

# IMechE – Australian Branch

## Chairman's Report 2011 (Period 1/1/2011 until 31/12/2011)

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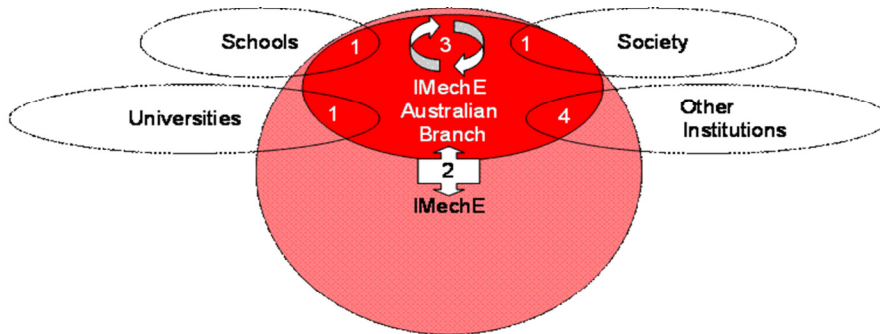
This is a report of the activities, successes and key events from the Australian Branch of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers (IMechE) for the Period 1/1/2011 until 31/12/2011.

This report has been prepared by the Chairman of the Branch for this period, Ian D Mash FIMechE, C.Eng.

## What were we trying to do?

2011-12 Vision for the IMechE in Australia is to work towards:

1. Enabling Engineering to progress from being a hidden success story in the Australia by seeking to grow awareness of the sector - taking a positive, inspiring message into schools, universities and into society beyond our membership.
2. Enabling a voice for our Australian membership to seek meaningful improvements in those issues most relevant to our members in Australia.
3. Enabling best practices in gaining, retaining and serving our Panel's memberships are shared across Australia to the benefit of all members.
4. Continuing to work with the other relevant institutions to the benefit of our profession.



On the basis that a picture is worth a thousand words, the above diagram was developed by the Australian Branch to illustrate the 4 themes in our Vision.

Throughout this report I intend providing an update on our successes, or otherwise in realizing the Vision we set for ourselves.

# SOFT Analysis

Successes	Failures
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. Still Alive</li> <li>2. Maintained membership</li> <li>3. Speak Out for Engineering</li> <li>4. Heritage Awards</li> <li>5. Teleconferences – KEEP @ lunchtime</li> <li>6. Engagement with Unis – Melb/SA</li> <li>7. Professional Interviews (20/yr)</li> <li>8. News Bulletin</li> <li>9. Prizes – 16 Unis</li> <li>10. Technical Program – (50/yr across Aus)</li> <li>11. Chairman's lecture Tour (SA, WA)</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. \$ Budget Certainty</li> <li>2. Level of funding \$64k for 1500 members.</li> <li>3. Involvement in ISB</li> <li>4. Student Prizes \$</li> <li>5. 50yrs service – recognition</li> <li>6. Lift Speech (What is IMechE?)</li> </ol>
Opportunities	Threats
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. YM's</li> <li>2. Succession Planning</li> <li>3. SofE – ACT/WA/Tas</li> <li>4. Heritage – Vic/Tas</li> <li>5. Engagement with Unis – WA/NSW/QLD</li> <li>6. Website</li> <li>7. (NZ?)</li> <li>8. PNG – Engagement &amp; Fees</li> <li>9. Greater younger engagement</li> <li>10. Chairman's lecture Tour</li> <li>11. University Membership – engaging academics to promote IMechE</li> <li>12. Marketing</li> </ol>	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. SA Panel – Demographic</li> <li>2. SofE Expenses</li> <li>3. People stopping bothering – volunteers</li> <li>4. Tech Programme (SA) – IEAust financial support withdrawn/location changed</li> </ol>

At a recent Executive Meeting, we conducted an exercise to review the successes, opportunities, failures and threats for our Branch. It was notable that the Executive are a positive group – with successes and opportunities outweighing the failures and threats. I will comment on some of these issue further in my report, but at this stage I wish to reflect on a recurring theme: money.

A key success recorded, and rightly so, has been in keeping the Branch alive. The demographics of our Branch, coupled with the tyranny of distance and underfunding of our activities have been hurdles overcome in providing the 50+ learned society events, the 3 issues of the News Bulletin, dozens of Professional Interviews, and administration of IMechE prizes to 16 Universities across the length and breadth of Australia.

Last year our Branch received \$47500 to fund activities: but this was only due to the diligent financial management of our Treasurer, Ken Tushingham, who allocated significant amount of time to watching the pennies carefully, and requesting additional funds on no less than 3 occasions. Technically we were insolvent 3 times in 2011, something I believe to be inexcusable when one considers:

- 1) The level of subscription income received from Australia; and
- 2) We, as a Branch diligently each year provide a fully costed and itemized spreadsheet at the branch level, rolling up the 5 Panel equivalents, for budgeting purposes which routinely includes the business as usual activities.

I remain of a view that a failure to adequately fund business as usual, means that business as usual can not continue. As the opportunities box indicates, there is much potential to develop further, that is if we have the budget and volunteers to do so. As it is, we have survived. Just survived.



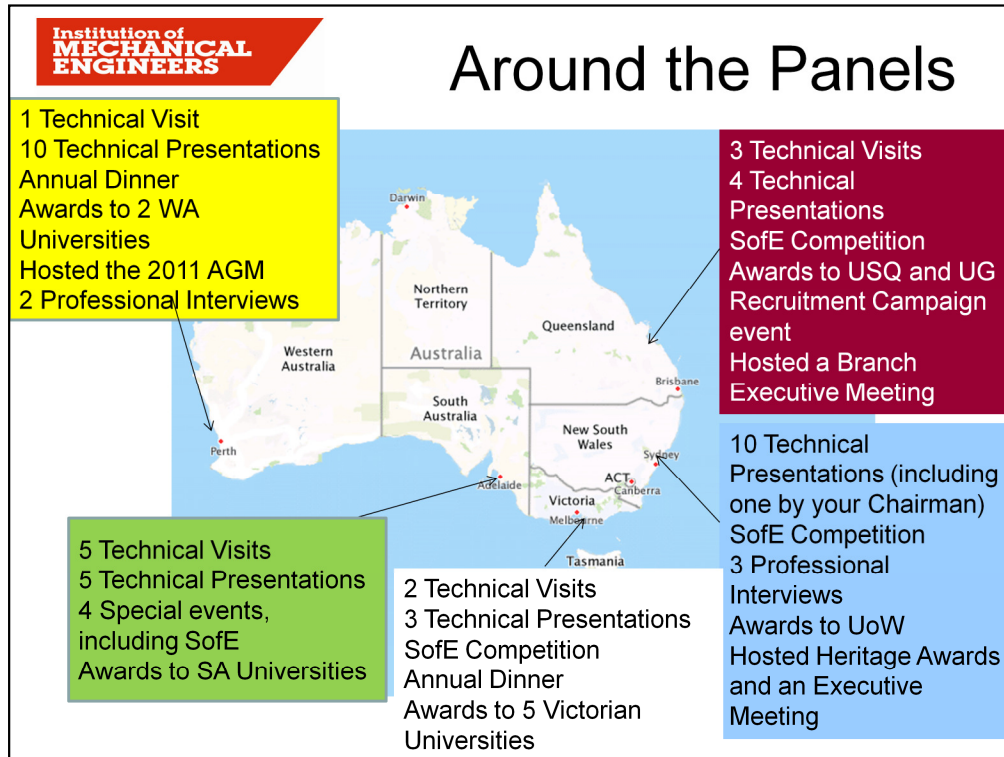
2011 has seen some significant highs: things of which the Branch can be justly proud.

The Engineering Heritage Awards were an outstanding event held in NSW. On Tuesday 20 December at the Powerhouse Museum its Boulton & Watt Engine and Locomotive No. 1, and South Australia's Humphrey Pump, received heritage plaques from the Institution of Mechanical Engineers. They are the first artefacts outside the UK and Ireland to receive this honour.

Professor Isobel Pollock, Deputy President of the Institution of Mechanical Engineers, presented the awards. Congratulations and thanks to Clive Waters and Robin Firth for their diligent work in progressing these successful applications.

Another significant high has been the refresh to the appearance of the News Bulletin. It remains the majority of our annual expense here in Australia, but as the only IMechE publication that is not UK centric and that is received in hard copy by the Australian membership. The Branch will do all we can to continue this success story. Under Roshan Dodanwela's editorship the Bulletin move forward significantly, and now with Matt at the helm, we are regularly getting good and positive feedback from the membership that both the content and the quality is appreciated. Thank you to both Roshan and Matt for their efforts (and to their respective partners for their patience and understanding).

Another high was alerting the UK to our financial plight, and through a somewhat direct letter to the CEO in which the above cup of coffee played a starring role, we were allocated monies to enable our program of activities to be completed. I believe confirming the viability of our Branch in 2011 to be a significant achievement.



**Queensland:** Led energetically by Leslie Yeow, the Queensland Panel continues to participate fully in the operation of the Branch. The list of events and activities of the Panel indicates a very full year and the Queensland Panel members are both congratulated and thanked for their energy.

**New South Wales:** NSW is one of our larger Panels (in membership number terms) and has benefitted from the continue leadership of Monika Sud – which is no mean achievement given Monika recently became a parent. The events in NSW continue to happen, and Monika and her committee contributed both to the Engineering Heritage Event in Sydney, and the logistics for this year's AGM.

**Victoria:** John Burt continues to lead a Panel of quietly achievers in Victoria. The list of achievements is again great, and a special mention is required to John who has achieved 50 years membership, and special thanks to Mr Bill Swinson and Dr Patrick Russell-Young who continue to conduct numerous professional interviews throughout Victoria.

**South Australia:** Ably led by Dr Michael Riese, the SA panel has had another successful year, as the metrics indicate. It is also appropriate I extend a special thanks for the considerable and enduring contribution of Derek Marley to the SA committee of our Institution. We wish him all the best for his future and look forward to hopefully seeing him at numerous events throughout the coming years.

**Western Australia:** David Heppenstall and his team in WA have achieved great things in 2011, commencing with a superb AGM in 2011. Again the metrics speak for themselves.

One wonders where else in the Institution one gets such a 'big bang for ones buck' – to my mind that is a significant quantity and quality of Institutional activities. Not bad for \$47500.

## Internationally

- Asia and Oceania Regional forum
- International Strategy Board
- Oceania Region



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Internationally, the branch has continued to play as active a part of the International Strategy Board as time zones and availabilities have permitted.

Prior to the reorganization at the regional level, I was fortunate enough to attend the final ASIA AND OCEANIA FORUM MEETING on 9 & 10 April in 2011 in New Delhi. It was most enlightening to realise other panels shared Australia's concerns and frustrations. The highlight however, was the Regional Speak Out for Engineering Final in which Australia's Daniel Burdett presented superbly, winning the even overall.

Further, I was privileged to be able to attend the 2 days of International Strategy Board (ISB) meeting at Birdcage Walk, London in May 2011. This provided a platform to directly discuss aspects of the Institutions financing and support of the International Branches with key staff members.

Australia's participation in the ISB has been limited since then, firstly due to teleconferencing issues, and more recently, to the nomination of 13.00 GMT for the start of the quarterly teleconference (that being midnight in Sydney). I am afraid even my willingness to contribute to our Institution is found wanting at that hour of the night!

In terms of Regional Representation, Australia forms ~80% of the membership of the Oceania Region. In 2011, 2 Australian members have taken on key roles in moving the Region forward. Ken Tushingham chairs the regional committee, ably supported by Belinda Herden, as the Oceania Young Member Representative. Belinda is an previous state SOfE winner. Both are to be congratulated for their commitment.

## Elevator Speech

- **International acceptance of CEng (IMechE preferred route)**
- Alternative routes to registration based on background.
- Mutual recognition of standards across country borders (e.g.: Washington Accord)
- Network of contacts (experts)
- **Recognition of competence (status)**
- Availability of e-CPD.
- Access to virtual library
- Access to mentors for younger engineers.
- **Increase in earnings potential/career prospects**
- Giving back to the profession
- **Independent verification of skills**
- Member support (e.g. Support Network)
- Technical programme

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An elevator speech is the response you would provide to someone with whom you share a 45 second elevator ride.

When in the UK for the International Strategy Board, the participants spent a little time developing the value proposition for an international member: the idea being to have a standard internationally applicable answer to the question: what do I get for my membership fee?

The slide above is the results of the workshop, and reflects the best efforts of the various Chairman and Young Members representatives from outside the UK to document the value proposition.

I will leave it to the membership to determine if we did a good job.

## Funding for 2012

- On 24-1-12, it was confirmed “that the branch budget for 2012 will be increased by 5% on the 2011 allocation”.
- This means the total Grant for 2012 is £21,000GBP
- **When is an increase not an increase?**
- The ‘increase’ of 5% in our Grant allocation is a mirage as due to exchange rates variations we actually have fewer \$\$ to spend this year than we were allocated last year.
- Our real allocation has REDUCED. 2011 Grant was 20,000 pounds or A\$ 31,628, our 2012 Grant announced a 5% increase to 21,000 pounds is A\$31,343 at today's exchange rate.

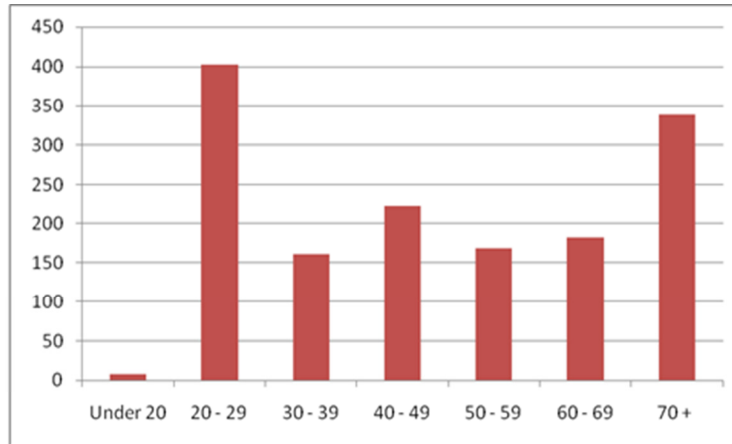
For 2012, through a continued situation whereby the Branch seems to continue to bear the consequences of Exchange Rate variations, we actually have less to spend than in 2011. As such, it can only be concluded that our Treasurer has another year ahead of watching the pennies, and of compiling multiple requests for more funds to HQ.

Again I emphasize, we are not managing the budget imprudently, nor are we spending recklessly. We meet face to face only once annually as a Branch: we conduct a great many of our activities at no cost, thanks in no small part to the continued cooperation in good faith from our Kindred Institutions.

We have already entered into a dialogue with HQ regarding the position in Australia and the obvious inconsistency between promoting IMechE as an International Institution, and the ‘managed decline’ of a mature Branch with a membership as numerous as ours. We hope sense prevails, as if not the Branch will be insolvent (finally and permanently) in June 2012.

A further difficulty in monetary terms, is that currently there is no monetary prize for either the Best Project and the Fredrick Barnes Waldron prizes. These are awards made at many Australian Universities and is a key element in our marketing to the next generation of members. This funding was removed when the Global Financial Crisis was at its peak, but has yet to return despite most of Europe having made it past that particular financial hurdle. Again, the Branch would hope sense prevails.

# Demographics



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A key perception of the Australian Branch, and one that is demonstrably wrong, is that the Branch represents an aging group of ten pound poms. As the graph above indicates, some of our members are from the generation that arrived here by ship, but not the majority. Indeed, it is clear that the majority of our members are of an age where they are likely to be in the workforce, and our greatest demographic grouping is in the 20-29 category.

This presents to me both an opportunity and a risk. The opportunity is to have sufficient members and activities to have a vibrant, energetic Branch. The risk is that the Institution either becomes irrelevant and/or the Branch is underfunded such that the membership decides there is a better use for the dollars that would otherwise comprise their membership fees.

As fewer employers pay professional memberships it is increasingly an individual choice whether to remain a member. It is therefore the Institutions challenge, through its products and the efforts of our Branch, to remain relevant and provide value in excess of the costs of membership. That is the simple, economic truth of membership.



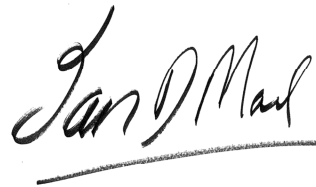
In closing, and despite the considerable funding issues we have faced in 2011, it has been a year of considerable achievement, and one of which I encourage the Branch membership and all those who have contributed, to be proud.

This slide was first drawn up a year ago with the ideas we thought to pursue: a free brainstorm if you will.

I have colour coded the ideas we had: green are those that have been a success in 2011, yellow a good start made but not yet in fruition, and orange remain as good idea to start sometime soon. Given that the Branch has spent (pun intended) considerable efforts in managing the finances and keeping the Branch solvent (for the most part), it is my interpretation that the above, and the foregoing elements of this Chairman's report indicates a significant level of achievement of local events which benefit Australian members.

# Thank you for your attention

Any questions?



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In closing, may I convey my sincere thanks to all the Branch and Panel volunteers, to those named in this Report and those I have omitted in error, for their support, assistance and encouragement in 2011. Also, to their families who have tolerated the imposition on family life that such activities inevitably bring.

It remains my honour and privilege to serve the membership as your Chairman.

Ian D Mash

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