

# FOREWORD

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Thanks to the vision and ingenuity of our early engineers, New Zealand is furnished with the infrastructure and technology that enable the high standard of living we enjoy today. Shaping the land from the ground up, engineers facilitated the building of the young country's towns and cities, connecting them with road and rail networks, communications systems and other essential services. That legacy is all the more notable given the concurrent challenge of establishing the foundations for an engineering profession.

*An Evolving Order: The Institution of Professional Engineers New Zealand, 1914–2014* begins with engineers at a crossroads, grappling with their identity and status. The formation in 1914 of the national body now known as IPENZ marked the beginnings of our modern engineering profession. It offered a home-grown alternative to Britain's "parent" institutions, indicative of a New Zealand that was coming into its own.

More significantly, engineers were acting out of the necessity to assert both the professional pecking order and their place in society. The new body would provide them with direct representation and standard-setting, and successfully advocate for their registration, bringing about the evolution of a strong profession and the values and identity that grew with it. As the fields of engineering proliferated over the century, the New Zealand Society of Civil Engineers would need to branch out from its "civil" focus into other disciplines, undergoing two name changes to reflect wider representation.

This book charts the development of an institution and the profession it represents, along with the growth of a nation. As the country underwent momentous changes that would steer its future course, engineers were compelled to act, at times taking centre stage. They mobilised for two world wars, not only enlisting to fight but also providing technical expertise on the battlefield. Destructive earthquakes in Hawke's Bay and Canterbury required them to provide solutions but also tested their resolve, and – especially with the latter quake – public confidence in the profession. These events informed the professional body's thinking, as did changing societal attitudes on race relations, immigration, new technology,

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environmentalism and gender. When issues were so contentious as to be divisive – such as with nuclear power – IPENZ facilitated open discussion amongst the membership.

Peter Cooke brings to life the centennial history through a plethora of sources, drawing on newspaper articles, historical journals, society bulletins, annual reports, academic texts and other archival material. Where possible, he lets engineers tell the story in their own words. The minutes of meetings illuminate engineering issues in the vernacular of the day, and interviews the author conducted with participants in the centennial story provide first-hand accounts of history. The combined effect is to convey an authenticity the book wouldn't otherwise have.

Times have changed considerably from a century ago, but *An Evolving Order* paints the picture of a professional body that never wavered from its founding principles. Then, as now, it was concerned – beyond its day-to-day membership functions – with status, ethics and public perception, with registration, competency and standards, and with serving the community to its fullest.

Cooke has masterfully weaved together an intricate body of knowledge to make sense of the people, issues and events of the past 100 years. This highly valuable resource is a superb way to mark the centenary year.

**Kevin Thompson**

*IPENZ President*