

Issue 03 August 2010



President's Column

Warm greetings to all chapters and their respective members.

We have had an active flow of information since our inaugural launching in March this year, which is a positive reflection of an active new entity. I want to thank my Council colleagues for their contribution during our last face-to-face meeting in Auckland in July. We did cover a significant array of items related to our long-term goals for improving engineering in our Pacific region. I find it extremely beneficial that we were able to meet and shared with representatives from Engineers Without Borders (EWB), South Pacific Professional Engineering Excellence (SPPEEx), University of Auckland, New Zealand Society of Earthquake Engineering, National Institute of Water and Atmospheric Research Limited and NZAID. The knowledge gained by SPEA by meeting these organisations is undoubtedly providing a *big* positive step forward in developing SPEA to help it grow quickly and for us to learn how to interact with other engineering bodies and funding agents.

National Chapters

The Fiji Institution of Engineers (FIE), Institution of Engineers Papua New Guinea (IPENG),
Institution of Professional Engineers Samoa (IPES), Tonga, Vanuatu, Cook Islands

www.spengineer.org

SPEA has managed to prove its embryonic success by witnessing two of our chapters, Tonga and Cook Islands, adopting the SPEA model national association rules to establish their own national chapters into a legal entity. This is a good sign that SPEA is helping its island nation countries. It is our hope that all current SPEA chapters will complete their national body association rules before the end of 2010. This is another milestone to be achieved. Vanuatu is currently working on its draft constitution with the help of IPENZ, aiming to complete by the end of 2010.

The Fiji Chapter (FIE), for instance, has confirmed that SPEA has helped established a relationship with UNICEF which is a potential funding source for the development of Standards and building codes. The fact that SPEA is a regional body, it will add weight to funding applications by the various chapters to improve Standards documents in the region. This is one of many examples of SPEA benefits to the Pacific community. Funding of professional development in the engineering community is another.

The Papua New Guinea Chapter (IEPNG) is working closely with Engineers Australia (EA) to address competent assessment and accreditation to conform to international standards and good practice. Assessor training within IEPNG has been in progress with the help of EA, this is another effort of SPEA that we see working.

The Samoa Chapter (IPES) has, before and after the establishment of SPEA, reviewed its regulations, membership registration, membership rules and corporate plan to become more in line with SPEA for consistency.

I wish to confirm the positive support from all SPEA chapters in committing their efforts to improving SPEA. I also want to thank IPENZ for their continuing support and for hosting a dinner for SPEA in the July meeting.

Thank you.

SPEA COUNCIL MEETING 27/28 JULY 2010

Late in July 2010, the members of the Council of the South Pacific Engineers Association gathered in Auckland for their third Council meeting. President Leiatua Tom Tinai led representatives of the six nations through a comprehensive work plan, finishing with a list of actions to be undertaken over the next six to 12 months. The Council will meet four times per year, three times by teleconference and once face to face. The next face-to-face meeting to be in Papua New Guinea in April 2011.

Highlights:

Showing the importance of SPEA

Templates for membership and registration certificates were approved. Certificates for membership of national chapters and national registers will continue to be issued nationally, but the SPEA logo will be proudly included – the chapters want to show their allegiance in this manner.

Influencing governments

Three policy position papers were approved:

- The role of engineering in sustainable economic development in the South Pacific
- Resilient infrastructure and disaster management
- The needs for engineering education in the South Pacific

The various national chapters will present these to their own governments, and acting collectively, SPEA will approach the Secretariat for the Pacific Community (which supports the Pacific Islands Forum) to seek discussions with senior government officials. Interested readers can read these on the SPEA website (www.spengineer.org).

Providing professional development to engineers

A major concern of SPEA is to deliver professional development opportunities directly to engineers in their own countries. Critical areas of need include building construction, road development and maintenance and small-scale water and wastewater treatment. Ideally, experts with local knowledge would travel courses around the countries.

A delivery model is under investigation – this would involve forming “buddy” relationships between engineering academics resident in the region (presently only Fiji and Papua New Guinea) with academics in Australia or New Zealand for a period of several years. The New Zealand or Australian academic could coach their counterpart on their day-to-day job, but then they would jointly deliver courses. After two to three years if all goes well there will be an expert in the region who can deliver the course without assistance! There would also be a greatly improved educational experience for students studying for their engineering qualification in the region. Win-win!

Collaboration with EWB and SPPEEx

EWB is keen to better partner with engineers on the ground in the Pacific. It was agreed that there would be value in establishing an operating protocol between SPEA and EWB. This might include circulating proposals from EWB to the relevant SPEA chapter prior to project selection for comment on suitability and to find local representatives for project. SPEA chapters can also offer projects to EWB that need voluntary labour to make them viable.

In New Zealand, SPPEEX represents the views of and provides support programmes for Maori and Pasifika engineers. SPPEEX can attend the SPEA Council to ensure that when SPPEEx is planning activities outside New Zealand, engagement with SPEA occurs.

Tapping into knowledge at times of disaster

There is general agreement that engineers with specific knowledge of a damaged region and its infrastructure are highly valuable at time of disaster – SPEA can help find those engineers, identify them to governments and aid agencies and get them deployed. Now that SPEA is being publicised, engineers are more actively engaged in national disaster management committees, and NZAID is keen to tap into the SPEA network. SPEA will list several emergency contacts for each national chapter on its website. The connection process actually happened after the March 2010 cyclone hit the Cook Islands – a couple of phone calls and the best engineers to assist were deployed!

News from FIJI – the Fiji Institution of Engineers

Following on from cyclone Tomas that went through Fiji in March, an approach by UNICEF was made to the FIE to accompany it to assess four schools. The schools targeted were those that had some damage from the cyclone, were remote, were boarding schools and had reported cases of diarrhoea and typhoid. The FIE is currently in dialogue with UNICEF on its proposals for other similar projects. It is possible that the UNICEF work will spread into the other regions of SPEA.

Professional development course on Professional Indemnity Insurance: The FIE organised this course on 10 May. Various other professionals like lawyers, architects, accountants and organisations like insurance/brokers, developers/investors, municipalities/councils, financial institutions, tertiary institutions, international donors, etc were invited, leading to a total attendance of 58.

Professional development course on Engineering and the Law: This course was held on 9 July with former High Court Judge Nazhat Shameem as the speaker. The seminar covered, “The Law and the Building and Construction Industry in Fiji”. Over 90 people attended from a variety of occupations.

Disaster and Risk Management Training Advisory Committee: The FIE was invited to attend and participate. It was discovered that the National Disaster Management Office (NDMO) did not have a list of suitably qualified engineers who could be called upon at the time of a national emergency to carry out immediate first aid inspections. The FIE have subsequently drawn up a list and submitted it to the NDMO following the agreement of each listed member.

The FIE President, Pratarp Singh, made a presentation at the University of the South Pacific (USP) attended by some 220 participants including the Vice Chancellor, engineering staff and undergraduates. He will soon be making a similar presentation to the Fiji National University (FNU) and is providing ongoing assistance to both the USP and FNU on their engineering programmes.

News from the COOK ISLANDS

Since May 2010, there have been two meetings towards formation of the Institution of Engineers Cook Islands (IECI). The participants considered developing a logo that identifies the Cook Islands' engineers, registering IECI as a legal entity once its Rules and Code of Ethics have been formally endorsed and then formalisation of the chapter of the SPEA.

Approval had been granted for the IECI to utilise the Ministry of Infrastructure and Planning (MOIP) office for its administration.

There are currently 15 potential members from the fields of civil, electrical and environmental engineering, architecture and land surveying. It is anticipated that once the IECI is established the membership number will increase to about 30. Also, there are currently four full-time engineering students studying in New Zealand. They are expected to return and work in the Cook Islands after graduation.

News from SAMOA – the Institution of Professional Engineers Samoa

The selected Chairman for “Professional Interviews” for new IPES Candidates who request promotion from Graduate to CPEng status, is working closely with the Council of IPES to finalise procedures in accordance with the practices used in New Zealand.

The President and Executive Committee have further discussed IPES Regulations for Building Permits and Construction of Buildings. IPES recognise weakness in enforcement of codes and is willing to offer to government to outsource this function to IPES.

A review of IPES Regulations have been in progress since 2009, and have continued well into 2010. Meetings with relevant governmental officials and eventually the Minister responsible will occur towards putting in place the changes.

The first publication in the local newspaper of the Approved IPES Financial list was done in April 2010. The second publication will be in July and the third to be in October 2010. All the members for IPES including overseas contractors who plan to undertake civil works in Samoa, must meet the requirement to become official members for IPES, before they can submit Tenders for Work Contracts.

The IPES President and Vice President met with the Pacific Rim Infrastructure Fund Manager responsible for Technical Assistance – Infrastructure Improvement in Pacific Island Countries) seeking to improve processes.

The IPES Scholarship Programme was revived and reconstituted in 2009, and the 12 Beneficiaries at the Institute of Technology/NUS were awarded the IPES Scholarships. For 2010, IPES approved to extend Scholarship Programme total of four Local Technical Centres/Schools; two in Upolu and one in Savaii including IOT-NUS, and the total value of Scholarships was about \$7,000.

The newly crowned Ms Samoa – Ms Tavalea Rachael Nilon – is also a qualified Mechanical Engineer. The IPES arranged a television event to encourage all the young people of Samoa, especially the female demographic, that it is possible to qualify for any career of their choice, and become a beauty contestant!

News from TONGA

The draft Constitution for Institution of Professional Engineers Tonga was approved by a sub-committee in early July 2010. An Annual General Meeting was called for 16 July 2010 to endorse the Constitution and to elect the first Council Members.

The Council's initial tasks will be to seek Incorporation of IPET in the 1988 Incorporated Societies Act, set fees for members, and request government endorsement for legislation to empower IPET as the National Body responsible for the Competence Register of engineers and engineering technicians.

The Ministry of Works had supported the setting up of IPET as this will assist the Ministry in their role in The Building Control Act of ensuring the competence of engineers involved with design and supervision of engineering works.

News from PAPUA NEW GUINEA – The Institution of Engineers Papua New Guinea

IEPNG is working with Engineers Australia on a number of issues. A feasibility study has been undertaken to consider the way forward in respect of moving competence assessment and accreditation to conform to international good practice. There are three major parts – what IEPNG should do, what the PNG government should do, and what academic institutions need to do. IEPNG have met with Minister responsible – now Deputy Prime Minister – an Engineer, who has accepted the report and is prepared to commit funding.

Training of assessors has been conducted by Engineers Australia. In 2011 or 2012, IEPNG will undertake the evaluations of those Unitech engineering graduates who wish the assessment to be done.

Two weeks ago, IEPNG approved the SPEA component of IEPNG membership fees for 2011. A staff member was recruited to look after SPEA issues. Activities include developing standardised application forms and streamlining processes internally.

News from VANUATU

Progress is being made towards getting the national body for engineers established. Talks have been held with the government about the importance of setting up the chapter. The Minister of Works is supportive and will allow government-employed engineers to participate. Three people are looking at the draft constitution and how it needed to be modified to fit into SPEA. To develop a logo, the engineers in Vanuatu will prepare their own concept drawing as a starting point.

SPPEEx and SPIES

The South Pacific Indigenous Engineering Students (SPIES) is an engineering student society at the University of Auckland. Both SPPEEx and SPIES conduct activities of relevance to SPEA.

NETS2010 (Native Engineering and Technology Symposium 2010) was originally to be held in Hawaii. Due to logistic difficulties and other constraints, the Hawaii-based conference was postponed indefinitely but a condensed version of the conference was held at the National University of Samoa to coincide with the first leg of the SPIES pacific tour to Samoa, Fiji and Tonga in July 2010.

On the first day, the presidents of SPPEEx, SPEA and SPIES introduced themselves and provided an overview of their organisation's activities and aims. As a part of his presentation on SPEA, the inaugural President, Leiataua Thomas Tinai, spoke about some of the challenges of working as an indigenous engineer in the Pacific, including ethical considerations. He encouraged all those students present to make a difference in their future work in order to overcome some of the present issues the Pacific Islands face.

The second day of NETS presentations had a more technical focus, with Dr Kepa Morgan and several postgraduate students from the University of Auckland presenting on current applications for indigenous knowledge, belief systems and technology. Presentation topics included using the Mauri Model in the decision-making process, the application of Uku – rammed earth housing in rural Maori communities and the effectiveness of aid work in two different Vanuatu communities.

As a part of the SPIES pacific tour, visits were scheduled to several of the local high schools in and around Apia including Samoa College, St Josephs College, Leifiifi College, Church College – Western Samoa (CCWS) and St Marys College.

The importance of NETS and the SPIES pacific tour can be summed up by comments made by Mr Randall Ah Mu, a Samoan, and the current President of SPPEEx. *“As the engineering abilities of native engineers in the Pacific increase and more engineering works, including aid-funded projects, are performed by indigenous engineers there will be a corresponding benefit to the local economy and general well being. This is because good infrastructure and engineering systems are necessary to increasing trade and economic prosperity, however, this will only be truly accomplished in a sustainable and long-term manner by those who have the particular nation’s best interests at heart.”*



University of Auckland SPIES students mix with appreciative high school students at St Marys College in Samoa