

# ASSOCIATION OF GEOTECHNICAL TESTING AUTHORITIES

DECEMBER 2011



## 2011 COMMITTEE OFFICERS

- ♦ Chairman  
Paul Coker
- ♦ Deputy Chairman  
Mark Owtrim
- ♦ Secretary  
Steve Cusack
- ♦ Deputy Secretary  
Alan Bartlett
- ♦ Treasurer  
Rex Fleiter
- ♦ Deputy Treasurer  
Vacant
- ♦ Non Executive Member  
Ron Richards  
Jon Nicholson

For contact details please visit our website at [www.agta.org.au](http://www.agta.org.au)

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**Editor Alan Bartlett**

*The views expressed by contributors do not necessarily reflect AGTA policy*

## *A note from the Chairman Paul Coker*



I write this message with a great deal of satisfaction that your Association has been able to deliver an incredibly successful Conference that achieved its goals of giving the members of our industry the opportunity to look towards the future.

So much has been achieved and I would be extremely remiss if I didn't take this chance to pay tribute to those who worked so hard to make the event the success it was. A.G.T.A. owes so much to Alan, Rex Brett, Ron, John, Steve and Mark and his team, including, Debbie, Jacquie, Jenny, Bridie, Denise, Grant, Craig and Peter. My deepest appreciation to you all.

After the angst of the January 2011 floods and the postponement of the Conference, I wondered if we were attempting something too big, too soon, given the circumstances. After lots of hard work (by a few), the seemingly impossible has been turned into something that our association should be very proud of. The response of our sponsors and exhibitors played a huge part in

the success of the conference. Our theme of "Engaging The Future" attracted some interesting papers covering the topics of: Technical Governance Knowledge and Sharing Construction Materials Testing – The Next Generation Technology and innovation. My thanks to those who were able to make these presentations and contribute to the success of the conference.

The Youth Forum proved to be a success with some interesting points to be reviewed by your Executive as an important item for 2012 still following on from our Engaging the Future theme. An update will follow in the next Newsletter.

Your Executive is preparing a full report for inclusion in the next Newsletter along with other items of interest that arose from various discussions at the Conference.

We as the industry Association in Queensland must not allow the dust to settle too quickly and too thickly after this success. There are many challenges facing our industry that we must face together if we are to make our industry a smart, technologically advanced, safe, vital, prosperous and attractive industry and career choice. BUT my friends, it's up to you.

As I write this article, I acknowledge our approaching Annual Meeting, which I hope, will also adopt the theme of Engaging the Future.

After six years as A.G.T.A.'s Chairman, I will not be seeking

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another term as Chairman so that the future can be engaged with a new approach, new thoughts, direction and ideas. I have enjoyed the challenges that we have faced, while acknowledging that there is still much to be done. I would like to sincerely thank those who have assisted on the Executive throughout the past six years and to wish you all well as we continue the work of our Association. A personal thanks to you all for your support over this time.

On a slightly disappointing note, the last Members' Forum was very poorly attended. The Association is YOUR Association and needs your support to be successful. I ask that you consider ways to be involved in YOUR Association to improve our industry for our members. As such, I look forward to seeing you at our Annual Meeting on Monday 12 December.

And finally, may each of you enjoy the coming Festive Season, taking some time to relax and enjoy something for yourself. May you have a safe and enjoyable Christmas and New Year.

Best Wishes and thanks for the ride.  
PAUL COKER  
CHAIRMAN

### *Editor's message      Alan Bartlett*

Unfortunately we were able to issue only two newsletters this year. The first for the year was delayed until June and the second until now because of preparation for the conference. I hope that those of you who enjoyed the conference will agree that it was the priority event of the year.

I would like to echo Paul's sentiments about the work of the organising committee and assistants. For some time it didn't look as though we could bring it all together. Peter Davis did an excellent job of finding and securing support from our sponsors that ensured the financial success and enabled us to deliver a conference second-to-none at an unbelievably low cost to delegates.

Our next concern was whether we could attract sufficient presenters to fill a two day conference. With the assistance of our colleagues from CETANZ who provided five papers we were able to provide a program that attracted the attention of delegates.

Rex Fleiter (assisted by his business partner Brett Hollingum) deserves special mention for managing the finances and communication with the venue. If Rex ever decides to retire from the CMT industry he can make a career in conference organising.

### *Obituary*

Eric Hanley WATSON

Eric with his twin brother Brian was a soil tester who worked for the Irrigation and Water Supply Commission during the sixties, seventies and eighties on a succession of major dam and irrigation projects.

The Watson family migrated to Australia from Manchester when Eric was a child. Eric's father was a baker and Eric served an apprenticeship in their bakery in Mulgildie near Monto. The early mornings did not suit Eric so he applied to join I&WSC. He was accepted and went to the Materials Laboratory at Rocklea for an intensive training course in soils, concrete and aggregates sampling and testing.

On completing the course he was transferred to Fairbairn Dam near Emerald during its construction. At that time, Fairbairn was the largest water storage project in Queensland. In fact, when at full supply level the water extends to the horizon. Originally built to supply the booming beef industry, by the time it was completed the industry had withered away. However, the canola, cotton and mining industries have been users of the available water.

From Fairbairn, Eric was transferred to Monduran Dam near Gin Gin, another earth and rockfill dam, second only to Fairbairn in capacity. Monduran was subsequently renamed Fred Haigh Dam in honour of the long-standing I&WSC Commissioner, although the lake it formed retained the name Lake Monduran.

From there he was transferred to Wivenhoe Dam near Fernvale, continuing sampling and testing soils, concrete and aggregates. He also would have worked on the Wivenhoe Power Station and Splityard Creek Dam which were part of the same project.

In 1979 he was transferred to Cania Dam near Monto which was then starting construction as my Senior Soil Tester. I learnt a lot about field testing on a major project from Eric and he and his family became good friends with me and mine. I was transferred back to Rocklea at the end of 1980 to resume the role of instrumentation technician when my successor in the role resigned from the Commission. Eric continued on as OIC Laboratory until completion of construction.

From Cania, Eric transferred to Clare Weir near Ayr in North Queensland but now as a construction foreman. This was natural career progression in the Commission, from laboratory to construction supervision.

Eric retired in 1990 when the Commission underwent one of its major downsizings. He purchased a house at Thangool near Biloela. He passed away on 17th January this year.

Alan Bartlett



## *News from ECLA (Engineering and Civil Laboratories Association)*

Our counterpart organisation in NSW suffered a setback this year when their industrial awards *ECLA/AWU Soil, Concrete Testing and Analysis Award 2000 [AP781028]* and *ECLA/AWU Soil, Concrete Testing and Analysis Award 2000 [Transitional] [AT781028]* were terminated by Fair Work Australia in August.

This was in spite of submissions by the NSW Business Chamber that the instrument still had coverage.

Both the AWU and AMWU had opposed the ECLA submission and want to claim coverage of soil testers but I am advised by ECLA that they are arguing for coverage under the Manufacturing Award. We wish them luck in getting their wishes granted.

## *Youth Forum Report*

### Issues

#### Education

- Are the current specialised degrees appropriate to the industry and is there scope for wider diversity of entry degrees?
- Is Civil still relevant or should there be a broader educational scope
- Trainees and cadets would benefit from being sent out to get an all round feel for the industry. This includes out to other areas and to other sites
- There needs to be more training specifically for underpinning theory on testing methods and material sciences.
- Training of new staff needs to cover all aspects, not just the “how to do it” but why and what it means
- More thought needs to be given to “learning styles” when training is delivered

#### Industry of choice

- Suggestion to offer incentives (financial perhaps) to attract graduate scientists, physicists and chemists to join the industry. This would diversify the knowledge base of entrants and provide a pool of underpinning knowledge
- The industry needs to be more proactive in engaging with educators to introduce students to the industry and to showcase it as a career option. Greater visibility, combined with greater innovation around school based traineeships, career days etc is needed. Field trips would open up the next generation to the importance of CMT particularly demonstrating how CMT is the first step in construction. This is not currently obvious so students overlook an industry which can provide a career for them

- A multifaceted approach to school based traineeships is required where industry, government, training organisations and schools participate in coordinated planning and strategies
- School career days and similar career forum could be utilised to promote the industry
- University career sessions could be utilised to market the industry
- CMT’s place in the “big picture” needs to be explained

### Conditions

- It was felt that management should take greater note of the transferability of lab skills across disciplines and provide opportunities to multi skill and to expand the scope of skills across the workforce

### Gender imbalance

- The industry could benefit from addressing the current gender imbalance and recruiting more women into the industry. This will require a major cultural shift as the current culture is very reflective of the male dominance of the workforce

### Future of the industry

- Innovation is not “out of the box” enough
- The industry should be more involved in research into environmentally sustainable materials rather than restricting its view to merely sustainable practices or work environments. We could be adding to and supporting the work of others to identify more sustainable materials
- Better use could be made of mobile technology and applications
- People need to get back to the ability to use manual calculations rather than rely on technology

### What is currently missing from the industry?

- There needs to be stricter guidelines and they need to be policed. The problem is HOW?
- Standardised LIMS for the whole industry would be very beneficial
- Standards and specifications need to be standardised across all states and be brought up to date with modern technology

### Issues within the industry

- Others within the industry think that labby’s have an easy life. They don’t notice that while they take a lunch or smoko break that is when the lab staff are out there working
- Work/life balance – many within the industry do not want to work 12 hour days
- There is very limited forward planning by on-site staff resulting in demands for lab staff to drop everything and respond to that lack of planning. This demonstrates a lack of awareness of the importance of the CMT functions and is disrespectful to the individuals. CMT needs to be part of the project



schedule and time frames made available. Invitations extended to lab staff at pre-starts would be helpful

- Information sharing about work schedules needs to improve
- PSR's need experience in the lab so that understanding of timeframes and testing requirements are understood
- Many labs and facilities are crowded, not big enough and equipment is old and tired. This tends to be exacerbated the more remote the location
- Industry focus is strongly economically based with a major emphasis on productivity and volume of results rather than the quality of results. This is common across all industry not just some
- More options for travel and transfer both within and externally to individual companies would be beneficial for individuals and for knowledge transfer
- The amount of systems paperwork is disproportionate to the actual work done. Streamlining of the systems could enhance productivity greatly and would allow greater focus on quality over quantity
- Construction staff (on site) have a very limited understanding of what CMT staff are doing and as a result fail to respect the results. Greater education needs to occur to make all construction staff aware of the science and its place in the whole process of construction
- Test results – failures are just “over-looked”

#### Career progression and development

- Position vs qualification and experience bottlenecks occur where workers have to wait for a senior person to leave or die to move up
- Career development and progression is generally left to the individual to pursue with little evidence of career development planning or support across the industry. The industry could benefit greatly by introducing planned career development which would enhance the skills and motivation of those who currently don't know how or lack the front to pursue their own career.

#### Ideas for improvements

- Government inspectors taking an interest in labs and testing
- Greater industry cross training eg: engineering to testing and PSR to testing would improve knowledge transfer and sharing and improve understanding

#### What is good!!!

- Training is happening, is high quality and is greatly appreciated in some organisations. Some employers are very supportive of their staff and actively engaged in career development

#### It would be good if –

- Expectations of the product were higher or shared between stakeholders. It appears that currently the pur-

chaser has one expectation and many suppliers have another

- CMT results were valued and seen to be meaningful
- Old heads were less resistant to change
- These ideas provoke real action

#### Summary of key issues

**Industry of choice** - Recruitment and retention needs to improve with a much broader scope of entry requirements and greater acknowledgement of the value of tertiary qualifications and the value of the underpinning knowledge

**VET training** – is often very repetitive in the way it is delivered unit by unit and does not reflect learning styles. Many find it boring and uninspiring. There is little time or resources for real training as the emphasis in the workplace is on production and “watch me and I hope you pick it up”. Underpinning knowledge is not provided or explained.

#### Career development

Happens if you are pushy and able to drive your own career

#### Perceptions of the industry

The construction world does not understand or appreciate the role of CMT and the profession needs a big marketing campaign to change this

### *Annual General Meeting 2011*

The AGM for 2011 was held at Stones Corner Hotel on 12th December. Attendance was disappointing with only 13 members and guests.

Chairman for the last six years Paul Coker did not seek re-election, nor did Treasurer Rex Fleiter. They retired from the executive having helped to deliver an extremely successful conference.

In the election of officers for 2012, the following were successful:

Chairman	Alan Bartlett
Deputy Chairman	Mark Owtrim
Secretary	Steve Cusack
Deputy Secretary (Newsletter Editor)	Dave Gregson
Treasurer	Brett Hollingum
Non-Executive	Danny Hallett (subject to his acceptance)
	Jon Nicholson
	Ron Richards

The treasurer's report was as follows:





**Association of Geotechnical Testing Authorities (QLD) Inc.**  
**Profit & Loss**  
 September 2010 through August 2011

	Sep '2010 - Aug 2011
<b>Ordinary Income/Expense</b>	
<b>Income</b>	
CMT Conference - Income	
Deposit Refund - Sebel Citigate	1,780.00
CMT Conference - Sponsors	53,480.00
<b>Total CMT Conference - Income</b>	<b>55,260.00</b>
Calibrated Sieves - Hire Fees	200.00
Membership Fees	6,150.00
Interest Received Income	1.65
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>61,611.65</b>
<b>Expense</b>	
AGTA Website	
Web Hosting	240.00
<b>Total AGTA Website</b>	<b>240.00</b>
Association Fees	
Office of Fair Trading	43.45
<b>Total Association Fees</b>	<b>43.45</b>
CMT Conference	
Deposit - Novotel Brisbane	9,267.00
Entertainment	2,200.00
Banner for Conference	544.50
Deposit - Sebel & Citigate	5,000.00
<b>Total CMT Conference</b>	<b>17,011.50</b>
Freight	69.73
Meeting Expenses	
Catering	1,033.10
<b>Total Meeting Expenses</b>	<b>1,033.10</b>
<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>18,397.78</b>
<b>Net Ordinary Income</b>	<b>43,213.87</b>
<b>Net Income</b>	<b>43,213.87</b>

Although Paul retired from the executive, he indicated his desire to work with the committee to address a number of issues:

- A review of the constitution
- Feedback from the Youth Forum
- Member participation in the association
- Investigate formation of a national CMT body

**Association of Geotechnical Testing Authorities (QLD) Inc.**  
**Balance Sheet**  
 As of August 31, 2011

	Aug 31, 2011
<b>ASSETS</b>	
<b>Current Assets</b>	
Current/Savings	
Cheque Account	41,323.59
<b>Total Current/Savings</b>	<b>41,323.59</b>
Accounts Receivable	
Accounts Receivable	18,330.00
<b>Total Accounts Receivable</b>	<b>18,330.00</b>
<b>Total Current Assets</b>	<b>59,653.59</b>
<b>TOTAL ASSETS</b>	<b>59,653.59</b>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>	<b>0.00</b>
<b>NET ASSETS</b>	<b>59,653.59</b>
<b>EQUITY</b>	
Opening Bal Equity	4,803.05
Retained Earnings	11,636.67
Net Income	43,213.87
<b>TOTAL EQUITY</b>	<b>59,653.59</b>



*Photos from the Conference*



Delegates in the conference room between sessions



Mark Owtrim with the keynote speaker, Keith McIlwain



Con Cretor introducing Greg Broad in Moments of Glory



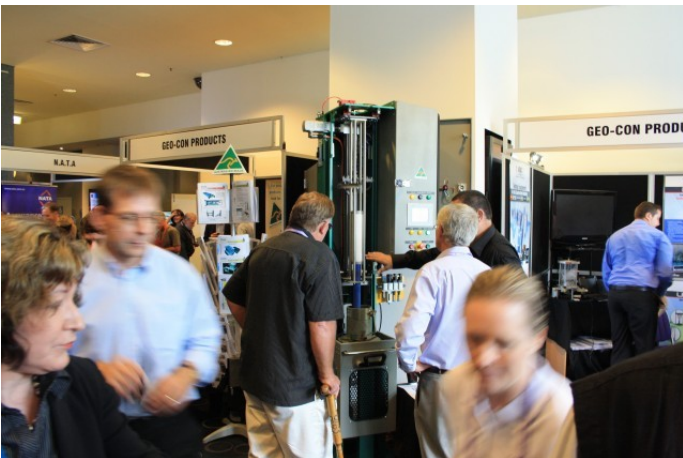
Con Cretor's alter ego Noel Sheridan hosting the conference dinner



Delegates enjoying the conference dinner



Delegates during the conference dinner



Part of the trade display



Members of the NATA delegation

For more photos of the event view a slide show at [www.agta.org.au](http://www.agta.org.au)



## *National Association of Testing Authorities (NATA)*

### *Queensland members' luncheon*

NATA held its members' meeting on Tuesday 17 May 2011 chaired by Dr Barry Inglis, PSM at Customs House, 399 Queen Street, Brisbane. The meeting was accompanied by a delicious lunch in the convivial atmosphere of the Customs House overlooking the by then post-flood Brisbane River. A small number of AGTA members attended. The last members' meeting had been in November 2009.

The guest speaker was The Honourable Stirling Hinchliffe MP, Minister for Employment, Skills and Mining who spoke of the role of testing and measurement, and the role of NATA in Queensland's industries.

Dr Inglis updated the meeting on a number of issues related to NATA, including:

- a perception among members of retribution from NATA if they chose to disagree with an assessor
- an improved search facility on the NATA website
- refreshing the NATA brand
- a new positioning statement
- a cost reduction project
- improved productivity.

Dr Inglis spoke of the certification system that has been developed in the European Union which, he said, was more about ticking boxes and filling in forms compared with the accreditation system that Australia had adopted which was more about identifying the testing facility's competence to carry out the test.

The meeting provided members an opportunity to meet with board members, hear what NATA has been doing and intends to do,





### *On A Lighter Note....*

One day an old **German Shepherd** starts chasing rabbits and before long, discovers that he's lost. Wandering about, he notices a panther heading rapidly in his direction with the intention of having lunch. The old German Shepherd thinks, "Oh, oh! I'm in deep s\*\*\* now!"

Noticing some bones on the ground close by, he immediately settles down to chew on the bones with his back to the approaching cat. Just as the panther is about to leap, the old **German Shepherd** exclaims loudly, "Boy, that was one delicious panther! I wonder, if there are any more around here?" Hearing this, the young panther halts his attack in mid-strike, a look of terror comes over him and he slinks away into the trees.

"Whew!," says the panther, "That was close! That old German Shepherd nearly had me!"

Meanwhile, a squirrel who had been watching the whole scene from a nearby tree, figures he can put this knowledge to good use and trade it for protection from the panther. So, off he goes.

The squirrel soon catches up with the panther, spills the beans and strikes a deal for himself with the panther.

The young panther is furious at being made a fool of and says, "Here, squirrel, hop on my back and see what's going to happen to that conniving canine!"

Now, the old German Shepherd sees the panther coming with the squirrel on his back and thinks, "What am I going to do now?," but instead of running, the dog sits down with his back to his attackers, pretending he hasn't seen them yet, and just when they get close enough to hear, the old German Shepherd says...

"Where's that squirrel? I sent him off an hour ago to bring me another panther!"

Moral of this story...

Don't mess with the old dogs... Age and skill will always overcome youth and treachery! Bulls\*\*t and brilliance only come with age and experience.

If you don't send this to five 'old' friends right away, there will be five fewer people laughing in the world.

Of course, I am in no way insinuating that you are old, just 'youthfully challenged'. You did notice the size of the print, didn't you?

# The Wheels of Life

