INTERNATIONAL OVERSEAS STUDY TOUR 2016 SYNOPSIS

Andrew Ryan, Director Infrastructure Services, Sunshine Coast Council - November 2016

Overview
A group of four Australian local government and public works engineers including myself visited North America and Europe in August / September 2016. During the tour we visited the cities of Los Angeles, then on to Minneapolis in the State of Minnesota for the APWA Public Works Exhibition and Conference, then to New York and across to Madrid, Spain, and Amsterdam in The Netherlands before returning to Australia, and met with many councils and fellow professional engineers.

The theme of the study tour was “Sustainable Practices and Innovation in Public Works”. Participants were interested in meeting with local government managers and public works practitioners to hear of their experiences, innovations and lessons learnt.

Areas Of Interest
The Study Tour group were made up of engineers with a range of engineering and executive management backgrounds, from different size communities – from urban cities to regional communities.

Particular areas of interest included sustainable practices and innovation in:
• Smart Cities
• Asset Management Practices
• Systems & Mobile Technology
• Sustainable growth & development
• Water cycle management

Study Tour Participants
The Study Tour participants are representative of a number of States across Australia and included:
• Chris Champion (NSW) – Director International IPWEA, and the study tour leader;
• Andrew Ryan (Qld) – Director Infrastructure Services, Sunshine Coast Council
• Gleb Kolenbet (Qld) – Development Engineer, Redland City Council
• Doug Bartlett (WA) – Coordinator Asset Management, City of Mandurah

Summary Learnings
The tour afforded the opportunity to travel the globe, meet interesting people, and learn and share with fellow engineers. The key learnings I took away are:

• Transport & mobility - The future for transport planners and traffic engineers will get blurry in the next five to ten years with a lot of change coming through in vehicle communication systems and the progression towards autonomy. Mobility is increasingly becoming the focus of transport systems design, over the more conventional segregation of modes, which is being driven by the disruptive technologies (such as Uber) and the integration of urban design and smart technology with mobility planning.
• Smart Cities - Many cities are jockeying to lead in the smart city arena – a committed local government is best placed to facilitate and/or deliver this technology in collaboration with the private sector as we manage the control the public realm that people interact with daily – not the Telco’s, not the state governments.
• Asset management - Our asset management practices in Australia are best practice and we need to ensure that we keep this focus, as not only do we maintain the asset quality but also ensure our councils are financially sustainable and strong.

• Urban design - Great urban design doesn’t happen by accident – it takes commitment and effort and involves art works, dedicated open space, integrated transport (mobility) systems, and above all, designing for the people first. Where this doesn’t happen, cities and towns cease to function as healthy places and atrophy sets in.