IEEE ANZSCON 2017

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Leadership and Humanitarian Technologies

An event where young engineering students and young professionals meet and engage to familiarize with trends in science and technology, discuss present and future engineering challenges, develop new skills and share technical, social and professional experiences.

- Meet and engage with student leaders, young professionals, WIE leaders and several top dignitaries
- Learn to create a culture of leadership and innovation
- Engage and deliver relevancy to your professional peers and relevant audiences
- Learn technology trends and personal development tools for swift career growth
- Share your success stories with your peers and influence the community and leadership
- Engage in competitions to showcase your engineering skills to a wide audience
- Learn and engage with life-shaping IEEE initiatives to develop your career and to engage with your community

ANZSCON|2017

IEEE Australia & New Zealand Student & Young Professionals Congress

◆IEEE

ANZSCON2017 Event Report

Introduction

The 2017 Australia and New Zealand Student and Young Professionals Congress (ANZSCON) was held at the University of Technology Sydney on the 10th and 11th of August. The event was hosted by the NSW Section. ANZSCON is an event where young engineering students and young professionals meet and engage to develop skills to grow and support IEEE membership, familiarize with trends in science and technology, discuss present and future engineering challenges, develop new skills and share technical, social and professional experiences. In 2017, the theme of this congress was developing leadership and humanitarian technologies.

Participation

A total of 104 IEEE members and 10 non-members (most seen in Figure 1) engaged with the congress ranging from new student members to the IEEE President. Registration included 68 direct participants plus 12 participants engaged within the organising committee. Representation was as follows:

- 62 from Australia (3ACT, 32NSW, 9QLD, 4SA, 10VIC & 4WA)
- 6 from New Zealand
- 2 from China
- 5 from Indonesia
- 1 from Iran
- 3 from Japan, and
- 1 from Malaysia

A total of 34 guests and speakers made time available to engage with the students and young professionals providing knowledge, awareness and encouragement of the benefits of the IEEE and the journey that lies ahead. Some of the key guests and speakers included the IEEE President, current and past IEEE R10 Directors, MGA Vice President, WIE Committee, R10 YP Coordinator and SAC Chair, IEEE Australia and New Zealand Council Chairs, SIGHT Coordinator, IEEE Xtreme representative and YP Global Chair together with a number of entrepreneurs, CEO's and other influential people.

In addition, a special training for trainers, sponsored and conducted by IEEE SIGHT, was held as part of ANZSCON. This training was an invite-only event with 23 people (mostly YP and WIE Chairs and Volunteers from Region 10) attending the training, who engaged with the participants of ANZSCON during the lunch and tea breaks.

The dinner was very well attended, having a total of 165 guests on a harbour cruise with 3-hours buffet. The dinner was attended by 40 guests who were sponsored by the MGA. Most of these guests were regional YP/WIE Leaders and IEEE Executives.

ANZSCON Program

The two day program provided a range of options to develop both knowledge and build networks. A number of keynote sessions were held, most undertaken in an interactive format. Some of the most popular keynotes included transitioning from a student to a young professional; seeking funding for start-ups; and engaging with IEEE Sight. Breakout sessions were categorised under three tracks: Student, Young Professional and Women in Engineering. The sessions were interactive based on growing the respected communities and developing leadership skills. The congress also celebrated Region 10's 50th anniversary with a cake cutting ceremony as seen in Figure 2.

Networking

The most important component of any IEEE event is facilitating networking opportunities. During the program participants engaged in mixed group discussions and conversed over great meals. The climax of networking occurred during the dinner cruise showcasing the beauty of Sydney Harbour as seen in Figure 3. The networking provided participants an insight as to opportunities available within IEEE when academia and industry combine to advance humanity.

Outcomes & Recommendations

All participants walked away from ANZSCON with greater confidence as to how the IEEE can support, develop and prepare them for the future. They developed networking skills, were introduced to tools and funding opportunities to get their ideas off the ground, and were shown how they could play a role in helping IEEE advance technology for humanity. Other outcomes include developing a list of current strengths and weaknesses in running student branches, forming an enthusiastic team to engage in work on Smart Cities, and nurturing industry-academic innovation for women in STEM. There was a strong engagement developed between Students, Young Professional Members and WIE Groups during the congress. The extract of some outcomes and recommendations from joint brain-storming sessions, workshops and interactive forums are presented below:

1. Role models importance was emphasized that would be inspiring for all early career engineers. Young professional role models should be engaged with a mentoring program so that members can benefit from their experiences.
2. Funding with respect to geographical locations was identified as a major limiting factor. Particularly, the STEP funding provided by IEEE Young Professionals was debated to be extremely limited in Australia-New Zealand regions, as opposed to South Asian sections in Region 10, considering the foreign exchange rates. Suggestions were made to change this from a ballpark figure of $400 following a one size fits all approach, to a budget and activity based funding model. For instance, an example was quoted that the per head meal in the Indian Sub-continent can be managed in an average $1 to $1.5, whereas the similar would cost $10-$15 in Australia-New Zealand.
3. Following up on point 2 above, the participation in the awards programme of IEEE YP is affected in the Australia-New Zealand Sections as the questions contained thereof in the application, and the metrics of success (such as event attendance and scale of activity), are largely influenced by the budgeting aspects of the activities. The meetup fund was commended in multiple discussions, however, STEP funding was identified as a bottle neck.
4. Unconscious bias seminars/ workshops should be conducted, as part of non-technical events from students branches and affinity groups platforms. Collaborative ventures between Student, YP and WIE groups should be encouraged to increase engagement and impact.
5. STEM outreach activities should be planned for High School students, where they will get a chance of meeting and networking with inspiring role models and mentors early on.
6. Outreach activities for School students – promoting STEM careers using technical projects display.
7. There should be some kind of mentoring program to help early career researchers and graduate student members.
8. More opportunities should be provided to promote entrepreneurship and internships as part of technical skills learning.
9. Industry and Networking events should be organized to engage and encourage industry-academia research collaborations. There is currently a huge gap, especially considering the IEEE membership, which is heavily biased towards academia. This is due to inherent benefits for the academia in terms of publications, conferences, awards for research, technical societies etc. But the industry engineers need to be encouraged more in terms of participation, even if it is by means of a certificate of participation at the events.
10. Importance of non-technical workshops e.g. legal technicalities knowhow for Startups, Financial planning workshops, communication skills development, leadership skills development, work-life balance etc.
11. Discounts should be provided to IEEE students/WIE members for certifications (e.g. CISSP, CCNA etc.).

Support

ANZSCON was a huge success due to the commitment of all participants and the financial support from sections in providing registration and travel assistance. Financial support was provided by the IEEE Australia Council (contributions from all sections), the New South Wales section, R10 (Student Activities Leadership Summit fund, Student Activities Collaborative Initiatives fund, and Young Professionals sponsorship) and MGA Young Professionals Meetup fund. Additionally, the time provided by industry volunteers and the organising committee made this event invaluable.

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Figure 1: Attendees of ANZSCON

Figure 2: Celebrating Region 10's 50th Anniversary

Figure 3: Networking Dinner