

# IMechE – Australian Branch

## Chairman's Report 2012

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 from our 2012 AGM, until our 2013 AGM on the 2 March 2012.

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

## 2 extremes



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The role of Chairman sits somewhere on a continuum. The extremities of that continuum are interesting – at one end it can feel like carrying a priceless Ming vase, and measuring success by whether it is not broken when you put it down. At the other end, it can be similar to a rugby player, ball in hand, driving forward as hard and fast as you can supported by your team mates

One requires gentle, careful controlled movements, the other requires courage and perhaps the acceptance of a few bruises along the way to scoring some tries.

## My thoughts on being a Chairman

### Should:

- Enable success of activities
- Seek **Champions** for roles
- Empowered for specific responsibilities
- Respect family time and work commitments
- Seek consensus
- A good committee enables a chairman

### Should not:

- Do all the activities himself
- Does not dictate roles or approach
- Respects empowerment and responsibilities
- Rely on exceptional efforts of a few
- Dictate, but can have casting vote.
- Inhibit or restrict a good committee

Two years ago the I proposed my intention as Chairman. I am most grateful to have had the chance to lead a good committee, and to be able to look back over 12 months of relative success for our Australian Branch.

## 100 not out

- Today in Brisbane the Australian Branch had its' 100<sup>th</sup> Committee meeting.
- Most by teleconference
- Analysing our scorecard, it has been a year of record performances



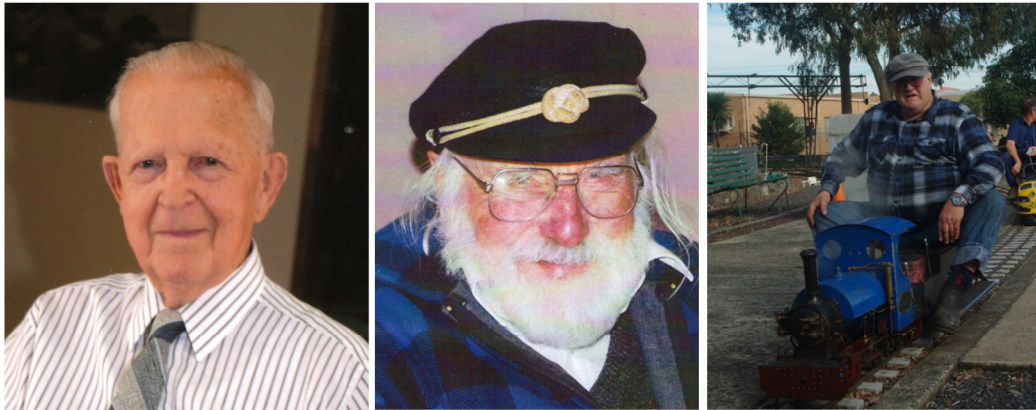
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Like all batsmen, being 100 not out is an achievement. Today, the branch held it's 100<sup>th</sup> Committee Meeting. We meet face to face as a Branch only once per year. Indeed the last time we all met together was in Coogee for the AGM on 18 February 2012. Further, a single face to face Executive was held this year, in Canberra on 15 September 2012. We are, and remain, a frugal Branch.

Our routine business is conducted by short, sharp monthly teleconferences, conducted during work hours so as not to impinge on valuable family time.

We have also spent the time this year developing a Business Plan for the Branch, covering the period 2013-2016. As such our budget requests are neither arbitrary nor transient. We have submitted a Budget request to achieve our published Business Plan. Our funding request for the activities proposed is reasonable – so actually the Branch remains both frugal and prudent.

## Team members

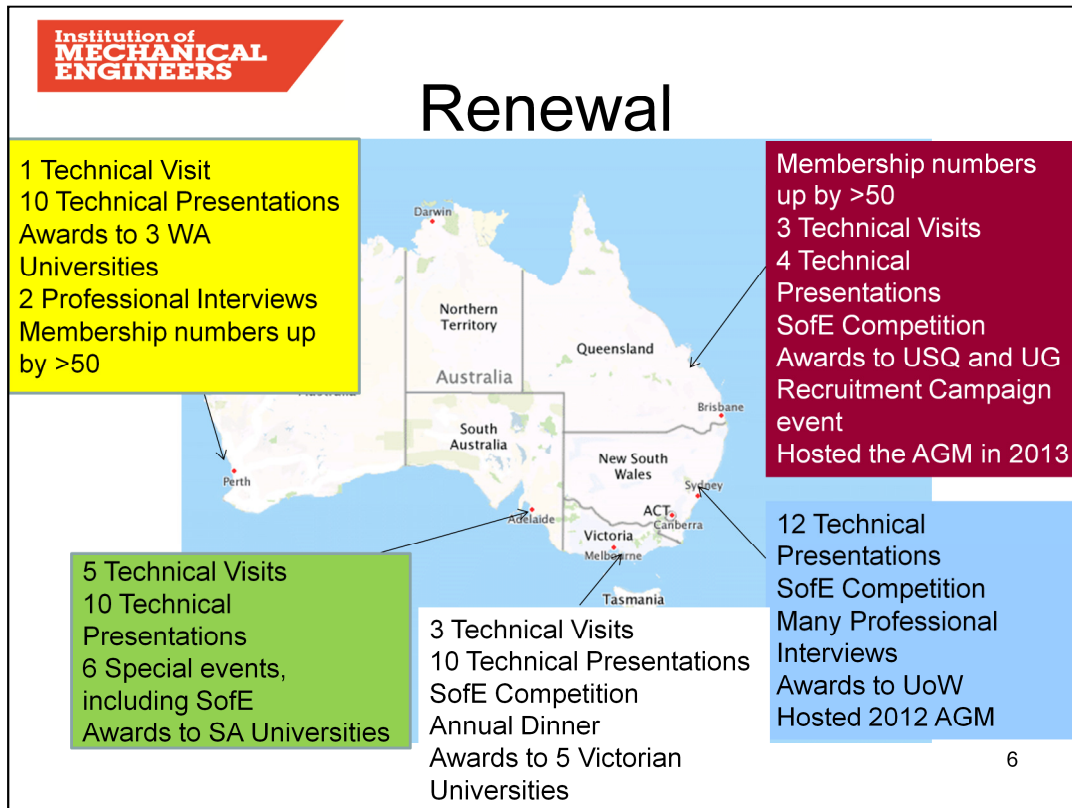


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In terms of our team mates, with much sadness, we lost 3 stalwarts of the Institution in 2012. George Fox was a previous chairman of the Branch, and perhaps like me, could not be considered a Ming vase carrier. A more forthright advocate of engineering, and a man with greater clarity of thought you would struggle to find.

Patrick Russell Young, or Vulcan as was his pseudonym, was another whose humour and presence we farewelled in 2012. His writings as Vulcan have been captured for posterity in the volume lovingly edited and completed by his son.

And most recently, John Burt who was tragically lost in a car accident just prior to Christmas. John has served the Institution for over 50 years, and fittingly, has been recognised by the Branch through the naming of the annual Speak Out for Engineering National Award in his honour. The appropriateness of this is obvious to all those who know of John's lengthy and successful career in engineering education.



But just as bushfire leads to renewal and new growth, so too did our losses in 2012.

The Queensland Panel remains the flagship for a healthy and vibrant panel, with 15 committee members

The NSW Branch boast a committee younger and more populous than I can ever recall.

The Victorian Panel continues John's fine work, and with new Chair Andrew Lezala at the helm, can only be expected to continue its successful trajectory

The SA Panel continues the rebuilding process necessitated by the reality that work, and family come before volunteer work for the institution

And, most westerly, but by no means least, the WA Panel continues to provide an excellent programme of activities for those in a time zone some 3 hours different from my own.

That in itself is impressive. The Australian membership is spread across land covering a 3 hour time window, and an area of land of 7,692,000 km<sup>2</sup> - about 31 time the land area of Great Britain! The tyranny of distance has a cost in terms of money and time for our volunteer network. And regrettably, it remains my observation that this reality is sometimes not fully appreciate by some in HQ who might better support us.

## New arrivals & traditions



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The Branch was also blessed with 3 very junior engineers (well they may well choose to be engineers one day). To Michael, Monika and Chris go our very best wishes for the many years to be spent helping their offspring solve Laplacian transforms by hand.

And new traditions have been established. The Chairman's tour I trust will become a regular feature of our events programme. By having the Chairman present a paper to each Panel achieves many things: but most significantly makes the Chairman available to the membership. I enjoyed presenting to audiences large and small in each of our Panel centres.



## Funding for 2012

- 2011 was a year of chasing funding.
- 2012 we were furnished with an appropriate allocation, so the challenge was one of appropriate governance.
- I maintain the value to cost ratio delivered by our Branch is >>1!

<u>Income</u>	<u>Total</u>
Grants	47,652
Events	1,759
Other	445
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Total	49,856
<u>Expenditure</u>	
Room & Equipment Hire	521
Travel & Subsistence	17,466
Entertainment & Catering	2,575
Printing & Stationery	12,693
Postage & Telephone	7,012
Clerical Assistance	
Meeting Expenses	1,724
Sundries	4,388
	<hr/>
Total	46,379
Excess of Income over Expenditure	<hr/> <del>3</del> 77

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.

An ongoing 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 are 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.



## Improvements in 2013?

- Not all went well
- The interview process took a farcical twist
- Also ISB times are tricky



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An improvement in communication of change would go a long way to alleviating many of the grumbles from us lot 'down under'.

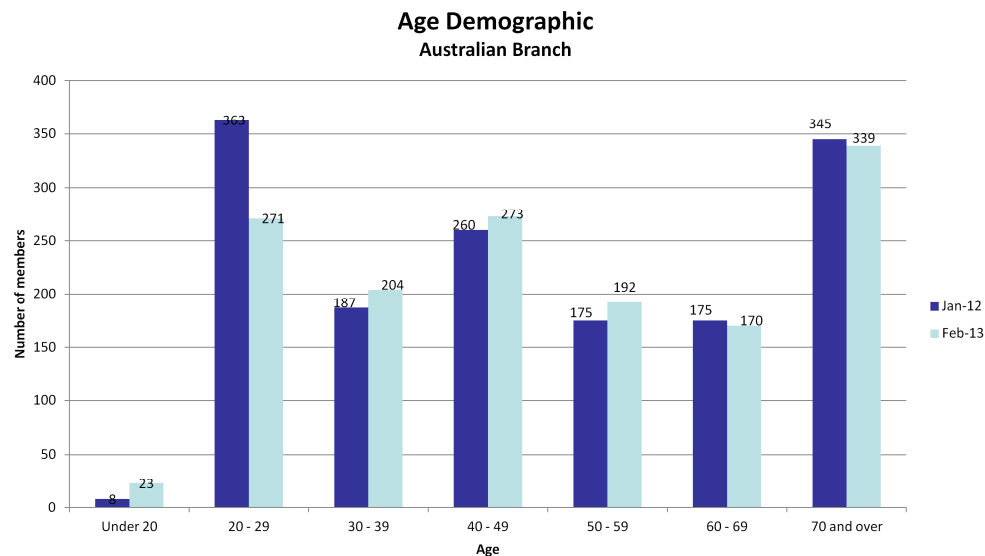
The interview situation is a case in point. As a result of the need to demonstrate compliance, it was decided, but not communicated, that all interviewers (whether they had been interviewing for 30 years or not) had to undertake compulsory training. Just to add to the fun, the modules were developed and deposited in an Easter-bunny-esque way somewhere in the website, and no one was told about it.

Needless to say, few did any training, and as a result, we have not conducted an interview for 3 months and now have a backlog of 11 candidates.

A positive in all of this (as I always wish to seek the positive) is that it was not that long ago that the Branch would do 11 interviews a year, now we are doing 11 a quarter. Ours is not a contracting Branch of ten pound poms. It is a lively, active Branch with many active members, keen leadership and a programme of events to be proud of. Which we are.

A further challenge remains how the Australian Branch can participate in the ISB. Regrettably, a 1pm UK start time is midnight on the eastern seaboard of our country. Trials of split ISB were successful, so I hope the future situation might be one where the Australian Branch can participate without the risk of the Chair turning into a pumpkin.

# Demographics



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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. It is further interesting to note the growth in the membership <20 years old.

This presents to me both an opportunity and a risk. The opportunity is to have sufficient 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 Institution's 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 maintenance and growth.

## Next year



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Stability is again afforded to the Branch as the committee next year has been elected unopposed from positions in the Branch and Panels.

Dayaratne Dharmasiri will assume the role of Chairman of the Branch – and in that role I trust he will forge his own path.

Ken Tushingham remains as Treasurer, and is commended for both doing a sterling job watching the pennies, as well as tempering my 'rugby player' tendencies.

Leslie Yeow becomes Hon Sec of the Branch, having successfully led in Queensland.

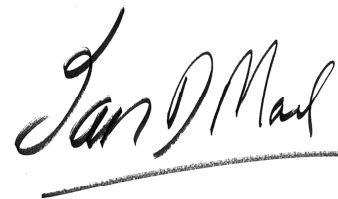
Matt Springer remain in the Asst Hon Sec position – and glad I am too as I can not remember a time when the News Bulletin attracted such a volume of positive feedback.

Next year bodes well for events and awards. We have in progress a Heritage Award application for the unique Repco Brabham race car. Given the desire for column inches, the opportunity to present the plaque to Jack himself is one that we surely can not slip by.

I trust the Branch can also look forward to the continued success of the Facebook and Twitter presence and to the energetic and ambitious conduct of our Young Member Section events. Successes in 2012, that led to individual recognition in terms of Young Engineer of the Year awards for both Matt Springer and Belinda Herden for 'use of electronic media' and 'Outstanding Commitment to Member Engagement' respectively.

# Thank you for your attention

Any questions?

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Ian D Mash", with a horizontal line underneath.

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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 2012. Also, to their families who again 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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