



Bledisloe Medal

Penny Nelson

Penny Nelson was appointed Director-General of the Department of Conservation (DOC) in November 2021, the first woman to reach this significant Crown role.

As head of DOC, Penny oversees a dedicated staff entrusted with looking after more than 14,000 native species of flora and fauna over 8 million hectares of land, 52 marine reserves and sanctuaries, and 220 large islands.

The scope of Penny's work for New Zealand is immense. Leadership and a determination to strengthen, improve and reshape DOC so it can better protect and enhance the natural environment are forefront in her work ethic.

Penny is a Lincoln University alumna, MSc (Hons) in Resource Management and Policy, 1997.

Prior to DOC, Penny was an influential senior leader across the public and private sectors including roles as Deputy Secretary at the Ministry for the Environment, head of the Sustainable Business Council of New Zealand, and she held senior leadership roles at the Ministry of Social Development, Dairy NZ and Manaaki Whenua / Landcare Research. As Deputy Director-General of Biosecurity for the Ministry for Primary Industries Penny oversaw the management of biosecurity risks offshore, at the border, and within New Zealand preserving the integrity of our land, water and ocean resources.

In line with Lincoln University's values, Penny's career has advanced the national interest in areas such as biodiversity, biosecurity, sustainability, and environmental protection, in both the land and marine environments.

Throughout her career, Penny has encouraged businesses, government agencies and communities to recognise the link between nature and climate change. She has also helped foster understanding that New Zealand's biodiversity is special, unique and a key driver of our economy. Not only is healthy nature necessary for its own sake and for ecosystem services, it is also a provider of tourism opportunities that regional economies rely on.

As a Lincoln alumna who has worked at senior leadership levels in many nationally important land and resource related sectors, Penny has contributed greatly to the country's scientific, economic, cultural and technological domains, well earning her the award of Lincoln University's Bledisloe Medal.

The Bledisloe Medal, initiated in 1930 by the late Viscount Bledisloe, former Governor-General of New Zealand, is made to a former student or a past or current staff member of Lincoln University, who in the opinion of the Council, has made an outstanding contribution to his or her chosen field of expertise, advanced New Zealand's interests, and/or brought credit to Lincoln University.

Professor Grant Edwards
Vice-Chancellor

Bruce Gemmell
Chancellor