

**50TH ANNIVERSARY DINNER OF
THE INSTITUTION OF SURVEYORS AUSTRALIA
SATURDAY, 25 MAY 2002**

**ADDRESS BY GARY NAIRN,
MEMBER FOR EDEN-MONARO**

TEN YEARS AGO WHILE I WAS A PARTNER IN A SURVEYING AND MAPPING CONSULTANCY IN DARWIN AND I ALSO HAD AN AFTER HOURS, BEFORE HOURS, IN BETWEEN HOURS AND ANY OTHER HOURS THAT COULD BE FOUND, VOLUNTARY ROLE AS PRESIDENT OF THE COUNTRY LIBERAL PARTY, I DELIVERED A PAPER AT A SURVEYING CONFERENCE TITLED "SURVEYING THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE".

IN THAT PAPER I TALKED A LOT ABOUT THE NEED FOR SOME PRETTY DRASTIC EARTHWORKS TO BE DONE ON WHAT I SAW AS A ROUGH AND OUT OF LEVEL POLITICAL LANDSCAPE.

WHILE I EXPLAINED HOW THE REPRESENTATION IN PARLIAMENT WAS VERY MUCH OUT OF SKEW WITH THE REAL WORLD, AND WHAT I MEAN BY THAT IS TOO MANY LAWYERS, UNION OFFICIALS, ETC, I THINK THE FUNDAMENTAL FRUSTRATION OF THE PROFESSION AT THE TIME WAS A LACK OF INFLUENCE BY THE PROFESSION ON THE POLITICAL PROCESS AND THUS ON PUBLIC POLICY.

WHETHER THAT LACK OF INFLUENCE WAS AS GREAT AS WE THOUGHT OR NOT IS PROBABLY IMMATERIAL. THE PERCEPTION WAS SO AND THEREFORE, AS I HAVE LEARNT OVER THE PAST SIX YEARS, WHEN IT COMES TO POLITICS THE PERCEPTION IS THE REALITY.

TEN YEARS AGO SURVEYING WAS MY PROFESSION AND POLITICS WAS AN INTEREST. TODAY IT IS BASICALLY THE OTHER WAY ROUND

ALTHOUGH WITH THE REGULARITY I MEET AND SPEAK WITH PEOPLE LIKE YOUR CEO MICHELLE MIRAN, ACSA'S DAVID HOCKING AND OTHERS, SURVEYING IS SOMEWHAT MORE THAN AN INTEREST.

AND IT IS QUITE AMAZING HOW MUCH I FIND MY PROFESSIONAL SURVEYING CAREER OF USE TO ME AS THE MEMBER FOR EDEN-MONARO.

I GET ROPED INTO THINGS LIKE JUDGING THE EXCELLENCE IN ENGINEERING, CIVIL CATEGORY, AWARDS EACH YEAR.

MY MAPPING EXPERIENCE PROVED VERY USEFUL WHEN I WAS HAVING SOME DEBATE WITH THE BUREAUCRACY OVER FLIGHT PATHS INTO CANBERRA AIRPORT. I TEMPORARILY WON THAT ONE AND THEY EVEN NAMED A KEY FLIGHT POINT, NAIRN, PROBABLY TO KEEP ME QUIET. ALTHOUGH THE PILOTS WON IN THE END AS THEY HAVE CONTROL OF THE AIRCRAFT AND THEREFORE CAN ALMOST DO ANYTHING THEY LIKE. THAT STORY IS FOR ANOTHER OCCASION.

BUT THERE ARE ALSO SOME UNUSUAL CIRCUMSTANCES WHERE MY SURVEYING KNOWLEDGE WAS SEEN AS VERY USEFUL BY CONSTITUENTS.

JIM LLOYD, OUR CHIEF GOVT WHIP, WHO IS HERE TONIGHT WOULD ALSO HAVE SOME INTERESTING STORIES TO TELL ABOUT REQUESTS FROM CONSTITUENTS. JIM BY THE WAY, IN HIS WHIP'S ROLE, IS THE REAL NUMBERS MAN IN THE GOVERNMENT AS HE IS THE ONE THAT HAS TO MAKE SURE WE HAVE THE PEOPLE AVAILABLE WHEN NEEDED.

MANY OF MY COLLEAGUES FOR SOME REASON ALWAYS WANT TO GET AWAY FROM CANBERRA BEFORE PARLIAMENT FINISHES AND JIM IS THE ONE WHO SAYS WHO CAN GO WHEN.

SO PLEASE BE NICE TO JIM TONIGHT BECAUSE I WANT ONE AND HALF HOURS LEAVE NEXT WEEK TO MEET ONE OF MY SCHOOLS AT THE WAR MEMORIAL.

BACK TO STRANGE REQUESTS.

ABOUT FOUR YEARS AGO IN THE LEAD UP TO THE OLYMPICS I RECEIVED A LETTER A LETTER FROM A CONSTITUENT I'LL CALL MR. X WHO HAD A GREAT IDEA FOR THE OPENING CEREMONY WHICH HE WANTED MY ASSISTANCE WITH.

HE PROVIDED ME WITH A COPY OF A LETTER HE HAD WRITTEN TO RIC BIRCH, WHO YOU MIGHT REMEMBER WAS THE DIRECTOR FOR THE OPENING AND CLOSING CEREMONIES.

HIS IDEA AS DESCRIBED IN THAT LETTER WAS THIS AND I QUOTE:

“MY IDEA IS INSPIRED BY THE PAUL HOGAN “PUT ANOTHER SHRIMP ON THE BARBIE” COMMERCIALS WHICH WERE IN VOGUE SEVERAL YEARS AGO, AND WOULD WORK AS FOLLOWS:

STANDING NEXT TO THE CAULDRON WOULD BE A ‘MR HOGAN’, I.E. A PAUL HOGAN LOOKALIKE (OR MAYBE PAUL HOGAN HIMSELF) WEARING STUBBIES AND A T-SHIRT, AND MAYBE EVEN HOLDING A CAN OF FOSTERS.

‘MR HOGAN’ WOULD BE HOLDING A BARBECUE SKEWER, WITH A RUBBER ‘PRAWN’, SOAKED IN KEROSENE, IMPALED ON ONE END.

THE RUNNER CARRYING THE OLYMPIC TORCH WOULD COME UP TO 'MR HOGAN', WHO WOULD THEN LIGHT THE 'PRAWN' WITH THE TORCH.

'MR HOGAN' WOULD THEN HOLD THE LIGHTED 'PRAWN' OVER THE CAULDRON, AND THE FLAME WOULD COME ALIGHT ACCORDINGLY.

COULD YOU PLEASE SEND A COPY OF THIS LETTER ON TO PAUL HOGAN AS I THINK THAT HE WOULD BE INTERESTED." UNQUOTE.

AS A GOOD FEDERAL MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT I THANKED MY CONSTITUENT FOR HIS IDEA BUT EXPLAINED THAT THE OLYMPICS ORGANISATION CAME UNDER THE JURISDICTION OF THE STATE GOVERNMENT (THIS IS MORE COMMONLY DESCRIBED BY THE GENERAL PUBLIC AS PASSING THE BUCK) AND THEREFORE I WOULD PASS HIS CORRESPONDENCE ON TO HIS STATE MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT, PETER COCHRAN.

I RECEIVED A LETTER BACK FROM PETER COCHRAN WHICH SAID IN PART:

"TODAY WE HAVE MADE ARRANGEMENTS WITH MR RIC BIRCH, DIRECTOR OF CEREMONIES OF SOCOG TO INCORPORATE THE IDEAS OF MR. X INTO THE OPENING CEREMONY OF THE SYDNEY OLYMPICS. WE HAVE FURTHER SUGGESTED THAT MR X SHOULD RECEIVE DUE RECOGNITION AUSTRALIA WIDE AND ALSO YOU AS OUR FEDERAL MEMBER FOR YOUR INITIAL ENCOURAGEMENT AND EFFORTS TO BRING MR X TO THE NOTICE OF THE SOCOG COMMITTEE.

WE ARE FORTUNATE TO HAVE YOURSELF AS OUR FEDERAL MEMBER KNOWING THAT IT IS PEOPLE LIKE YOU IN OUR COMMUNITY WHO CAN

SEE THE FAR REACHING RESULTS OF AN EVERY DAY AUSTRALIAN'S IDEAS WHOM MOST WOULD SIMPLY PASS OFF AS A 'CRACKPOT'.

INTERESTING STORY BUT WHERE WAS THE SURVEYING CONNECTION.

WELL WHEN MY CONSTITUENT FOUND OUT I WAS A SURVEYOR HE THOUGHT OF CHANGING THE IDEA SLIGHTLY TO LINK THE BLAZING TORCH TO A BOOMERANG AND I COULD HELP CALCULATE THE ANGLE NEEDED TO THROW IT SUCH THAT IT ENDED UP IN THE CAULDRON.

NOW YOU KNOW WHY MANY POLITICIANS END UP AS AMBASSADORS AFTER A PARLIAMENTARY CAREER. IT IS ALL THAT DIPLOMACY EXPERIENCE THEY GET EVERY DAY WITH THEIR CONSTITUENTS.

FORTUNATELY I HAVE ALSO BEEN ABLE TO USE MY 25 YEAR CAREER IN SURVEYING AND MAPPING TO ASSIST THE PROFESSION AND THERE WAS NO ONE MORE DELIGHTED THAN ME WHEN NICK MINCHIN AGREED TO AN ACTION AGENDA ON SPATIAL INFORMATION.

I THINK THE ACTION AGENDA IN YEARS TO COME WILL BE SEEN AS A WATERSHED BY THE INDUSTRY AND THE PROFESSION ALIKE.

WHILE VARIOUS PROFESSIONS MAY CLAIM A STAKE IN THE SPATIAL INFORMATION INDUSTRY, THERE IS NO DOUBT IN MY MIND AND IN THE MIND OF MOST IN GOVERNMENT THAT IT WAS THE SURVEYING PROFESSION, PUBLIC AND PRIVATE SECTORS WORKING AS ONE, THAT DROVE THE ACTION AGENDA.

CAN I ALSO REINFORCE THAT THE PROCESS AND THE OUTCOME SO FAR OF THE ACTION AGENDA IS FETED BY GOVERNMENT AS A MODEL OF HOW TO DO IT WELL. THERE HAVE BEEN NONE BETTER.

THAT IS WHY THE FUTURE ACTIONS IN IMPLEMENTING THE ACTION AGENDA ARE CRITICAL FOR THE INDUSTRY AND PROFESSION'S WELL BEING.

WHILE GOVERNMENT HAS AN IMPORTANT ROLE, THE PROFESSION AND THE INDUSTRY MUST ENSURE IT IS DRIVEN ON THE CORRECT COURSE.

AND I HAVE GREAT FAITH THIS WILL OCCUR.

HISTORY TELLS ME IT WILL.

RESEARCHING THE FIFTY YEARS OF THE INSTITUTION OF SURVEYORS AUSTRALIA WAS VERY INSTRUCTIVE AND CLEARLY DEMONSTRATED HOW WELL OUR PROFESSION HAS COPEDED WITH CHANGE. WHICH IS WHAT WE ARE TALKING ABOUT WITH RESPECT TO THE ACTION AGENDA. WE ARE TALKING ABOUT CHANGE.

WHILE THE SURVEYING PROFESSION MAY BE PERCEIVED AS CONSERVATIVE AND SLOW MOVING, HISTORY SHOWS SOMETHING ELSE. REMEMBER I SAID IN POLITICS THAT PERCEPTIONS ARE THE REALITY. WELL WHEN YOU FIND THAT THE TRUE FACTS ARE DIFFERENT TO THE PERCEPTION IT INVARIABLE MEANS THERE HAS BEEN A COMMUNICATION PROBLEM.

THAT IS A PROBLEM THAT PERHAPS THE PROFESSION HAS HAD IN TIMES PAST. WHILE WE HAVE UNDERSTOOD WELL AHEAD OF THE REST OF SOCIETY THAT CERTAIN CHANGES WILL HAPPEN WE HAVE TENDED TO DEBATE THAT SOLELY WITHIN THE PROFESSION RATHER THAN INCLUDING THE BROADER COMMUNITY.

ALTHOUGH THAT HAS BEEN CHANGING. OUR INVOLVEMENT IN THE VARIOUS COMMISSIONS WITHIN INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF

SURVEYORS (FIG) IS AN EXCELLENT EXAMPLE OF THAT CHANGE. AND I REFER PARTICULARLY TO THOSE COMMISSIONS THAT RELATE TO SOCIAL MATTERS RATHER THAN PURE TECHNICAL ISSUES.

I FOUND IT FASCINATING TO READ MANY OF THE PRESIDENTIAL ADDRESSES OF THE PRESIDENT'S OF THE INSTITUTION AT THE END OF THEIR TERMS. LOTS OF WISE COUNCIL. I UNDERSTAND WHY THOSE FORMER PRESIDENTS ARE CALLED THE COLLEGE OF CARDINALS.

MOST PRESIDENTS WERE VERY FORWARD LOOKING IN THEIR ADDRESSES AND I COULD CITE NUMEROUS EXAMPLES OF THEM TALKING ABOUT CHANGE.

TONY BOMFORD, PRESIDENT IN 1975/76, MADE A STATEMENT IN HIS ADDRESS WHICH IS AS RELEVANT TODAY AS IT WAS THEN AND I QUOTE:

“THE MEMBERS OF OUR INSTITUTION HAVE THE BEST BRAINS, AND THE BEST EDUCATED BRAINS, IN THE BUSINESS, AND PROVIDED WE KEEP THEM ATTUNED TO CHANGES IN SOCIETY, AND ENSURE THAT OUR INSTITUTION EVOLVES TO MEET CHANGING NEEDS, WE CAN ONLY FLOURISH. BUT AS WITH EVERY OTHER INSTITUTION, IF WE DON NOT EVOLVE, THEN LIKE THE BRONTOSAURUS, WE SHALL PERISH.”

BUT IT WASN'T ONLY PRESIDENTS. PROFESSOR IAN WILLIAMSON, A LITTLE MORE RECENTLY IN 1997 WHEN ACCEPTING THE AWARD OF THE MEDAL OF THE INSTITUTION OF SURVEYORS AUSTRALIA SAID:

“...CHANGE IN SOCIETY IS CONSTANT, WITH THE RATE OF CHANGE EVER INCREASING. AS A PROFESSION WE HAVE TO BE PREPARED TO RESPOND TO CHANGES QUICKLY AND POSITIVELY, WHETHER THIS IS MARKETING OUR SERVICES UNDER A GEOMATICS BANNER OR CHANGING THE STRUCTURE OF THE INSTITUTION.”

THE EXAMPLES GO ON DEMONSTRATING OUR PROFESSION'S INTEREST IN MATTERS BEYOND THE PURELY TECHNICAL. THE ISA CONFERENCE IN 1984 WAS FOR EXAMPLE THEMED "WHAT ABOUT THE PEOPLE".

AS I SAID EARLIER, PERHAPS IT JUST WAS OUR COMMUNICATION WASN'T BROAD ENOUGH OR LOUD ENOUGH AND THEREFORE THE PERCEPTION WAS WE WERE ONLY INTERESTED IN THE DETAILED FORMULA FOR SAY HARMONIC ANALYSIS OR SOMETHING SIMILAR INSTEAD OF INPUT INTO THE DETAIL OF HELPING CREATE A HARMONIOUS SOCIETY.

MY BUSINESS PARTNER OF 15 YEARS, EARL JAMES, WHO IS HERE TONIGHT AND MOST OF YOU WOULD KNOW HE REPRESENTED THE INSTITUTION OF SURVEYORS AUSTRALIA AS PRESIDENT OF THE INTERNATIONAL FEDERATION OF SURVEYORS FROM 1992 TO 1995, WAS ISA PRESIDENT IN 1978/79.

EARL IN HIS ADDRESS SAID THAT WE (THE SURVEYING PROFESSION), SHOULD BE AIMING TO OBTAIN THE STATUS OF ADVISORS TO GOVERNMENT. IN HINDSIGHT MAYBE EARL WOULD SAY THAT I TOOK HIS ADVICE A BIT TOO LITERALLY.

I THINK WE HAVE COME A LONG WAY IN THAT REGARD, BUT LIKE ANYTHING, YOU MUST REMAIN DILIGENT, PARTICULARLY GIVEN THE EXTENT TO WHICH CHANGE OCCURS WITHIN GOVERNMENT.

I MENTIONED NICK MINCHIN BEFORE. HE IS ONE OF THE MANY LAWYERS IN THE PARLIAMENT BUT ALSO HAD A LONG INVOLVEMENT IN PARTY POLITICS BEFORE BECOMING A SENATOR. HE BECAME A PASSIONATE ADVOCATE FOR THE SPATIAL INFORMATION INDUSTRY, LARGELY AS A RESULT OF ONE BREAKFAST WITH A GROUP OF SURVEYORS PLUS A BIT OF EXTRA BACKGROUNDING. BUT NICK IS NOW THE FINANCE MINISTER AND WHILE THAT IS VERY HANDY, WE HAVE A NEW MINISTER TO EDUCATE.

JIM LLOYD AND I HAVE TO DO THIS CONSTANTLY WITH RESPECT TO OUR ELECTORATES AND THE PROFESSION'S TASK IS NO DIFFERENT.

COMING BACK TO WHERE I STARTED, WHILE THERE HAS BEEN SOME DRASTIC CHANGES TO THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE IN THE PAST TEN YEARS IT IS STILL SKEWED TO THE LAWYERS AND UNIONISTS SO THE EDUCATION OF THE PRACTICAL SCIENCES TO THE POLITICAL SCIENTISTS MUST GO ON.

I WAS ENCOURAGED HOWEVER TO READ AN ARTICLE IN A SURVEYING MAGAZINE WHICH STARTED – AND I QUOTE:

“A NEW WAVE OF TECHNOLOGICAL INNOVATION IS ALLOWING US TO CAPTURE, STORE, PROCESS AND DISPLAY AN UNPRECEDENTED AMOUNT OF INFORMATION ABOUT OUR PLANET AND A WIDE VARIETY OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND CULTURAL PHENOMENA. MUCH OF THIS INFORMATION WILL BE ‘GEOREFERENCED’ – THAT IS, IT WILL REFER TO SOME SPECIFIC PLACE ON THE EARTH’S SURFACE.” UNQUOTE

I WONDER WHO SAID THAT?

THAT ARTICLE, TITLED “THE DIGITAL EARTH”, WAS BY THE THEN VICE PRESIDENT OF THE USA, AL GORE, TAKEN FROM A SPEECH HE GAVE IN 1998.

PLEASING TO SEE THAT YOU DON'T HAVE TO BE A SURVEYOR POLITICIAN TO KNOW SOMETHING ABOUT SPATIAL INFORMATION.

THE IMPORTANCE OF THAT DATA HE REFERRED TO HAS CERTAINLY COME HOME TO GOVERNMENTS POST SEPTEMBER THE 11TH.

ALTHOUGH IT DID START BEFORE THAT. AS IAN WILLIAMSON ALSO SAID IN THAT ACCEPTANCE SPEECH I REFERRED TO EARLIER:

“THE SPATIAL INFORMATION INDUSTRY IS ON A ‘ROLL’.
GOVERNMENTS WORLD-WIDE ARE RECOGNISING THAT CADASTRAL
AND LAND MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS ARE FUNDAMENTAL TO
ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT, SOCIAL STABILITY AND ENVIRONMENTAL
MANAGEMENT. POLITICIANS ARE LISTENING TO US MORE THAN EVER.”

WELL, LADIES AND GENTLEMEN, THIS IS ONE POLITICIAN YOU CAN BE
SURE WILL ALWAYS HAVE THE TIME TO LISTEN TO YOU.

IT’S BEEN A DELIGHT FOR KERRIE AND I TO BE HERE TONIGHT WITH
YOU, WITH MY BUSINESS PARTNER OF 15 YEARS, EARL JAMES AND HIS
WIFE WENDY, AND I WISH THE PROFESSION EVERY SUCCESS IN ITS
FUTURE ENDEAVOURS.

THANK YOU.