

# National Skills Shortage Project

## Quarterly Update

November 2006

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Institute of Public Works Engineering Australia

### 1. Resignation of Project Manager Skills Shortages

Richard Usher who had filled the position of Project Manager Skills Shortages since 31 January, resigned effective from 6 October.

During the term of Richard's engagement Ross Moody maintained an overall project management role. Hence Ross is in a position to continue with the project albeit at a reduced pace given his other IPWEA responsibilities.

At least in the short term, it is proposed to engage assistance on a project by project basis rather than appointing another project manager. This strategy is also appropriate given the requirement of the project stakeholders (Foundations and Divisions) to review performance prior to committing to a second year of funding.

### 2. National Skills Shortage Committee (NSSC)

Since its formation and inaugural meeting the NSSC's primary role has been to provide input/feedback to the various elements of the project. A further meeting of the committee is not planned until 2007.

### 3. National Guidelines, Templates & Careers Brochure

The National Guidelines and Templates to assist in tackling the skills shortage issue have continued to be marketed through articles in the IPWEA Journal and e-news. Articles have also been sent to Local Government Focus and LGAT News. 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).

An electronic version of the Careers Brochure is also available for download from the IPWEA website at <http://www.ipwea.org.au/upload/careers.pdf>.

### 4. Careers PowerPoint Show

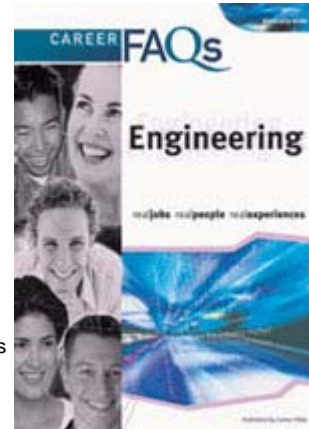
A PowerPoint slide show has been prepared and is now also available for download from the IPWEA website. The slide show has been prepared to help engineers in making presentations to local schools, clubs, or other opportunities to explain public works engineering as a career. This is a series of 20 slides that are built on the theme of the careers brochure. Assistance was sought from marketing firm Big Ideas in preparing the final product. Download from [http://www.ipwea.org.au/upload/IPWEA\\_Career\\_in\\_Eng.pps](http://www.ipwea.org.au/upload/IPWEA_Career_in_Eng.pps).

## 5. Careers Advertisement

A full-page advertisement based on the design used for the Careers Brochure has been placed in a new 160 page book all about Engineering as a Career. It is full of information and a very handy resource for the office or as a handout to prospective students thinking of a career in engineering.

It answers questions like:

- Why engineering?
- What do engineers do?
- What makes a good engineer?
- Job opportunities
- How much can I earn?
- Who are the main employers?
- What are employers looking for?
- What do real people say about their jobs?
- What qualifications do I need?
- Tip on resumes, cover letters, selection criteria, Do's and Don'ts



The book includes interviews with Warren Sharpe of Eurobodalla Council on what employers are looking for, and Chris Watson, now CEO and former Director Engineering at Rockdale Council, talking about his career path from engineering into management.

The book can be purchased through IPWEA for \$30 plus postage. Visit <http://www.ipwea.org.au/skills/#careers> for details.

## 6. Careers Website

The Queensland Division new careers website "Engineering – Fully Loaded" aimed at encouraging young people into PWE is now up and running at [www.engineeringfullyloaded.org.au](http://www.engineeringfullyloaded.org.au). The website has recently been updated with various projects added. The website is being promoted in Queensland:

- To the Membership
- At Branch activities
- To the Education Department
- To the Universities

Other Divisions will be encouraged to also promote the website. Interviews with young people are being conducted. Answers to questions of recent retirees Kevin Bickhoff and Peter Way are now included. Contacts for other young people or people of note are sought from all Divisions, as well as project information to keep with website updated.

## 7. Part Time Work for Undergraduates

Part-time work in Councils for students studying engineering has been identified as another tool in addressing the skills shortage and at the same time giving students a taste for working in local government.

A high percentage of all Australian university and TAFE students now work part-time every week. Students need to work in order to pay their way through university or TAFE. Most of these students are working in jobs other than their field of study and this is not advancing their knowledge in their chosen profession.

Apart from doing meaningful work and providing real value for the employer, part time work exposes the student to the organisation and public works engineering as a career.

Part time work provides another option which may turn out to be the most valuable in attracting young people to public works engineering. Articles promoting part time work have been prepared for PWE and LG Focus.

## **8. Attracting & Retaining Talent Masterclass**

A one day training program or 'masterclass' has been developed focusing on changing workplace culture and becoming an employer of choice. The program will be presented on behalf of IPWEA by Bridget Hogg from Adelaide based consultancy HR Development at Work.

The training has the full support of other peak local government professional bodies, eg., LGMA, PIA, ALIA, ALGA. The 'masterclass' will focus on what participants can do to make a difference to attraction and retention rates in their organisation, or even section or department. It will include local government case-studies and a proforma sample attraction and retention plan. The workshop will be participative, interesting and practical.

Initial workshops will be held in Melbourne on 21 Nov, Sydney 22 Nov and Brisbane 1 Dec 2006.

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

Work has progressed on the preparation of a project brief for a New Ways of Working project. The project would focus on an 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.

## **10. Local Government Skills Shortage Steering Committee**

The peak professional body forum has been joined by ALGA and is known as the Local Government Skills Shortage Steering Committee (LGSSSC).

IPWEA is actively involved in the LGSSSC which has the ability to deliver on the elements of the second level of the IPWEA strategy – 'local government as a career' and 'local government as an employer of choice'.

IPWEA contributed \$5,000 from the NSSP project for the engagement of a part time project officer who commenced duties in October. A project and communication plan will be completed by the end of November.

## **11. Austroads Capability Taskforce**

IPWEA is also a member of the Austroads Capability Taskforce which includes all the State Road Authorities. The focus of the Taskforce is 'Engineering as Career' which fits the first level of the IPWEA Strategy. The core areas of training for a state road authority fit well with the requirements of local government engineering.

The objective of the Capability Task Force is to provide national strategies and knowledge transfer to ensure sustainable levels of capability related to the technical skills which are specific to road authorities and related road industry organisations, including skill attraction and development. The four areas of interest were initiated as national projects, namely:

- National Workforce Capability Strategy
- National Marketing Plan
- Professional Development for Road Engineering
- Best Practice Guide for Road Authorities.

A major report has been prepared on the Professional Development for Road Engineering Project. The report makes recommendations on the postgraduate courses necessary to deliver the technical skills required by the road authorities, and the road infrastructure sector at large, and how they should most effectively be delivered.

The report identifies there would be a greater benefit if industry-focused development drove the make-up of postgraduate coursework. For the road infrastructure sector, focused postgraduate studies around disciplines from road, bridge and traffic design, construction and maintenance, to project management and contract management would promote accelerated capability development opportunities.

The report identifies the way to achieve these outcomes and Austroads may well have the influence to succeed.

## **12. 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.

## **13. State NSS Committees**

No progress has been reported on the formation of effective State NSS Committees other than in WA where an active committee exists. As previously suggested assistance is needed at State Executive level to help make these happen.

## **14. 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, 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.

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

Work over the next quarter will focus on:

- Ongoing implementation of the marketing plan
- Progressing discussions with Engineers Australia on the Professional Development Program for Graduates in local government
- Continuing to work with stakeholder groups – in particular the peak professional bodies Forum, Austroads and APESMA in achieving the 3 level strategy
- Further developing the New Ways of Working Project
- Implementing other deliverables from the Project Action Plan

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