

# *National Skills Shortage Project*

## **Quarterly Update**

August 2006

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Institute of Public Works Engineering Australia

### **1. National Skills Shortage Committee (NSSC)**

As reported in the May Update the Committee, under the chairmanship of the National President, met in Melbourne in May 2006. The Committee provided invaluable input and feedback on a series of draft guideline and template documents, which enabled them to be finalised (see next item).

### **2. National Guidelines and Templates**

The following Guidelines and Templates to assist in tackling the skills shortage issue have been prepared and are now available for download on the IPWEA website. The individual guidelines or the full series can be downloaded from the IPWEA Skills Shortage website at [www.ipwea.org.au/skills](http://www.ipwea.org.au/skills).

Guidelines have been prepared for the following key areas:

- Retaining the Current Workforce (including Potential Retirees)
- Work Experience for University students (including practical work examples and guideline position description forms)
- Work Experience for Secondary School Students
- Careers Expos Guide
- Cadetships (purpose and explanation)
- Cadetships (guidelines for university students)
- Cadetships (guidelines for TAFE students)
- Cadetships (template for employment contract)
- Scholarships
- Mentoring
- Employing overseas trained engineers
- EngQuest (an activity for Primary School Children)

Recent issues of 'Public Works Engineering' magazine have carried articles explaining various topics associated with the skills shortage issue. These articles have raised awareness and more than two dozen local government engineers have contacted Richard Usher requesting copies of one or more of the documents. Future requests will be directed to download the documents from the web.

### **3. Careers Brochure**

The new Careers Brochure has been distributed to State Divisions and Foundations. It has a 'young, vibrant and dynamic' look and should appeal to school leavers and tertiary students alike. It describes in simple terms what public works engineers actually do (design, plan, construct, operate and manage). An electronic version is available for download from the IPWEA website and a power point version that could be used at careers functions etc. is under development.

### **4. Careers Advertisement**

The opportunity recently arose to include an IPWEA advertisement in a national Careers booklet – Careers FAQs on Engineering. The full-page ad is based on the design used for the Careers Brochure to reinforce IPWEA's brand.

### **5. Careers Website Under Development**

The Queensland Division is developing a new careers website "Engineering – Fully Loaded" aimed at encouraging young people into PWE. The initial framework has been completed and work is underway to ensure content is satisfactory.

### **6. NSSP Marketing Plan**

During the NSSC meeting in May, a framework for a marketing plan was developed. This has been developed into a full marketing plan (copy attached), complete with a priority list of avenues for marketing the project. Assistance will be sought from a marketing firm such as Big Ideas (who have produced the Sustainable Communities DVD) to assist develop attractive marketing material.

### **7. Construction Industry News**

Construction Industry News carried an article on 1 August on IPWEA's initiatives to address skills shortages in local government engineering. The Executive officer, Ross Moody was extensively quoted

### **8. New Ways of Working - Project Brief**

Work has commenced to prepare a project brief to possibly submit to Government seeking a grant to engage the services of an external engineering/strategic management consultant. Their review could be in the form of analysis of the work performed by local government engineers and their staff, looking at options for doing more with less, current work

methods and impediments to efficient work practise, and identifying innovative new procedures. The National Board has added its support to the project and conducted a brainstorming session at its recent meeting to assist in development of the project brief.

## **9. National Forum of Peak Local Government Bodies**

Since the initial Forum in April the peak bodies released a communiqué and held a teleconference in July. The Forum is seeking to appoint a short term project officer to assist in achieving the objectives

- Audit current initiatives being undertaken to address the Skills Shortage issues in Local Government;
- Identify and consider the gaps in the various initiatives being undertaken;
- Develop and promote coordinated sector wide strategies to address Local Government Skills Shortage issues; and
- Negotiate with and advocate to relevant State and Commonwealth agencies to access relevant programs and secure funding opportunities for the implementation of Local Government Skills Shortage strategies and communicate the Forum outcomes and proposed implementation plan to key stake holders including Commonwealth and State Ministers responsible for Local Government.

Members of the Forum have been requested to provide a financial contribution and IPWEA has offered \$5,000 from the NSSP funds. This will be a good investment as 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.

Support from the Forum has also been obtained for IPWEA's proposed Skills Shortage Training Masterclass. CEO Chris Champion and another representative of the Forum will attend the Masterclass being run by Bridget Hogg in Adelaide in late August to ensure the content will meet local government's needs.

## **10. Professional Development Program**

There has been no progress with the development of a local government umbrella PDP with the IPWEA providing a broker and marketing role. Engineers Australia has insisted all of the formalities of IPWEA becoming a technical society are in place before this matter can be further negotiated.

## **11. Work Experience for Undergraduates**

Work experience (particularly summer vacation) for university undergraduates was identified by the NSS Committee as one of the

highest priority actions required to attract young people to a career in local government engineering. The experience to date in WA has not been a great success since the careers expo and IPWEA's inclusion in the WA Division (of EA) Work Experience handbook. Students have responded in numbers (>20) but places have not been offered by local government employers. This is clearly an area that needs to be addressed.

## **12 State NSS Committees**

The formation of effective State NSS Committees to provide a 2 way conduit for the NSS Project is proving difficult to activate. Assistance is needed at State Executive level to help make these happen.

### **12. Where to from here?**

Work over the next quarter will focus on:

- Implementing the marketing plan
- Progressing discussions with Engineers Australia on the Professional Development Program for Graduates in local government
- 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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