A recent report suggested COVID-19 had accelerated a level of change through our community more often requiring a decade, rather than a few (quite long) months.

This program (on ABC’s Radio National, 4 August 2020) flagged the potential mental health challenges that COVID-19 restrictions may bring to the surface, particularly in Victoria as most of its population endures another six weeks at the highest lockdown level. While south-east Queensland has, thankfully, been able to resume life and business (in a socially-distanced way), the economic downturn may only escalate as the pandemic continues to see communities functioning differently, with “normal” newly defined. Federal and Queensland government stimulus projects may shield public works from the worst of this downturn. However, as I outlined in the June journal, our focus will remain on Queensland (rather than overseas or even Australia) for some time yet, with engineers (as innovators) well positioned to assist our communities with transitions to online platforms, future transport options and the development of home grown product (to reduce our reliance on international suppliers).

Under such difficult circumstances, it is gratifying to see IPWEAQ achieve its relocation to new premises at Eagle Farm, with space enhancing the delivery of training, product development, support and advocacy for our sector. Innovation that has proven powerful this quarter includes the development of PW-TV, initially in response to the COVID-19 lockdowns in April but now with three channels to supply diverse and stimulating presentations to members with audience interactivity.

Given the challenges of the year, I am delighted that we will gather for our Annual Conference in Brisbane in November (10-12). While plans to hold this event in Cairns were scuttled by COVID-19 delays to the Cairns Convention Centre redevelopment, a strong program with papers from across our sector offers valuable learnings which address the challenges of our times. A record 86 nominations for the 2020 excellence awards guarantees another enjoyable night celebrating the power of engineering to deliver for our communities. It is our pleasure to coordinate the awards program, now in its 18th year, which recognises these achievements. The SEQ Branch Conference brings us back to the south-east corner, now scheduled for 25-26 February 2021, when we will gather at the Event Centre in Caloundra.

It seems clear that, even at some future date when the pandemic is just a memory, virtual meetings and presentations will be integral to our way of doing business. Acceleration of other initiatives such as working from home and the paperless office also offer positive environmental and social benefits. Our sector has the opportunity to lead the way in which these changes are understood and broadly appreciated, and I congratulate IPWEAQ for its ability to nimbly negotiate the challenges that 2020 has so far delivered.

SAVE THE DATE
Branch
Conference
CALOUNDRA
25-26 FEBRUARY
2021