

# **SSEE 2009 International Conference: Solutions for a Sustainable Planet**

Melbourne, 23-24 November 2009

Review by Dr Gavin M. Mudd (Co-Chair)

The bi-annual conference of the Society for Sustainability and Environmental Engineering (SSEE) was held in Melbourne in November 2009. The conference is the premier event for SSEE members, and attracted over 200 delegates from across Australia and overseas. Despite the conference coinciding with the worst financial crisis in living memory, the strong attendance is testament to the diversity and commitment to sustainability in engineering practice.

The conference's major sponsor was the Victorian Department of Innovation, Industry and Regional Development (DIIRD), as well as support for some plenary talks from New Zealand Society for Sustainability Engineering & Science and VicRoads. In a first for SSEE and Engineers Australia, Engineers Without Borders Australia were a conference partner. A significant amount of in-kind support was also given by the conference committee and peer reviewers.

The conference theme was 'Solutions for a Sustainable Planet' – chosen to highlight the global nature of the many challenges we all face, but also the fact that as engineers it is our professional duty to provide leadership and solutions for these challenges. In this regard, the conference was a great success – showcasing the innovative thinking and practical solutions which can and are being implemented across Australia and the world. The conference included about 90 presentations and 6 plenaries from:

- **Cheryl Batogol** (Chair – Environment Protection Authority Victoria)
- **Bob Welsh** (Chief Executive Officer, VicSuper)
- **Julian Turacek** (Cleantech Ventures)
- **Dr Carol Boyle** (Chair, New Zealand Society for Sustainability Engineering & Science)
- **Evan Thornley** (Chief Executive Officer, Better Place Australia)
- **Daniel Almogor** (Chief Executive Officer, Engineers Without Borders Australia)

In addition, a Climate Code Red workshop was run on the climate change challenge.

A key outcome of the collection of plenaries and talks, was the need to link technology with policy, that sustainable options are available, as well as the need to build alliances in business and finance to ensure economic viability. A key message was the importance of networks and alliances, often transcending traditional boundaries, silos and thinking, as a key part of sustainable solutions. All plenaries provided inspirational thinking and commitment, demonstrating that Australia and beyond is well placed to meet the problems of energy, water, technology, material resources and human development and indeed provide solutions for a sustainable planet.

The next SSEE conference will be in Queensland in late 2011, with our New Zealand counterparts holding their next conference in late 2010.