

## “IPWEA ON THE WAVE TO SUSTAINABILITY”

by

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### **Introduction**

Much of the 1990’s proved to be a period of soul searching for IPWEA with the Institute experiencing two name changes and expending much of its energies on discussing future direction. The issue was about long term sustainability and how this could be best achieved. Various options were considered and reconsidered again a few years later. What continued to emerge was the desire to maintain our independence as an industry body based around public works engineering with a strong national focus.

By 1999 a new constitution was adopted by the State Divisions and the name Institute of Public Works Engineering Australia was launched at the national conference in Sydney. IPWEA is now well established at the national level and rapidly gaining industry recognition. I can confidently report we are now “*riding the wave to sustainability*”.

### **Background**

The concern of the 90’s was that the Institute was at the brink of survival at the national level. The national body was without resources and was no more than a group of state representatives meeting twice yearly.

Largely through the efforts of Ian Robins the first corporate plan was developed in 1993. This provided some focus and one of the most significant outcomes was the development of the national journal *Engineering Edge*. However, the introduction of CCT in Victoria proved to be a major set back and the Institute, concerned about survival revisited the future directions options. During this time relatively little progress was made in achieving any of the goals of the Institute.

With the virtual dissolution of the Institute in Victoria there was strong pressure to adopt the Local Government Professionals (LGPro) model and join with other local government professional bodies. Strong arguments were also presented to become a Society of the Institution of Engineers Australia. Notwithstanding, the desire to maintain independence and develop our own identity prevailed and the decision was made to adopt the current IPWEA structure with an expanded focus from local government to public works engineering.

### **The National IPWEA Focus**

The IPWEA National focus is based around a strategic plan developed soon after the launch of the new name at the Sydney National Conference. The strategic plan has now been a focus for the Institute for 3 years and has provided the framework for what we have achieved to date.

## **Our Vision**

Our Vision is “to be the leading organisation for all persons involved in the planning and provision of public works and services in Australia”.

## **Our Mission**

To achieve our Vision, the Institute’s Mission is:

1. To foster the personal and professional growth of the Company’s members.
2. To develop and exchange ideas, information and technology.
3. To provide leadership and support to members to assist them in dealing effectively with change
4. To provide public policy advice and advocacy to advance public works issues for the betterment of the wider the community.
5. To represent the interests of members nationally and internationally

## **Our Strategic Priorities**

Progress on our long-term goals is reported under the five Key Result Areas, namely:

- Membership
- Strategic Alliances
- Leadership & Innovation
- Policy & Advice
- Organisation Capability

## **Our Critical Success Factors**

It is most important to identify key measures that, if performed well, reflect a major contribution to the achievement of our strategic priorities. It has been identified that the Critical Success Factors of the Institute are its:

- Membership base,
- Financial health and
- Strength of strategic relationships.

## **The Way To Sustainability Is Through A Network Of Relationships**

While our critical success factors were not necessarily listed in order of priority the thinking was certainly that the most important priority was to expand the membership base. Unfortunately a change of name was never going to achieve that goal.

In my view to achieve success the order of priority could be best placed in reverse. That is the strength of strategic relationships can bring about financial health and an increased membership base.

## **What Relationships Can Achieve**

Relationship can have an immediate impact on bringing benefits into the organisation addressing our needs and extending the influence and raising the profile of IPWEA externally. All relationships add value but unlike mergers do not change our Institute’s focus or dilute our independence.

### **Our Achievements**

History will show that IEAust was to be the first of many new formalised relationships or alliances for IPWEA with other organisations. The relationships will not all have the same focus but each alliance will add value to IPWEA as an effective organisation for its members and the public works industry.

There are many different types of alliances that IPWEA is pursuing:

#### **Strategic Alliance**

Placing IPWEA in a strategic network with other organisations with similar or complementary pursuits. These include International and national relationships with kindred professional bodies.

#### **Corporate Alliance**

Partnerships with organisations that see value in supporting the Institute and the public works industry.

#### **Industry Alliance**

An alliance with other peak body organisations in the public works industry

#### **Service Alliance**

Partners that assist in the provision of services to our members and the industry

#### **Alliance with Government**

An alliance with government that identifies the role IPWEA can provide in the public works industry

*The development of these alliances could not be achieved without an effective national body.*

### **International Relationships**

IPWEA has two international relationships in the American Public Works Association (APWA) and our New Zealand counterpart INGENIUM. Both have been further strengthened in the past year through two-way conference attendance, joint committees or joint ventures.

International relationships are of strategic importance to IPWEA as they provide:

- A more effective conduit for obtaining and sharing information with the industry.
- Potential for development of world’s best practice in public works engineering
- The opportunity for greater international standardisation in public works infrastructure and policies.

As a growing organisation in size and influence we can learn a great deal from international communication exchange. We can learn from differing approaches to solutions that can improve the professional and the public works industry.

We not only learn from sharing experiences when we get into the international arena but we can go further and leverage from one another to achieve a quantum leap to benefit the public works industry.

My interaction with professionals from the USA, UK and NZ over the past 12 months has confirmed we have more issues in common than differences with our international counterparts.

### **National Relationships**

The objective of developing relationships with the Australian Local Government Association, Local Government Managers Association, National Works Officers Association, Australian Road Research Board and the Beacon Foundation are all new initiatives and are in the early development stage. In all instances the benefits will be two way.

A number of alliances are also being pursued with bodies within our industry whose members provide services to the industry.

### **Corporate Partnerships add value**

The Institute is embarking on developing a limited number of partnerships with organisations that see value in supporting the public works industry. There is added value in relationships where the partners are keen to work together to deliver services to an industry.

The benefits to IPWEA of Corporate Partnerships are twofold. Firstly they add value through the expertise available from the partner and secondly provide financial support to IPWEA

Three Corporate Partners were announced in 2001/02:

- Telemetric Media Information (TMI)
- Corporate Project Management Group (CPMG) and
- Morrison Low Consultants (MLC)

Further Corporate Partnerships are in the negotiation stage.

Two of the three corporate partners have joined with IPWEA in the provision of national training services, namely MLC in the area of Service Delivery and CPMG in Project Management.

National training courses are also being provided in cooperation with the State Divisions in AUS-SPEC and Asset Management. Training in Plant & Fleet Management is expected to be available by mid 2003 following release of IPWEA’s

Australian Plant & Fleet Management Manual being developed in partnership with Marketing & Transport Consultancy (MTC).

The training and development program delivers best practice nationally and at the same time provides a profile and financial sustainability to IPWEA National.

### **Relationships with the Foundations**

All of the State IPWEA bodies have links with Foundations established to provide funding for Fellowships. Each Foundation has a specific charter detailing what they will award fellowships for. Foundations generally receive income from their respective IPWEA bodies and rely on this income to support their ongoing activities.

An IPWEA National initiative was the Sunday Forum held in conjunction with the Perth International Public Works Conference. One of the outcomes of the Forum which was attended by over 30 representatives from State and National IPWEA bodies was a working party to progress resolutions from the meeting.

Following a report from the working party, agreement was reached on sources of funding and areas of responsibility between the IPWEA and Foundation State and National bodies. This was an important step in clarifying roles and providing a focus for long term financial stability.

A further outcome resulting from the Forum was that the National Foundation resolved to realign itself with IPWEA National through election of trustees and the adoption of a strategic plan.

### **Conclusion**

We have made the choice to stay together as engineering professionals and the achievements of past few years have convinced me this was the right decision. It is doubtful I personally would have had the same commitment to the Institute if we were a society of IEAust, or under the LGPro banner.

Now we are doing and succeeding, we are no longer wondering about the future and where we should be or who we should have merged with.

IPWEA is reaching a level of maturity in its development that will ensure its continued growth and effectiveness as the peak professional body providing member services and advocacy to people involved in delivering public works and services in Australia.

We are indeed *On the Wave to Sustainability*.