

Conference reports

CAPG Plenary Session – 13th Australia New Zealand Conference on Geomechanics, Perth

The Corporate Associates Presidential Group (CAPG) is a Board level committee representing the commercial sector of the international geotechnical community within ISSMGE. One of the main objectives of CAPG is to assist ISSMGE in fostering the advancement of geotechnical knowledge and encouraging activities such as research, practice, exchange of knowledge, and education. With this in mind, CAPG, together with the Technical Oversight Committee, launched a global survey in early 2017 on the State of the Art (SoA) and the State of Practice (SoP) in geotechnical engineering. The survey attracted approximately 1300 respondents from 68 countries answering a number of questions. This was followed by CAPG holding a workshop at the 19th ICSMGE in Seoul in September, 2017 to discuss the results of the survey. A follow-up paper presenting the survey results and the workshop discussion comments was prepared by CAPG and was published in 2018 in various journals and magazines.

Encouraged by the success of the global survey and the conference workshop, CAPG embarked on organizing a number of plenary sessions at the various regional conferences to be held in 2019 in Africa, America, Asia, Australasia and Europe. The first one of these plenary sessions was held during the 13th Australia New Zealand (ANZ) Conference on Geomechanics in Perth, Australia in April, 2019. The title of the CAPG session was “Collaboration in Geotechnical Engineering - Impact on Research and Project Delivery”. The main objectives of the session were:

- To promote collaboration among various stakeholders in academic research and project delivery; and
- To stimulate discussions and communication in the geotechnical fraternity to produce best project outcomes.

Prior to the Perth conference, CAPG also sought the assistance of local chapters of the Australian Geomechanics Society (AGS) and the New Zealand Geotechnical Society to organize a few local events. The main purposes of these local events were to promote the Perth plenary session and to capture ideas and comments from those who were not able to attend the Perth conference. The local events held before the ANZ Conference were as follows:

- AGS Sydney Chapter debate night held on 12 December 2018 with two debate topics:
- Geotechnical designers are too conservative while the contractors are too ambitious
- Unsaturated Soil Mechanics is of no use to the practicing geotechnical engineer
- AGS Queensland Chapter panel discussion on “Cast-in-place Piling Practice, Design & Construction” held on 21 February 2019
- New Zealand Geotechnical Society panel discussion “Collaboration in Geotechnical Engineering - Impact on Research and Project Delivery” held in Auckland on 18 March 2019



Figure 1. AGS Queensland Chapter panel discussion held on 21 February 2019

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Figure 2. AGS Sydney Chapter debate night held on 12 December 2018

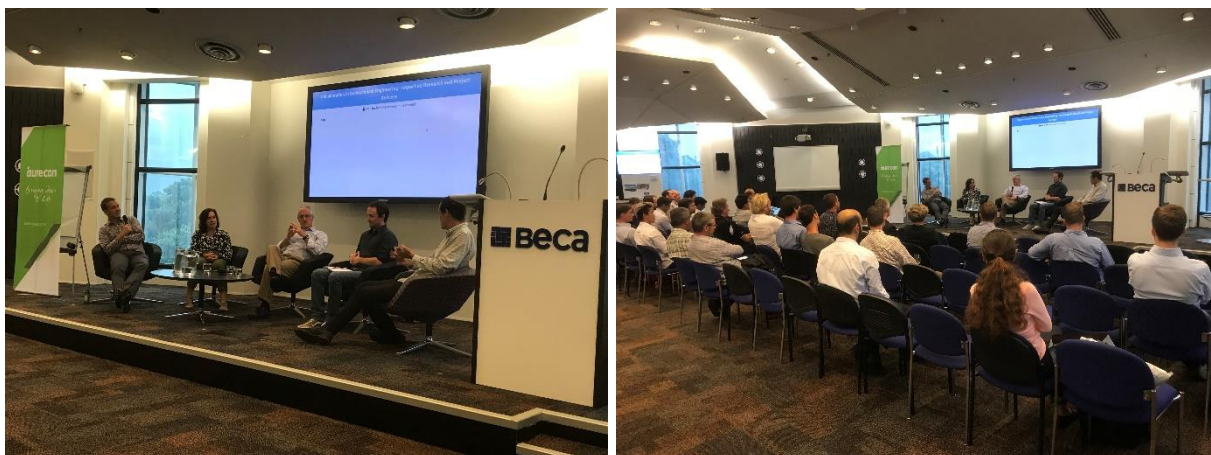


Figure 3. New Zealand Geotechnical Society panel discussion held in Auckland on 18 March 2019

In addition to the local events held before the ANZ Conference, some other local events are being planned to be held after the Perth conference.

The format of the CAPG plenary session at the ANZ Conference took the form of a panel and floor discussion. It was held on the first day of the Conference, 1 April 2019 and was attended by about 400 participants. The Vice President Australasia, Gavin Alexander opened the session and introduced ISSMGE and CAPG. He was followed by the organizer of the event, Kim Chan who briefly described the CAPG activities and provided

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the participants with some background and objectives of the session and what CAPG was trying to achieve from this exercise. David Airey as the Vice Chair of Technical Committee TC306 “Geo-education” then introduced the technical committee and promoted TC306’s next conference.



Figure 4. Gavin Alexander opened the session and Kim Chan provided some background of the session

The panel and floor discussion was facilitated by Camilla Gibbons. The panelists included representatives from academia, Buddhima Indranatna; design consultants, Richard Kelly; contractors, Amir Nik Eftekhari; private asset owners, Fiona Chow and government authorities, Sam Henwood. The panelists provided their views and opinions on various discussion points, such as academic research and industry involvement; the great divide between designers and constructors; traditional vs collaborative and agile project management approaches; examples of collaboration between industry and academia; knowledge sharing and dissemination; transferring research into practice and project risks management considerations.



Figure 5. David Airey introduced TC306 Geo-education

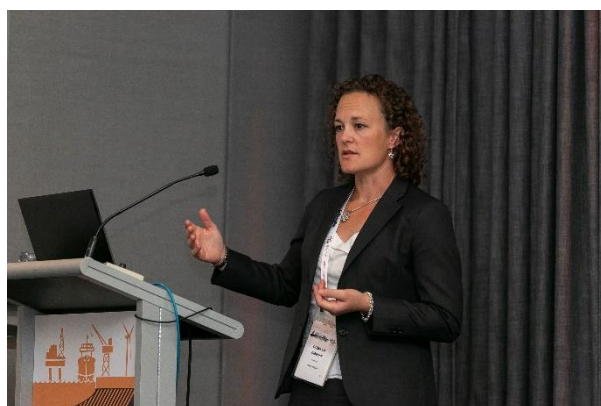


Figure 6. Camilla Gibbons was the facilitator of the panel and floor discussion

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Figure 7. (l to r) Kim Chan, David Airey, Buddhima Indranatna, Fiona Chow and Richard Kelly



Figure 8. (l to r) Richard Kelly, Amir Nik Eftekhari and Sam Henwood

The panel discussion generated active floor participation and many critical questions. Most of the questions from the floor were posted digitally via the conference app for the panelists to respond and address. There was also a voting function with the conference app which enabled the facilitator to select the most popular questions from the audience to be responded first. In addition, some comments from the floor were being made by the participants using the traditional method of floor discussion.

Some of the questions being asked included:

- It is not often you get a cross section like this from industry. What will you be taking back to ISSMGE to ensure Geotechnics does not become a lost profession.
- Do you feel the tender process and rules for public works discourages innovation by typically selecting the cheapest proven option?
- Is collaboration in research only really possible in high value industries such as oil and gas?
- How do you stop people or organisations being afraid of losing intellectual property through collaboration?
- What need to be done to encourage industries to invest more in education and research collaborations, especially for long term and future applications across the Industry?
- Do you think collaboration adversely affect competition on projects? If so, how can we create a balance between the two, noting collaboration in academics and research might be easier to achieve compared to commercial projects in the Geotech industry.
- There is a culture in the construction industry to avoid taking on risk. Does the tender process need to change to meet the need for such collaboration and innovation towards advancing the industry?

Following nearly one hour of panel and floor discussion, the session was closed by the CAPG Chair, Sukumar Pathmanandavel, who also introduced the four main avenues for advancement pursued by the CAPG, being public face, innovation, analytical and connector, and urged the participants to join Corporate Associates.

Based on the feedback received from the conference attendees, the CAPG plenary session was a resounding success and generated a fair amount of interests in the topic. A number of suggestions were made by conference attendees on what can be done to improve collaboration among various stakeholders. CAPG will take advantage of the enthusiasm shown by the participants and will adopt some of these suggestions to promote collaboration in geotechnical engineering.

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Some of the opportunities identified include:

- A CAPG sponsored session on the management of tailings storage facilities involving the major mining houses;
- A 2-minute video competition for young engineers; and
- A special edition of the Australian Geomechanics Society journal on Industry Collaboration.

For further information about the CAPG and their activities, please visit:

<https://www.issmge.org/corporate-associates/corporate-associates-presidential-group>



Figure 9 Audience during the panel discussion



Figure 10 Sukumar Pathmanandavel giving a closure speech at the end of the session

Kim Chan

Coordinator of Corporate Associates Presidential Group