

The Otago Branch monthly lecture follows the Annual General Meeting of the New Zealand Geographical Society at the Department of Geography, University of Otago, Room 5N4, Richardson Building at 5.15 pm

Lecture title

"Understanding the Elephant: the role of collaborative research in the energy transition" - Dr Janet Stephenson

Lecture abstract

Energy constraints are fast becoming a defining issue of the 21st century, yet achieving the widely-touted 'sustainable energy transition' is proving to be enormously difficult. There is clearly no quick fix, and every innovation comes with strings attached. I will discuss the benefits of addressing this complex field through multi-disciplinary collaboration, and using examples to illustrate some current projects.

Biographical statement

Dr Stephenson worked as a professional planner for 15 years prior to moving to an academic career. She currently lectures part-time in planning in the Geography Department, and is a Senior Research Fellow in CSAFE (Centre for the Study of Agriculture, Food and the Environment).

Her research interests fall into 3 overlapping areas:

Maori and resource management - this has been a continuing interest since her Masters research, and she is currently involved in a 3-year FRST-funded project looking at the use of matauranga (Maori traditional knowledge) in resource consent hearings.

Landscapes - her PhD (completed 2005) was on cultural values in landscapes. Since then she has continued to give talks, publish and research in the area of landscapes and cultural heritage. She is currently co-editing a book entitled 'Beyond the Scene' on different disciplinary perspectives of NZ landscapes. One of her research projects is looking at the conflicts between windfarms and landscapes, using Project Hayes and Project West Wind as case studies.

Energy - from 2005 to mid- 2008 she worked with Prof Gerry Carrington to develop what became the National Energy Research Institute, and its sibling the Otago Energy Research Centre, and found she was quite good at grant-writing. She is currently the convenor of the OERC and a member of NERI's management committee. She is also involved in another FRST-funded research project on energy innovation.

She also likes to run away from time to time into the glorious mountain landscapes of Central Otago.