

## **Biographical note for Dr Edward Hearnshaw (1977-2020)**



Edward John Spencer Hearnshaw was an environmental economist who worked in the New Zealand public service. He was born in Christchurch in March 1977 and attended Christchurch Boys' High School. In his school years, he had a love for sport and the outdoors.

After a forestry degree at Canterbury, Edward studied at Waikato University for an MSc degree in biotechnology, and in 2001-02, he worked in the forestry industry in Gisborne. This was a great life experience, as it brought him into contact with the forestry pruning gangs with whom he had to work.

In 2003, Ed went to Lincoln University near Christchurch, where he studied commerce for a year before commencing a PhD in ecological economics. It is here at Lincoln from his mid-twenties that he really matured as a critical thinker. He became interested in philosophy and studied Nietzsche, C.S. Peirce and Schopenhauer. He became engaged in examining the big questions of life and society. He became very widely read and joined a book club, where he was notably the only man and only student among middle-aged women. Characteristically, he thrived in this environment and learned a lot from it.

At Lincoln, he had a close circle of friends among his fellow graduate students, and many of them became friends for life. For recreation, Ed pursued tramping and mountain biking; he played rugby at club level and continued his early enthusiasm for golf.

During his time at Lincoln, Ed won a Japanese government economics scholarship to visit Japan with 30 other young people from around the world. He spent three weeks in Japan with this group, and immediately his attribute as a group leader became apparent. More close friendships were forged.

After completing a doctoral thesis in 2009, Ed lectured at Lincoln for a year before obtaining a job at the Ministry for the Environment in Wellington in 2011. Here, he enjoyed the intellectual stimulation of dedicated professionals in public service. He met his intellectual equals in his work colleagues and interacted with politicians. James Shaw from the Green Party became a colleague and friend. His most outstanding achievement at MfE was work in drafting the Zero Carbon Bill – in full, the Climate Change Response (Zero Carbon) Amendment Bill, 2019.

From 2014 on, Ed and his friend Geoff Simmons started a volunteer project with the Wellington City Council to clear gorse and broom from Macalister Park in the Wellington Town Belt and to plant this area out with native trees and bushes. Together with their friends, known to all as Charlie's Angels, they planted some 10,000 native trees over the next six years. It was an environmental project led by Ed, of which he was justifiably proud. A memorial bench in Macalister Park (off Finnimore Terrace, Vogeltown) bears a plaque that notes this contribution to Wellington municipal ecology.



At MfE Ed developed as an intellectual powerhouse, promoting new ideas for environmental management. He was known to his colleagues for his deep understanding of environmental issues and the related research literature, for volunteering at lunchtime seminars on environmental topics, and for his enthusiasm for mentoring and helping junior colleagues.

When Ed was a child, one of his most remarkable characteristics was his equanimity. He never spoke a cross word, never complained of anything and never had a tantrum. This happy and benevolent personality served him well in later life. In the Ministry, he became a friend of everyone and had time and patience for all.

His intellect may occasionally have been a little daunting for some, as he enjoyed a robust debate and was quick to point out the shortcomings in arguments he was contesting on ecosystem

management. But his demeanour was never antagonistic or aggressive. He wanted others to understand his principles of ecosystem management, and was constantly taking his peers under his wing to support them. He also had a mischievous sense of humour, which colleagues greatly enjoyed. He was often having jokes and engaging in humorous banter.

Ed's wider philosophy of life matured during his seven years at MfE. He believed that environmental economics is about managing the ecosystem to maximise both environmental and human wellbeing. This became part of Ed's philosophy of life and one he promoted through his work on every possible occasion.

While at MfE, Ed was appointed as New Zealand representative for meetings in Paris of the OECD Environmental Directorate. He travelled to Paris on six occasions from 2013 to 2018 for meetings to discuss OECD environmental policy. Here his intellectual grasp of the issues, his ability to debate these ideas and his collegiality all became noticed. The other representatives from the three dozen or so OECD member countries saw in Ed a leader and promoter of new ideas for ecosystem management, and these will continue to have an impact for many years to come.

In Paris, Edward met with the Kiwi head of the OECD Environment Directorate, Simon Upton. This was a most propitious encounter, as when Simon returned to New Zealand in 2017 as Parliamentary Commissioner for the Environment, he offered Ed the following year a job as number two in his office as Chief Economist in the Parliamentary Commission. Ed accepted this with relish, as he enjoyed the intellectual stimulus and freedom that the PCE provided compared with the more restrictive life in the Ministry.

Ed joined the PCE in mid-2018, and the last two years of his life were spent at a job he dearly loved. His major contributions were as lead author of reports on fossil fuels in New Zealand in relation to climate change, which appeared in 2019 and early 2020.\*

During these years, his interests continued to diversify. He always loved cooking, and his culinary skills were on display on numerous occasions to friends and family. He immersed himself in te reo Maori and became confident at speaking set pieces. He took up dancing lessons, he collected New Zealand art and studied ikebana. He enjoyed popular music, and he continued as a very avid mountain biker and tramper. One mountain-biking adventure was along the Heaphy track, where he had walked on foot nearly 30 years earlier.

Ed Hearnshaw died on 1 June 2020 in a tramping accident in the Ruahine Ranges. He was crossing a mountain river in flood when he lost his footing and was swept away. His body was found by a police search party on the river bank the following day.

The Hearnshaw family is now establishing an Ed Hearnshaw arboretum at Te Horo on the Kapiti Coast as a memorial to Ed, given his love of trees. In the coming decade, we hope the arboretum will grow sufficiently for public access.

In 2021, a prize for Economics and the Environment was established by Ed's parents in collaboration with the Government Economics Network as a memorial to their son. The prize was awarded in 2021 and 2022. We now hope that an agreement with NZIER will result in a biannual award for environmental economists, the NZIER Ed Hearnshaw Award for Environmental Economics from 2024.

\*They were *Farms, forests and fossil fuels: The next great landscape transformation?* Published by PCE, March 2019, pp184; and *Restricting the production of fossil fuels in Aotearoa New Zealand: A note on the ban on new petroleum permits outside onshore Taranaki.* Published by PCE, March 2020, pp 60.

John Hearnshaw (Ed's father)