

# Property Pros



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## Hazel Phillips

RICS manager Andrew Crosby spent a decade working for Redwood Group in New Zealand and America. Now in charge of some 400 members of the not-for-profit organisation, his focus is on people from a plethora of backgrounds.

### You get to work in the morning, smash a couple of coffees, and then what?

As NZ manager for RICS, I serve our members by helping them out and providing guidance and doing research. I also try to attract new members by showing them the benefits of the organisation. On a daily basis I do everything from basic admin tasks to writing reports that will go to the government. One we've got at the moment is being compiled in conjunction with our members in Christchurch and will end up on the prime minister's desk. It's a varied role – often we're in Wellington talking to the government, and last night we did a site tour of 80 people to the new Westpac headquarters [in Britomart]. The RICS president Robert Peto is coming to New Zealand in April so there's a big of organisation around that too.

### What concerns are on your radar at the moment?

There are two areas we're looking at – the PPP [public-private partnership] process, as a lot of our members around the world have experience in that. It's a big talking topic in New Zealand – are we going to build a prison by involving the private sector? How do we get stuff built now there's no

money left? Spatial planning and what the Auckland Council is doing is another thing. We've set up a group of people from some of the property owners and different members to look at that.

### What did you do in your pre-RICS life?

I started working for RICS in September 2010. Before that I was working for Redwood Group in Phoenix Arizona for five years in real estate development. I saw the highs and the lows of the US. I also worked for Redwood in New Zealand for about five years. Then RICS hired me because they wanted someone with a bit of a property focus to take the organisation forward in New Zealand.

### Do you own any property yourself?

I have a couple of half shares of properties in Manurewa. I'm looking to buy a house but I'm not sure about the market. I can't afford to rent now because all my single mates are teaming up with each other to get nice houses in Remuera and Meadowbank, putting me and my wife out of the market. I've had various property interests over the time. I'm very much the advocate for improving standards and ethics and doing things right with property.

### What are the big hairy challenges for your members at the moment?

New Zealand is running a two-tiered property system at the moment. One is struggling and that's anything to do with valuation and real estate agency. There's not a

lot of work on, not a lot of transactions. Then there's the other side of things – building surveying and quantity surveying and different aspects of construction that are booming. In one area there are people with not a lot to do, and in another area there's a huge resource demand. Even before the second Christchurch earthquake, I would get calls from people wanting surveyors. Once the situation down south settles down, there's going to be a resource-constrained situation.

### Is there a property brain drain?

Even before this latest earthquake, my members have been telling me that tradesmen are moving to Australia. We're losing brains to Australia to help rebuild over there. From an industry point of view, it's something New Zealand has to deal with.

### What are your hopes for Christchurch?

I hope the community can get involved in the rebuild. I hope they get the ground right, let's sort that out. Some members – and again this is only anecdotal – have mentioned that people inspecting some of the buildings need to be careful to look at it on an absolute basis as opposed to a relative basis. For example, this building isn't as bad as the last one I saw, here's a green sticker. If you had that building in Auckland it would be a red or an orange sticker any part of the day. Let's not turn it into a New Orleans style situation, being a disaster – let's make it a San Francisco model, which has just powered on and powered on.

## Pulling the wool over house for US

Wool insulation may be commonplace in New Zealand, but for a team taking a solar-powered house to a competition in the US, this novel approach will definitely need explaining.

A team of Victoria University students will be taking part in the US Department of Energy's prestigious global design competition, the Solar Decathlon, by designing, building and operating an attractive, affordable, net zero energy house, powered entirely from solar energy.

Kiwi company Eco Insulation, has developed a

new wool insulation product to meet the high standards required for the competition. The house will be insulated by four layers of wool insulation, which gives the house nearly three times greater efficiency than the New Zealand's building code requires.

Using wool as insulation is vitally unheard of in the US and the team will be working hard to educate those who come to the competition that wool is a safe, durable and healthy alternative.

"This is a great opportunity to show the rest of the world what Kiwis can achieve. Let's show them

what we're made of," says Eco Insulation's Hamish Holder.

The Victoria team, made up of almost 40 students from throughout the university supervised by staff and industry partners who are donating their time to the project, will compete in the 21 day competition during September in Washington DC.

The New Zealand public will have the chance to see the First Light house in action when it is on display during May at Frank Kitts Park before being shipped to the US.