By the time you receive your first issue of our new journal, Engineering for Public Works, the first quarter of our year will almost be over yet it doesn’t seem that long ago that I made my way across Europe with my wife and daughters during the Christmas break.

I was looking forward to inspecting the cobbled streets of Rome that have lasted hundreds of years. At the peak of the Roman Empire, there were over 400,000 km of roads connecting the provinces to Rome and a fifth of these were paved in stone. In Roman Britain, the Romans constructed more than 3,000 km of road with many of these routes still in use today albeit a modern road has been built over the original road.

The Romans preferred to go through or over an obstacle and engineered ways of cutting roads into hilly or mountainous landscapes. They were also skilled at bridging rivers and constructing causeways to support a road over marshy ground; skills that our members have enhanced over the years for our benefit today. Change is important. Without it we are not challenged and we cannot grow.

Last year was a momentous year of change for me with some planned changes and other changes that came as a complete surprise. It has made me aware of the need to regularly review where I am at and where I am going and to have contingency plans in place for unexpected scenarios.

And change is likely to be ongoing this year with local council elections now behind us as we sift through the effects on our individual members and our council Supporters. Last year, 70% of council CEOs changed and it is predicted that 50% more will change in the year ahead. There will be uncertainty and instability with it but it is our hope that we are able to guide our members through this period.

It will be an important time for our new community leaders to communicate effectively with their constituents and stakeholders to ensure their messages are well received. And I am conscious of the need to do likewise – it’s easy to believe people know exactly what you are meaning to say as opposed to what you actually say and how you say it.

While a quarter of the year is almost behind us, it is not too late to set goals. I will pay attention to my health – as I hope all of you do; it is not to be taken for granted. I will attend all of my daughter’s Year 12 major events. I aim to be accurate and pragmatic but not overly purist as I tend to be. Progress is made more difficult when we focus on the textbook rather than the desired outcomes and there are often multiple ways to achieve a desired outcome. The best possible route may not follow the textbook but may be reasonable, practical and appropriate within the context of a political environment. For all of us in the public works space, ultimately we serve our communities and we naturally aspire to do this in the best possible way even when it is contrary to our natural inclinations. And now this is in print, you can hold me to these commitments.

We have conferences coming up in Noosa, Emerald and our state conference in Brisbane, my hometown in November. I hope to see all of you there and perhaps you might ask me about my goals and how well I’ve adhered to them. I look forward to those conversations.

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