

Graeme Mills - Honorary Life Membership

This year we're presenting one of our most prestigious awards – the Honorary Life membership Award to someone that many of you will know well.

As Chair of the Backflow Special Interest Group for more than ten years until August this year, Graeme Mills has been particularly generous with his time, knowledge and skills.

Backflow is one of our more active and successful groups and much of that is because of the effort that Graeme has put in over the last decade.

During his time as Chair, the Backflow group developed a number of important initiatives including:

- NZQA backflow testing standards 23847 and 23848.
- The Backflow Code of Practice.
- The New Zealand Industry Standard for field-testing backflow prevention devices and verification of Air gaps.
- Organising numerous conferences throughout New Zealand.
- Facilitating a large number of backflow forums in association with the local branches of Master plumbers throughout New Zealand.

Graeme began his career in the water sector working as a plumber, completing his apprenticeship in the 1960s under the old criteria of 6 years or 12,000 hours apprenticeship.

In the 1970s he spent 7 years at Auckland Maximum Security Prison, not as an inmate but as one of two maintenance plumbers.

It was during this time that he moved away from Plumbing and into the field of Water and Wastewater treatment and gained "C" grade in both of these fields under the Ministry of Works training scheme.

Following a period as plant operator with Cambridge Borough Council, Graeme moved to Mount Maunganui Borough Council as Water Overseer looking after five staff and maintaining the water supply network and water treatment plant operation.

In 1996 Graeme became a Network Technician with the Tauranga City Council managing the water quality programme protecting the public water network from contamination through a cross connection.

As a member of the Water Supply team at Tauranga City Council, he has led the charge of maintaining good water safety practise in the water network through the City's backflow prevention programme; managing the approved contractors working on the live reticulation; responding to customer water quality issues and the like. Graeme retires in January but his work will live on in the excellent practises he has promoted in Tauranga and the wider water industry.