I am writing this report as we fly over this amazing and intriguing land of ours after attending the IPWEA International Public Works conference and Young IPWEA annual strategic meeting in Perth. Like the land passing below, the conference and meeting confirmed for me that the road ahead for young engineering professionals (and quite frankly everyone) across Australasia is ever changing, challenging and crucial.

Autonomous vehicles are coming upon us very quickly and are predicted to change our lives substantially by 2035. Up to 60% of our engineering professionals are set for retirement in the next 5-10 years which provide challenges for public works. The way we communicate and the extent to which we’ve been able to embrace diversity within our sector will be crucial to our success. We need to share our successes and our mistakes for the sector as a whole to learn and grow and to adapt as we step into the future. These are just a few learnings from the conference.

At IPWEAQ, we are collating responses to a recent survey of our ‘young’ members ie those under age 35. If you have not as yet responded to the survey, please take a moment to do so as this will help us develop programs and services. To those of you who have responded, thank you for your contribution. As an organisation, responding to this information helps us to stay relevant and engaged as a profession that nurtures our younger members. Survey results, recommendations and actions will be published in the December issue of Engineering for Public Works.

We are on the right track as we have seen a dramatic increase in the number of younger members nominating for positions on our four branch committees. I am pleased to welcome on the YIPWEAQ committee, the following incoming branch committee members:
- NQ Branch: Amelia Marshall (Townsville City Council), Hari Boppudi (Flinders Shire Council)
- CQ Branch: Ashleigh Tomkins (Gladstone Regional Council)
- SEQ Branch: Jessica Kahl (Aurecon), Sophia Andary (Ipswich City Council)
- SWQ Branch: Ashlee Adams (Toowoomba Regional Council)

With such eagerness amongst our younger members, we hope to gain momentum with our Young IPWEAQ program particularly as we gain a better of understanding of their needs. It is important to have these members actively involved and engaged with our senior members to ensure a seamless transition of experience and knowledge. With this in mind, we are offering councils a special offer for this year’s state conference to be held in Townsville, 24-26 October 2017 – for each standard conference registration (member or non-member), you can register a delegate under the age of 35 at half the price of the standard registration fee.

If you know of a final year university student, please encourage them to participate in the Futures Challenge. Final year students studying engineering and related disciplines will be invited to present their thesis or research project on poster boards at the conference trade exhibition. Delegates will offer advice and feedback to students with the top three projects chosen by a panel of judges to deliver a 10-minute presentation in the auditorium in a plenary session. Delegates will vote on the best presentation using the conference APP.

I look forward to seeing you all in Townsville in October for what is shaping up to be another great event. Please feel free to share your ideas with me on how we can best nurture our younger public works professionals.

Celisa Faulkner
YIPWEAQ Chair