

Australian National Committee of CIGRE Ltd

Chairman's Report 2014-2015

The reform agenda continues across Australia and internationally as our industry and the broader Australian community continue to come to terms with fundamental shifts in the energy landscape. This was recognised at our last AGM, along with a sharpening of the commercial focus of our businesses. Responses to these drivers have been encompassed in the CIGRE Australia strategic plan.

Thus, much of the Board's and Secretariat's energy this year has been focused on following through on the commitment given at last year's AGM to ensure that key features of the 3 year strategic plan and actions arising from it were demonstrably delivered during the period and laying the foundation for growth of CIGRE, both in numbers and reputation.

Specifically in 2014-15, CIGRE Australia has focussed its efforts on implementing initiatives designed to clarify our value proposition, refresh the CIGRE brand and image and improve our governance, resourcing and processes to enable us to deliver maximum value to our members and our client organisations.

As my term expires this year, this will be my last report as Chairman. I would like to take the opportunity to reflect on what has been, for me, a most interesting and rewarding involvement with CIGRE, both nationally and internationally.

Strategic Plan Refresh and Organisational Enhancements

It was clear in early 2012 that the time was ripe to develop a strategic plan for CIGRE Australia which acknowledged the changing industry landscape, reflected the global strategic priorities of CIGRE and identified clear priorities on which we needed to focus our resources locally. It was also clear that we needed to have measurable outcomes by which we could demonstrate our progress to members and increasingly sceptical sponsors.

The board spent some time developing just such a plan which was endorsed by the 2012 AGM and we have been rigorously working to and reporting against this plan for the last three years.

This approach has produced achievements on several fronts as summarised below. It also provided a basis for enhancing the structure and role of our secretariat and for upgrading and streamlining our administrative processes. All of this was achieved smoothly but with considerable effort and dedication from our past and current staff and board members.

Brand and Marketing Initiatives

One of the key initiatives that we have introduced in my term as Chairman is the rebranding of CIGRE Australia to enable us to better publicise and promote our expertise and the value that we add to individuals, their companies and to the broader industry.

As I have said, CIGRE and the work it does is often the industry's 'best kept secret'. It is vital to its survival as a trusted source of shared wisdom and creativity in the global electricity space that this is actively changed.

We have over the last 2 years put a lot of effort into revealing that secret through implementation of such things as:

- Our public website which has seen over 50,000 page views and 12,000 users since inception 18months ago.
- Our quarterly In The Loop industry newsletter which now has near to 500 subscribers

- More recently more active use of our LinkedIn site which already has grown to over 200 followers.

The ground-breaking nature of our initiatives within the global CIGRE community has drawn a great deal of interest from our international colleagues at Paris sessions with many seeking to emulate our approach.

I believe even the number of nominations and interest we have had in our board elections this year is unprecedented and to some degree shows an increase in awareness of our profile and the valuable work our members are carrying out.

NGN

I have been particularly pleased to witness the interest and growth in our young engineers' network, the NGN (Next Generation Network). This has grown from being basically non-existent four years ago to now having over 220 members and has already held its first NGN seminar (in conjunction with QUT) in Brisbane earlier this year. The NGN committee is also developing a series of webinar presentations from experts which are made available to members.

These young people are the future of CIGRE and we need to recognise this and foster their development. To this end, both NGN co-chairs remain as invited members of the CIGRE Australia board and fully participate in board meetings and discussions.

Membership

Maintaining membership of any industry association is difficult in tough economic times as corporates and indeed individuals look to where they can cut costs.

The Board and Membership of CIGRE Australia have grappled constructively over two years with the challenge of how to balance membership fees with member value and sustainability of the organisation. I am pleased with the maturity that has been demonstrated by the final outcome which positions us well for the long term.

Whilst we have had some resignations and retirements, I am pleased with how we have been able to maintain most of our membership and attract new members over the last 3-5 yrs.

In 2012-13 membership had fallen to 176, and 315 panel members, due in the main to a restriction of funds and winding back across the economic environment in which we operate. Now as we stand in November 2015, we have 202 members and some 332 Panel members as well as the 220 NGN members previously mentioned. CIGRE Australia remains the only national council to have representation on each of the CIGRE international study groups. This is a great achievement for our members and reflects on their commitment and the general high regard in which our Australian engineering community is held.

Additionally we have attracted some 15 Student members under the free student member scheme and following communication with all our Collective 2 members, we are set to increase this substantially with the start of the first semester of 2016.

We have also recently confirmed a joint affiliation with the Pacific Power Association (an association of power utilities in the pacific region), which will give both CIGRE Australia and the PPA access to each other's information, work and member networks. It is envisaged that this will provide long term benefit to members of both organisations and aid in promoting technology and engineering achievement in the Pacific region.

Scholarship and Support

In the spirit of stimulating interest in science and engineering in schools and marketing of the CIGRE brand, we have been able to continue support for the ATSE - STELR program with \$10,000

sponsorship of power system education in secondary schools in Australia and New Zealand. The sponsorship enabled the supply of renewable energy kits to a number of schools in Australia and New Zealand to provide hands on learning experiences for year 9 and 10 secondary students with the aim of encouraging the take-up of science and mathematics and pursuit of careers in the engineering and science fields.

We have also continued to support two NGN members through a scholarship to the Biennial Paris session and this year also sponsored an Award for the best NGN paper submitted to the IEEE PES Asia Pacific and Energy Engineering Conference.

I am personally very pleased with these initiatives as our future depends on us engaging the next generations and we need to be encouraging them and promoting the skills and work that we do as much as possible.

Conferences and Seminars

I am further pleased that not only have we been able to maintain our staging of the biennial SEAPAC conference and the annual CIGRE tutorial seminar, but this year introduced CIDER (Conference on the Integration of Distributed Energy Resources). This was well received, particularly for a new initiative, and we are looking to make it a biennial event.

As stated earlier, we also ran the inaugural NGN seminar in conjunction with QUT and plan to make this an annual event run by the NGN to provide a forum for discussion on topical and current industry issues which are of relevance and interest to young engineers.

Australian Technical Committee (ATC)

Steve Jones and his team of Australian Panel (AP) Conveners have continued to be at the heart of the ongoing growth in vibrant, highly regarded technical input as you can appreciate from his separate report and the reports of the APs.

I thank Steve and his crew for their tireless work and contributions. The work of the technical groups is our core business, our raison d'être, and the work and contribution is recognised globally.

Under Steve's leadership, CIGRE Australia has twelve convenors of Working Groups and has achieved a record 20 papers accepted to the 2016 Paris Session. This is indeed a great achievement and continues a proud history of Australian Contribution – 'punching above our weight'.

As Steve is completing his term as Chair of the Technical Committee, I would like to acknowledge personally the contribution he has made in his quiet, steadfast way. He has ensured ongoing technical excellence on the part of the Technical committee with regularly high standard and volume of contributions to the international scene and has put in an enormous amount of personal time in doing so. Thank you Steve!

Directors and Secretariat

I should like to take this opportunity to thank personally the Board and Secretariat for their dedicated efforts in support of myself and CIGRE Australia.

In particular over the years it has been a pleasure to work with my current fellow board members as well as Richard Bevan, my predecessor, Matt Zema, Warwick Glendenning and Garth Dibley. Each of these board members has grasped the need for renewal and a recognition of the changing commercial realities which confronted us without losing the essence of cooperation and generous, open exchange which are the hallmark of CIGRE. They have all worked tirelessly to find the best path through difficult challenges such as decisions on fee structures and allocation of resources to deliver optimum outcomes for members and I am proud to have had the opportunity to work alongside them.

Last year we acknowledged the dedicated work of Alex Palamarczuk who had been the Secretary of CIGRE Australia for many years and helped the organisation successfully through many local seminars and Paris sessions.

The current Secretariat in Terry Killen and Denis Warburton have done an excellent job in streamlining all our processes, including our accounts and records, leveraging off our upgraded web presence and extending our connections with relevant organisations while still providing solid support to Steve Jones and his Technical Committee and the Board.

I would personally like to thank Terry in particular for his initiative, energy, enthusiasm and professionalism which have made my life as Chairman much easier.

International

Over the past four years CIGRE Australia has contributed to CIGRE internationally via its support for Richard Bevan as Treasurer of the global organisation. Richard has made a major impact on CIGRE in overseeing staff changes, streamlining processes and influencing strategic direction, drawing in part on the initiatives of CIGRE Australia. This has demanded a great deal of Richard's personal time and energy and I congratulate and thank him for his efforts.

CIGRE Australia has also participated in the deliberations of the Administrative Council of CIGRE and we are contributing to a working group on best practice for national committees by providing examples of our induction material for panel members.

Conclusion

Last year I commented on the change that we were seeing and the need to embrace the opportunity to evolve our offering to our members and stakeholders. This change continues and we live in times where the challenges and impacts on our daily lives seem to becoming more global in cause and consequence, in a raft of areas including issues related to global climate change, world food supply, political unrest and economic control.

Whilst CIGRE Australia does need to adapt and grow in this challenging global environment, we need to do this in a way that preserves our traditional core strengths, finding ways to share our substantial knowledge base and insights with a broader audience.

This period has been an exciting phase in the development of CIGRE Australia and I believe that in hindsight it will be seen as a watershed in our development and growth.

I have been honoured to have had the opportunity to work with Board, Secretariat and Members to lay a foundation that I believe will see the longer term success and growth of CIGRE Australia.

I remain on the Board as immediate past Chairman for the coming year and look forward to continuing to work with all of you in that role. I wish all of you well on this journey and invite your input and continued support as CIGRE evolves to meet our industry's and indeed society's local and global demands.

Indeed, if there is a final challenge to leave you with, it is: CIGRE can only continue to thrive as a source of shared creativity and expertise if we collectively shed the culture of maintaining the 'best kept secret' and dare to articulate our successes, large and small, and the role CIGRE has played in helping us achieve them.



Doug Aberle

Chairman November 2015