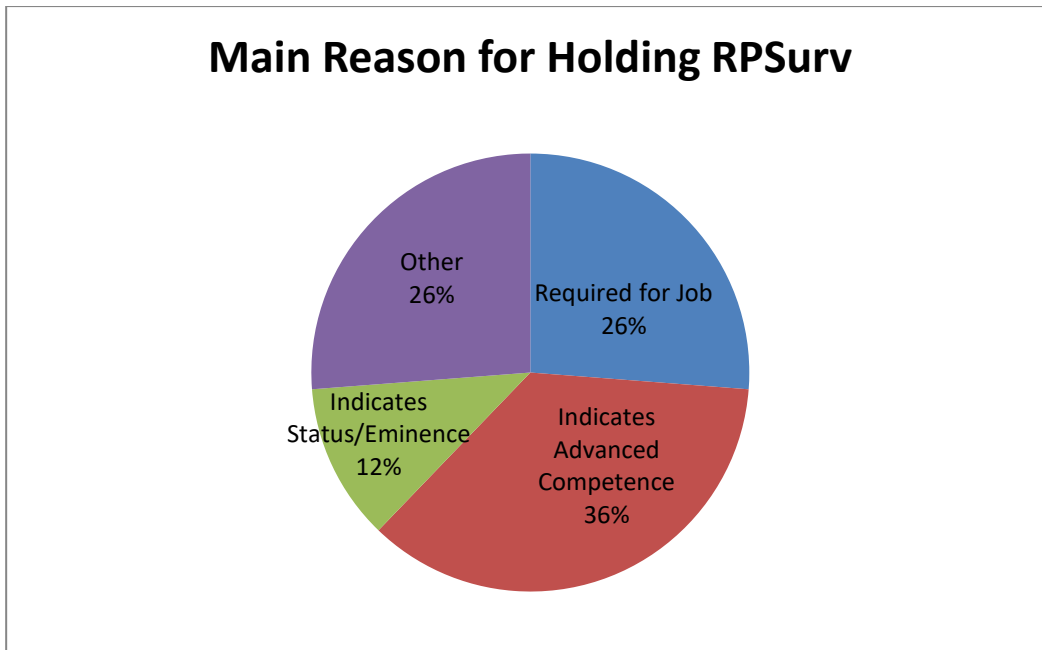
"Well, I thought it was to show advanced competence and an indicator of status/eminence, but in reality, RPSurv is a joke, because the hopeless, hopeless elected members of the NZIS have done nothing to promote it over the years. It has been thrown onto the compost and is buried beneath years of neglect."

However, while such responses could be considered outliers, they still show a degree of commitment (even passion) to the profession and are useful feedback (even if the tone could have been gentler).

6 Discussion

6.1 Respondents Who Hold RPSurv

Of the 601 respondents who responded to the survey, 185 currently hold RPSurv, and most of them (i.e. 164) answered the question as to the main reason for doing so. See the chart below.



Many of these respondents view RPSurv positively, with representative responses provided in *Section 6.3.5* later. However, those who responded that it's required for their job or career don't necessarily view RPSurv positively.

6.1.1 Job or Business Requirement

Many respondents hold RPSurv or see its value *only* as a job or career requirement or for business reasons. That is, an externally driven rationale rather than viewing RPSurv as having any inherent value for them personally. Common themes for requiring RPSurv were:

1. Expectations of surveying organisations, or the projects for whom they work
 2. Expectations of clients such as some city councils (especially Auckland)
 3. Engineering or land development career paths
 4. Ability to sign off as-built plans / surveys
 5. Owning a surveying business
 6. Useful in court cases
- *"Required by Auckland Council to certify Subdivision Engineering, plus to provide Expert Opinion at Land Valuation Tribunal (Environment Court) on Subdivision and Land Development Engineering."*
 - *"Enables me to sign off land development engineering designs and associated building consents for minor works. Gives extra gravitas when preparing tricky planning applications or presenting evidence for a hearing or court."*

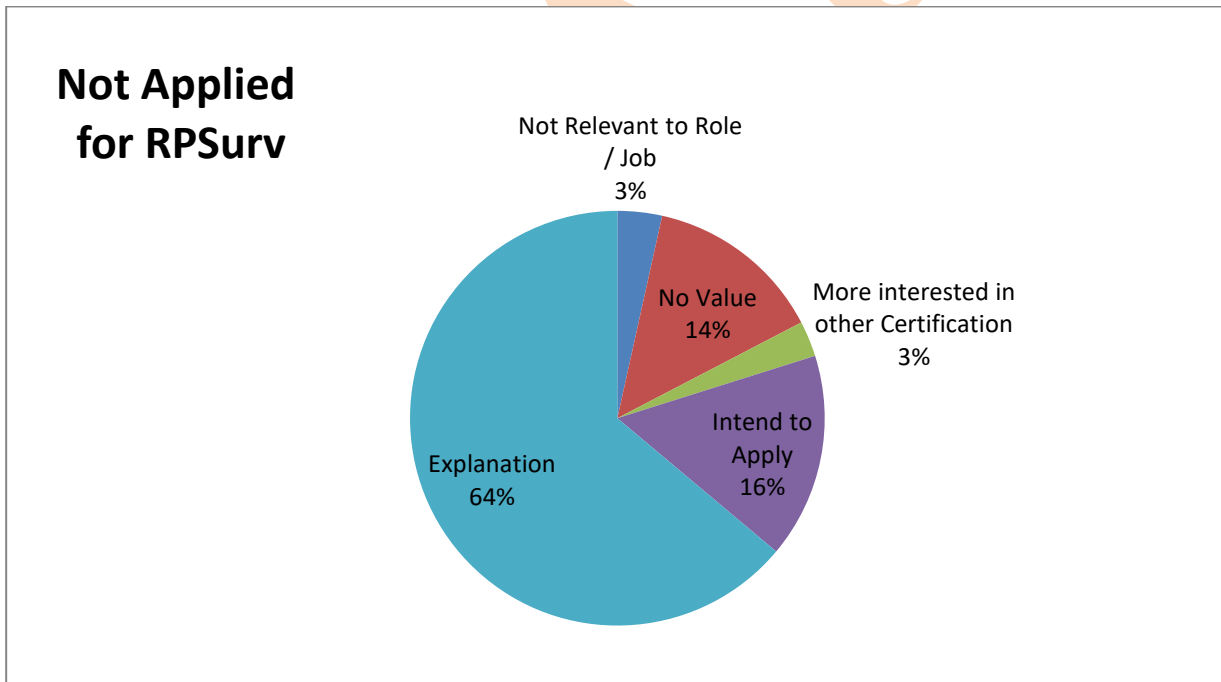
- *"The only purpose for myself is the certification requirement for TA's. There is so much continuous change in the development world that to remain an experienced (30yrs) and currently practicing engineering surveyor over multiple TAs should be skills development enough without additional work to keep existing qualifications.
If there are to be additional requirements to meet new legislation standards please make them high quality and very concise so as to not waste any time. Time for directors and staff is a precious resource. Also please ensure every TA recognises RPSurv without question at that point."*
- *"I didn't mind the idea. It lost momentum as a concept, I guess people didn't really need it to do their jobs. Now with Council not accepting engineering designs it would have been great to have kept it going and developed certification process that goes with it. That is happening under the recent work that Jayne is doing."*

6.2 Respondents Who Don't Hold RPSurv

Of the total 601 survey respondents, 368 (61%) indicated that they don't hold RPSurv. Of these, 46 (16%) intend to apply, suggesting a positive perception to some degree, but almost the same number of respondents see no value.

However, it's interesting that 187 respondents - almost 2/3rds - wanted to discuss it, indicating that RPSurv or some form of accreditation has at least potential value for Members, or should have.

This indicates a significant opportunity.



6.3 Response Themes

There are several strong themes running through the responses, presented below. The themes overlap and are strongly inter-related, and some responses could be placed under more than one heading.

6.3.1 Intrinsic Value - Critical Feedback

Many respondents (currently) see little intrinsic value in RPSurv in respect of career enhancement, professional credibility, or status in the industry, and would only acquire it if their career path or job opportunities required it. This is most probably also related to the effort and cost of obtaining it, and then having to retain it.

- *"I'm able to certify everything I want/need to as an LCS. There is no point incurring the time and expense (including additional ongoing expense) for a more grandiose post nominal that I don't need and no one understands."*
- *"In my region of work, I don't believe the RPSurv has any tangible value. It's value is that it should be widely recognised by people who operate in the land and property environment, but there has been so little effective marketing that the status is more confusing than anything else."*
- *"All the advertising and emails you have sent out had suggested that you had all this organised and we were going to be shortly thrilled and enthralled with a rejuvenated RPSurv. It sounds like you are no further forward after how many years."*
- *"Unless it is more robustly marketed by S+SNZ, there is little value in the Hawke's Bay region."*
- *"There isn't any [value] if it is not recognised by any council in NZ. It appears worthless outside of Auckland and as such I have made the decision to let it lapse this year. Any CPD gained has been used for licensing not RPSurv."*
- *"Personally I do not see any advantage [for RPSurv] with new certification process [happening]. I will continue to maintain competency as an LCS and am engaging 3rd party engineering expertise where required. In previous years I haven't diligently recorded CPD given the impending change and I am more likely to engage with CPD of a more technical nature such as the ICS workshop which is more relevant to my day to day activity."*
- *"There isn't any if it is not recognised by any council in NZ. It appears worthless outside of Auckland and as such I have made the decision to let it lapse this year. Any CPD gained has been used for licensing, not RPSurv."*
- *"No real reason [why I still have it]. Helps a bit with council, but I don't find much use for it."*
- *"[I] thought it was best to hold this. But the cost is immense and the benefit negligible or not apparent."*

6.3.2 Insufficient Prestige

A strong theme through the responses is that there is insufficient recognition of the RPSurv title - essentially, lacking prestige. This concern about prestige is inherent in other themes flowing through the survey feedback.

It appears that if RPSurv did hold sufficient prestige / gravitas, many S+SNZ members would see it as having real value to them and to the survey and spatial industry, *and worth retaining or acquiring*. One or two respondents also noted that RPSurv has little legal standing.

- *"[I would undertake RPSurv] if it had legal standing as the required 'qualification' for a required process/application, i.e. similar to Licensed Cadastral Surveyor or Chartered Professional Engineer."*
- *"[I would undertake RPSurv] If it actually held some value. ie was recognised as a an industry standard, by all Councils, or was a requirement by law to have a RPSurv certify work."*
- *"[I would undertake RPSurv] If it held more weight and recognition relative to engineering design and supervision."*
- *"Grandfathered from registration into RPSurv when it was promoted as a higher level of experience and expertise. I do not believe it has achieved this status."*

- *"RPSurv has not been promoted and recognised as I suspect anyone had intended from the outset. I had expected it to indicate advanced competence and therefore be useful in demonstrating to Territorial Authorities that the holder was suitably qualified in areas such as engineering and planning."*
- *Something to aspire to beyond licensing, which is fine for Cadastral but doesn't recognise the breadth of knowledge and experience required to advise clients on a wider range of development issues. A higher status indicating seniority within profession. Basis for marketing of the highest qualified people."*
- *"It is becoming harder to convince Councils that surveyors can carry out planning and engineering work, alongside their surveying work. This is where RPSurv should have value."*
- *"Not sure [what RPSurv main value is]. No one seems to know what it is or any benefit. It could be for how I consider it, which retains ongoing CPD, but not detailed land transfer work associated with Prac cert, which is only a very small part of my work."*

6.3.3 Competency - No Guarantee

Some of the feedback focussed on a competency issue.

- *"Just because I've watched a few webinars doesn't mean I'm competent."*
- *"Seems like it only exists to support the egos of surveyors past."*
- *"It's main value should be to acknowledge advanced competence in a particular field to our clients. In relation to Q5 below, I couldn't find what the required CPD is on the SSNZ website, so I don't know if I've maintained it. I do try to achieve the recommended 20 points per year recommended for all members."*
- *"Well, I thought it was to show advanced competence and an indicator of status/eminence, but in reality, RPSurv is a joke...."*

6.3.4 Insufficient Public Awareness

Another theme running through the responses is that of little or no public awareness of RPSurv and which again relates to the other themes - insufficient prestige, etc. Some respondents are concerned about S+SNZ not promoting RPSurv profile in the public domain.

- *"Hard to say [what value RPSurv has], as it has never really achieved a widespread acceptance, probably due to a lack of marketing by NZIS."*
- *"[I would undertake RPSurv] if it was more readily recognised by the public. As it is a Licensed Cadastral Surveyor is well regarded by Councils and the public. Would be happy to apply if it was of benefit to the profession/business."*
- *"Have retained it because feels it reflects experience, however don't believe that it means anything to anyone outside of the profession."*
- *"At the moment, I don't think there is value in being an RPSurv as it is [not] widely recognised/understood by the general public."*
- *"At the present time it would be hard to identify the [RPSurv] title's main value as I understand that in some TA circles it allows the author to sign engineering statement. However in most circles there appears to be little value as no public recognition, and active misuse by others."*

Some replies were non-committal in nature, but still imply a credibility concern - i.e. if RPSurv had greater value/gravitas the answers would possibly be more positive.

- *"I was able to obtain RPSurv status by virtue of being a Registered Surveyor under the Act that pre-dated the CSA 2002. There was no reason not to take up this title at the time."*
- *"It is of no use to me but it is too hard to apply for again if it lapsed."*
- *"Very much by default, only very occasionally is the competency required by clients or Councils."*
- *"I gained it under the grandfather clause when RPSurv was established and it has been easy to maintain, so I've kept it by default rather than for any particular reason, other than it carries some status within the profession (but not outside it)."*

6.3.5 Intrinsic Value - Positive Feedback

Despite the many adverse perspectives, there are many respondents who have RPSurv, either acquired it or grandfathered into it, and some who haven't yet obtained it, who have a generally positive view of its inherent value. They view it as providing a degree of credibility, gravitas, status - at least in respect of their particular circumstances - sufficiently for them to retain RPSurv.

- *"I work in two different Council areas and having RPSurv status still allows me to sign PS3 producer statements for most Public assets.
We need to do everything we can to retain this and not lose it to the Engineers."*
- *"I am retired but still involved with S+SNZ. Why would I let my past qualification go before it is taken from me."*
- *"I am practicing in the land development / project management space. RPSurv provides the qualification that recognises my competence in the civil engineer / land development space that licensing doesn't."*
- *"I am much more than a land transfer surveyor, and RPSurv provides a broader indication of my skill set."*
- *"I started as a Registered surveyor in 1970 and accepted the right to be granted RPSurv when it was proposed and I became a licensed surveyor. I wished to remain a member of the professional surveyors and abide by their rules. I am a member of the Consultants division as well. I feel it gives my clients extra confidence in my professional ability and standing. Having said the above at this late stage of my career my clients probably stick to me because of our reputation."*
- *"I gained it under the grandfather clause when RPSurv was established and it has been easy to maintain, so I've kept it by default rather than for any particular reason, other than it carries some status within the profession (but not outside it)."*
- *"Indicates advanced, varied, & time served experience in a variety of professional activities to colleagues, fellow consultants & clients that is not apparent from just LCS certification."*
- *"I initially didn't apply for grandfathering because it seemed just like yet another thing to belong to, just had to pay a fee, but over time it seemed to gather more meaning. As a registered surveyor I sought and proved competence for registration and have been in private practice a long time. I am not a top expert in every field, but I have competence in the areas in which I practice."*
- *"Grandfathered into RPSurv. Currently my RPSurv status offers little benefit to my day to day work. However, I believe that it (or the upcoming certification process/framework) will become more important for all the reasons listed in this question."*
- *"It does give status and proves competence in other areas of surveyors, albeit that the public, Councils etc have no idea of how it differs from LCS, and while I have other competencies it is up to me to apply discretion as if I am competent to use the title in terms of certifying some work. i.e I shouldn't use the title in a particular area if I am not competent.
But obviously this problematic and the new Certification system goes some way to clarify where particular*

endorsements can be used. If there are still TAs that require a RPSurv certification then it will remain important until that is replaced in TA rules.

A comment about CPD for below - although I have not kept the formal submission of CPD up to date I would have met the annual CPD requirements for points through conferences, webinars etc. However I would say my areas of competence have shifted - eg I may not be sufficiently competent at this moment in LDE, as I once was."

- "From the S+SNZ point of view the main value is to indicate advanced levels and/or areas of experience, competence, integrity, professionalism & ethical behaviour and to promote the pursuit of those values by members to ensure the profession is not allowed to decline to the lowest common denominator."
- "Surveying is far more than just a cadastral license these days and the RPSurv allows surveyors to be professionally certified in other areas of the industry in which they may be practicing."
- "Grandfathered into RPSurv. Currently my RPSurv status offers little benefit to my day to day work. However, I believe that it (or the upcoming certification process/framework) will become more important for all the reasons listed in this question."
- "It gives some standing to those who have attained a wider knowledge of survey matters. The term Registered still carries some value."
- "The public still recognise the term "Registered Surveyor" from the old Act. The term still carries mana."

6.3.6 RPSurv compared to Other Options

Some question RPSurv credibility against other certifications. There is some uncertainty over how RPSurv is associated with, or compares to, or interacts with the current Certification initiative.

7 Retaining RPSurv and Improving Value

Despite considerable adverse opinion about the value of RPSurv at this time for many Members, there nevertheless appears to be some appetite for this to improve. It appears that RPSurv (or other accreditation if not RPSurv) would be well received and valued generally by Members if it was noticeably widely recognised and appreciated - i.e. having prestige - in the survey and spatial industry and in the wider public domain.

An indicator of this is that for Q5 Have you actively maintained the required CPD for RPSurv? 76% of the 161 respondents who answered this question answered 'Yes', while 21% were unsure.

Of the 290 respondents who responded to Q9 Why have you not applied for RPSurv? 16% intend to, indicating either that RPSurv has inherent value for the respondent, or that they need it because other entities value it (i.e. they need it for their career/job). Also, it is telling that 63% of respondents wanted to talk about it - i.e. rather than simply answering one of the other response options.

Of the 45 respondents who answered Q8 Would you consider reapplying for RPSurv?, 20% would consider reapplying - mostly conditional on an improvement in the value of RPSurv, consistent with other responses. Of the 64% who currently would not consider reapplying, most are retired. It can be anticipated that some of those not retired could reconsider if RPSurv was improved.

All things considered, the survey responses appear to be saying that Members as a whole want to retain RPSurv, but its image and therefore value and usefulness to members needs to be considerably improved.

DRAFT

8 Other Papers on RPSurv

8.1 RPSurv Report - Certification Project

The RPSURV & CPD REVIEWS - Main Report contains some background information for RPSurv, although this information is embedded in the narrative in various places across Pages 55 and 56 and elsewhere.

Section III - RPSurv - Background, on Page 6 contains no historical context for RPSurv - i.e. why RPSurv exists and what it replaced - that would provide context at the outset. In that respect, the "frank, blunt account" (which the report certainly is) can be difficult to work through. This section also states that:

"it was generally believed the answer to reviving and bringing RPSurv into relevance and value for now and the future lay in restructuring it so it was fit for purpose as a pathway for all members of S+SNZ..."

Restructuring RPSurv was not a theme that was evident in the survey, so it would be good to confirm its validity and source. Regardless, the information in the report could be useful in making improvements, though may require time to search through the content. Statements such as *"Apart from the public Register, RPSurvs are not profiled anywhere on the website."* will probably be useful in reviewing what changes could be made in enhancing RPSurv profile - and without having to "restructure" it.

8.1.1 RPSurv & QMS?

I had assumed that the document RPSURV & CPD REVIEWS - Summary Report would be a summary of the Main Report above. However, while there is overlap, the Summary Report introduces new discussion, including a recommendation for the Certification initiative to develop a comprehensive Quality Management System (even including a launch event, tours, and Media involvement). For the purposes of S+SNZ, QMS does not need to be any sort of pre- or co-requisite to enhancing RPSurv (but as it happens, it is currently being implemented on a more modest though appropriate scale as a separate activity).

8.2 Report to Council by Vision NZ Ltd on RPSurv Certification

The REPORT to the Council of the NZIS on RPSurv CERTIFICATION by Professor J. Hannah of Vision NZ Ltd (date not stated) appears to be a very useful information source for reviewing RPSurv. It presents very helpful historical context, and useful comparison of RPSurv to four "like" professions in NZ, including IPENZ (Institution of Professional Engineers New Zealand), whose CPEng certification was intended by NZIS as a model for RPSurv. Comparison to Australia's SSSI is also very interesting.

Professor Hannah's conclusions and recommendations provide what appears to me to be a very useful roadmap for reviewing and enhancing RPSurv, and align well with the member feedback discussed in this analysis paper. I consider that the first recommendation of that paper: *"On balance, it is recommended that RPSurv be retained as the premier post-nominal for all members of the Institute..."* aligns well with the findings of this analysis.

Also, it is incidentally interesting to compare the approach and conclusions of the Vision NZ paper to that of the Certification initiative papers.