

National Skills Shortage Project

Quarterly Update

May 2006

Institute of Public Works Engineering Australia

1. National Skills Shortages Project Approval

At the teleconference meeting held on 15 December 2005, the National Board resolved to approve commencement of the project for an initial period of 4 months using existing funding support to allow the (interim) appointment of a project officer from the beginning of February.

2. Appointment of National Skills Shortages Project Officer

Richard Usher commenced in the part time role of National Skills Shortage Project Manager on 31 January 2006. This appointment marked the official commencement of the National Skills Shortage Project (NSSP).

3. Quarterly Project Report

This first project report was originally due at the end of April but was delayed by a month due to the first meeting of the National Skills Shortage Committee (NSSC), held in Melbourne on 8 May 2006.

4. National Skills Shortage Project Plan

In February a Project Plan was developed based around the previously agreed project deliverables. Additional items have been added to the plan and timeframes adjusted as the project has progressed. A major change was been the inclusion of an additional Key Result Area (New Ways of Working) to address the demand side of the problem. This inclusion followed a forum of the peak national local government bodies in April. The plan was further updated and endorsed at the meeting of the NSSC on 8 May.
Copy of Project Plan attached.

5. National Forum of Peak Local Government Bodies

On 27-28 April the National CEO & EO attended the Forum of peak local government bodies in Canberra. The Forum which was coordinated by LGMA was held to discuss the National Skills Shortage. The concept of a national forum of this kind was part of the IPWEA 3 level strategy & action plan and was initiated following a meeting with LGMA in late 2005.

The Forum was very successful and resulted in agreement for the development of a coordinated approach to address the national skills shortage.

The peak body forum will substantially address the elements of the 3 level strategy involving 'local government as a career' and 'local government as an employer of choice' with IPWEA ensuring the inclusion of engineering. The peak body forum will also allow the Project Manager to focus on engineering relationships.

6. National Skills Shortage Committee (NSSC)

The NSS Committee has been formed and the inaugural meeting held on 8 May 2006 in Melbourne. The NSSC consists of the National President (chairman), CEO, National Executive Officer, Project Manager and two representatives from each State Division.

Main agenda items discussed were:

- National Skills Shortage Project Plan
- Need for Work Experience to attract young people to Public Works Engineering
- Cadetships for University and TAFE students
- Information on Engineers Australia's Professional Development Program for graduates
- Grade of student member for IPWEA
- Benefits of mentoring
- Careers Expos as a recruitment tool
- Skills Shortage Training Masterclass for managers
- Retaining current employees and those at (or about to) retirement

Minutes of the meeting and copies of the discussion documents and draft templates are available on request.

Committee delegates provided invaluable input at the meeting as well as feedback on discussion documents and draft templates prior to the meeting. These documents are to be updated before being made available on the IPWEA website. The framework for a much needed marketing plan was also developed. The Plan is needed to ensure the work emanating from the NSSP reaches the target audience.

7. National Templates

Draft templates have been prepared for:

- Cadetships
 - University
 - TAFE
- Work Experience
 - University
- Mentoring
- Careers Expos
- Retaining the Current Workforce (including Potential Retirees)

Templates are also being prepared for:

- Scholarships and other types of Work Experience

The templates will be available for download from the IPWEA website in the near future. Each template will also have a one page step by step guide to assist.

8. Careers Brochure

A new brochure outlining opportunities in Local Government and Public Works engineering has been developed and printed. The brochure which was produced in-house has been used at Careers days in Western Australia and Tasmania. The brochure has subsequently been improved by a marketing/design company and will be printed by the national office and distributed to all states as part of the NSSP.

9. Professional Development Program

There is anecdotal evidence that graduates prefer to work for an organisation that offers a Professional Development Program accredited by Engineers Australia. IPWEA is continuing discussions with EA for the development of a local government umbrella PDP with the IPWEA providing a broker and marketing role. There is a lot of work ahead to develop this initiative and finalisation will have to wait until IPWEA officially becomes a technical society of EA.

The possibility of an additional category on NPER for Local Government Engineering will also be investigated at the same time as the PDP.

10. EngQuest

EngQuest is a program run in primary schools in most states in Australia to heighten students awareness of engineering. Engineers Australia conducts the program using federal funding. The National Project Officer is assisting IPWEA members to become involved.

11. Careers Expo

Careers expos have been conducted in WA and Tasmania. These have been aimed at university and TAFE students and present an important opportunity to raise the profile of IPWEA and work involved in local government engineering. The first version of the careers brochure was prepared for these events and the Careers Expo template resulted from attendance at the Perth Expo. Additionally, IPWEA has an entry in the WA Division (of EA) Work Experience handbook.

12. Where to from here?

Work over the next quarter will focus on:

- Finalising templates and step by step guides
- Developing a marketing plan for the “tools” to be provided to the industry
- Following up on actions from the NSSC meeting
- Assisting in the formation of IPWEA State Skills Shortage Committees
- Continuing to work with stakeholder groups in achieving the 3 level strategy
- Implementing other deliverables from the Project Action Plan

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