



**ASDE NATIONAL E NEWSLETTER**

**No 1 December 2010**

## **Message from National President – Doug Roser**

Since taking over as the ASDE National President last year I have enjoyed working with the other members of your National Committee and Katrina Chisholm of Engineers Australia Canberra who looks after our Technical Society so well. The Committee has met every quarter usually by teleconference and once a year face to face. In my opinion the Committee has worked hard to improve the functioning of ASDE, to improve its interface with Engineers Australia as well as other similarly minded organisations, and to provide presentations of interest to its members.

One of our decisions was to issue this National Newsletter after every quarterly National Committee Meeting to keep members up to date with the plans and activities of ASDE at all levels. This is the first of this Newsletter thanks to the efforts of Peter Davidson of the Victoria Chapter who has undertaken its preparation. The National Committee trusts you enjoy it and find it of interest.

In closing I wish all our members and their families the very best for the Festive Season and a Happy and Prosperous New Year.

## **2010 Defence Engineering Conference**

The 2010 Defence Engineering Conference, the first to be organised and run jointly by DMO, Engineers Australia and ASDE, was held in Canberra on 23 November, attracting over 260 attendees. Speakers gave a range of presentations on the theme *“The Engineering Challenges of delivering capability in an SRP environment without compromising safety”*.

Lead speakers Ms Shireane McKinnie, Acting General Manager, Systems, DMO and Ms Jane Wolfe, General Manager, Reform and Special Projects, DMO explained key features of the Strategic Reform Program. The SRP seeks to achieve procedural and cultural changes throughout Defence and its industry partners, with the aim of achieving significant financial savings - \$5.5b over the next 10 years - for reinvestment in new capability. Reform objectives focus on Smart Sustainment, Inventory Management, and greater commercial discipline (the Mortimer Reforms). Efficiencies through smart engineering will play a major part in achieving these objectives.

A highlight of the Conference was the presentation by Dr Jan Davis, a former astronaut and now Vice President and Deputy General Manager of Jacobs Engineering, Science, and Technical Services Group at NASA’s Marshall Space Flight Center in Huntsville, Alabama. Her talk *What Went Wrong? A Different Perspective on the NASA Shuttle Accidents* dealt with the Challenger and Columbia Space Shuttle disasters. She described the design flaws that led to the failures and, based on her personal experience, the engineering changes introduced to fix the problems. She went on to explain how the decision making process and

the change process are critical in implementing a strong safety program and how lessons learned from these catastrophic failures can be applied to other engineering projects. Her talk carried the strong message that systems safety is paramount in the design of hardware and software.

Presentations by DMO and defence industry representatives explained how, through their innovative approaches to solving maintenance and upgrade problems, they were able to bring about very significant savings in both time and money.

The presentation by Dr David Schmidtchen '*Safety Culture: A Mystery Masquerading as a Puzzle*' provided a stimulating analysis of safety from a non-engineering perspective, based on the inquiry into the Nimrod aircraft disaster.

He pointed out the many similarities with other major disasters and the need for organisational and cultural change if we are to heed the lessons from the past and avoid accidents in the future. ASDE Chairman Doug Roser spoke about ASDE and its role in promoting defence engineering.

Dr Andrew Jacopino gave the final presentation on the subject of "*Performance Based Contracting and the Role of the Engineer*". PBC is a contractual framework for the delivery of products or services where payment is related directly to performance. PBC is being used more and more by Defence because of the contribution it can make to savings.

Major General Tony Fraser, the guest speaker at the Conference Dinner, gave a very interesting presentation on battlefield equipment, demonstrating that good engineering is essential to good performance.

**Report from Denton Bocking**

## **Defence Industry under threat**

Mr Graham Prestnall, National President of the AIDN has warned that the Australian defence industry is under threat following a meeting he and AIDN Vice President, Mark Smith had with Minister Jason Clare to discuss the issues affecting Australian companies supporting the ADF. Despite the Government forecasting a higher level of defence spending in the Defence White Paper 2009 and the Defence Capabilities Plan, Australian SME's are experiencing a significant reduction in defence work. The reduction is caused by various factors including the delay in defence project schedules, the impact of the Strategic Reform Program (SRP) on sustainment and direct purchasing of Military Off The Shelf (MOTS) solutions from overseas suppliers.

Recent AIDN industry surveys are clearly indicating a reduction of defence work for SME's and an intention of many companies to change their business focus to other markets.

"Defence risks losing access to defence-ready industry capability that may not return when the forecast spending becomes a reality. We need a strategic resourcing program that brings industrial regional benefits including investment in local industry, continuity of strategic skills and Australian sovereignty of capability. The Government needs to strengthen its Australian Industry Capability Program by mandating SME participation with measurable KPI's", he said.

The June 2010 Defence Industry Policy Statement (DIPS) requires MOTS benchmarking to determine value for money in defence projects, there is evidence MOTS is being interpreted

by acquisition project managers as a solution preference rather than a benchmarking requirement. Australian defence industry SME's are sometimes excluded from the opportunity or are excluded from the opportunity or are placed in uncompetitive positions.

AIDN believes that the Government may be reducing their technical risks through MOTS solutions but is potentially its strategic risk by losing local defence industry capability. AIDN called on the government to expedite approvals for projects that are in backlog, investigate the impact of the SRP and review cost and implications of MOTS solutions.

## **National Committee Report**

**Australian Industry Defence Network** The Canberra, New South Wales and Victorian Chapters all have a formal relationship with their local AIDN Chapters which facilitates the exchange of information and mutual assistance to our members.

### **Involvement in EA Year of Humanitarian Engineering**

ASDE has commenced plans for the organisation/involvement in workshops/seminars in ACT, Sydney and Queensland in support of the Year of Humanitarian Engineering, the results of which will be advised to the National Conference planned for Melbourne late in 2011. Further details will be advised as planning proceeds. ASDE members who wish to become directly involved in the activities in support of the Year of Humanitarian Engineering can do so via the recently opened website which can be accessed via the EA website.

### **Submarine Engineering Conference**

The National Committee has taken a decision to conduct a Workshop in conjunction with the Submarine Institute of Australia in Adelaide in November 2011 on Submarine Science, Technology and Engineering. Further details will be advised as planning proceeds.

### **Awards to ADFA**

ASDE currently gives prizes to ADFA cadets for academic achievement and is investigating an expansion of this programme to one or two other educational institutions, including ADF institutions, with a focus on defence engineering.

### **Financial Report**

ASDE is in a good financial position and well able to fund its activities. The National Committee takes a very cautious approach to any expenditure but has recently agreed to offer a year's honorary membership to EA members who achieve Chartered Status in the field of defence engineering. It is hoped this will encourage membership and publicise the work of ASDE.

### **Navy Engineering Review**

ASDE made a submission to the Navy Engineering Review and the National Committee is keeping track of the progress of the consideration of this review.

## **Chapter Reports**

### **NSW Chapter**

The NSW Chapter held its AGM on 1<sup>st</sup> November and elected Doug Roser, Tom Fink, John Brett, John Elliot and Chris Skinner to the Committee. Admiral Tony Hunt, a well known and highly respected Navy engineer, did not stand for re-election. Tony has given many years to the Committee and his contribution will be missed.

Following the AGM, an outstanding presentation on the Landing Helicopter Dock (LHD) Vessel Project was given by Captain Craig Bourke (the Project Director) and Jeremy Redmond (the Project Engineering Director). This extremely complex project is proceeding on schedule and will deliver a much needed capability to the ADF and two very large ships to the RAN. A video of the presentation is available on the Engineers Australia website.

The next event for the NSW Chapter will be on 7<sup>th</sup> February 2011 and will be a presentation on the operations of the Royal Australian Engineers (our Sappers) by Brigadier Wayne Budd the current Commander ADF Counter Device Task Force and concurrently the Head of Royal Australian Engineers Army Corp.

### **Victoria Chapter**

Over the past year we have maintained our provision of communication services to our members. We congratulate the National Committee on the decision to re-introduce a members news letter on the email.

Over the past few years we have provided our members with access to information through our newsletter and access to kindred organization who have programmes of interest to our members.

Recently we have negotiated an agreement with the AAAAI for corporate membership and are negotiating with other organization for access to their data for our members.

We are planning two important presentations for the first half of 2011. They will be from the Aviation Industry and will be an adjunct to the Avalon Airshow which will celebrate the 90<sup>th</sup> birthday of the RAAF. The Airforce was born at nearby Point Cook in 1920. The presentations will be videoed and converted to electronic formats for all ASDE members to access.

### **The ASDE E Newsletter**

Welcomes articles and reports from State Chapters and members. Please E-mail copy to the Editor, [peterq davidson@pacific.net.au](mailto:peterq davidson@pacific.net.au) by 10 February 2011. Put in bolds and italics to your reports but not indents