

Helen Atkins

Professional Qualifications

LLB Canterbury

Key Areas of Experience

Environmental and Resource Management

Public and Local Government Law



Helen has over 25 years' experience acting in the areas of environmental, public law and local government law. She regularly advises the public and private sectors on a variety of matters relevant to resource management, environmental and local government law and practice.

Helen has significant local government experience starting in the late 1980s and early 1990s (1989 to 1993) in England where she headed the Litigation and Licensing legal team at the Oxford City Council. Since that time Helen has continued to advise extensively on local and central government matters.

From 2004 to 2010 Helen was the primary provider and client relationship manager for the work done for Papakura District Council (now part of the Auckland Council). This work included all aspects of legal services that a local authority requires and therefore Helen was, in essence, the Council Solicitor albeit external. Since the amalgamation Helen has continued to advise the Auckland Council on a number of issues. Helen has similar roles for other councils, notably Waipa District Council, where she advises on a range of matters for that Council in conjunction with their local legal providers.

From its creation in 2009 Helen was appointed to advise the Independent Maori Statutory Board (established under the Auckland Council legislation) in relation to all the legal issues of concern to them, many of which involve consideration of some extremely difficult Maori law and local government legal, governance and organisational issues.

Helen is frequently called upon by central and local government agencies and government Ministers and the private sector to assist on aspects of law reform. Particular work areas are local government, resource management, hazardous substances and new organisms, freshwater management, three-waters (water supply, wastewater and stormwater).


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Helen has advised a variety of corporate clients on the full range of resource management and environmental matters including the primary production sector, heavy industry, land developers, energy companies, the oil and gas sector and infrastructure providers. In addition to her work for local authorities Helen also advises the private sector on a number of local government matters including: governance issues; decision making processes; reserves issues; development contributions and others.

Helen is an accredited resource management commissioner and an appointed development contributions commissioner.

Appointments that Helen has accepted or been elected to include:

- Member (Ministerial appointment) of the Agrichemical Trespass Ministerial Advisory Committee (2002)
- National Committee Executive Officer member (elected) of the Resource Management Law Association (1997 - 2004 and 2007 - 2011 (including as President from 2009 - 2011))
- Affiliate Member of the New Zealand Planning Institute (by application) (since 1994)
- Chair of the Wellington Branch of the Institute (by application) (1995 - 1997)
- Member (Select Committee appointment) Local Government and Environment Committee (Panel member advising on the Resource Management (Simplifying and Streamlining) Amendment Bill) (2009)
- Board Member of the Environmental Risk Management Authority (Cabinet appointment) (2004 - 2011)
- Committee Member of the Hazardous Substance and New Organisms Committee to the Environmental Protection Authority (Board appointed with Ministerial approval) (2011 – 2016)
- Board Member of MOTAT (Museum of Transport And Technology) (September 2016 – present)
- Board Member of Water New Zealand (2016 - present)

Examples of clients - past and present

- Horticulture New Zealand (wide range of environmental matters including plan changes, policies and water consenting)
- Cooper and Company (Britomart Precinct redevelopment – resource consent and regulatory issues – Auckland CBD waterfront planning and regulatory issues)

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- Independent Maori Statutory Board (established under the Auckland Council legislation) Ministry of Agriculture and Forestry (Co-leader of legislative review of pest management)
- Papakura District Council (Primary legal advisor for all local government and resource management issues)
- Waipa District Council (co-legal advisor (together with local providers) for all local government and resource management issues)
- Vector Limited (advice in relation to ultra-fast broad-band project)
- Mountain Landing Properties (advice in relation to property and marine farming issues associated with this land development in the Far North District)
- Nuplex Industries Limited (advise in relation to air discharge consents and contaminated site issues)
- Sims Pacific Industries Limited (advice in relation to air discharge consents).