

A perspective on the *ideaction 2007* Conference

Leading up to the *ideaction 2007* conference, I was a little nervous at the prospect of finding myself among a few hundred facility managers. A relative newcomer to the industry (I had no idea what Facility Management was when I first started writing about it), I have at times found myself more than a touch overwhelmed by a multitude of industry acronyms and jargon that seemed to serve no other purpose than to confuse me.

BY MELANIE DRUMMOND

Before boarding the plane to Sydney I comforted myself with the knowledge that I did in fact know about KPIs, building controls, churn, staff retention, sustainable design, AS1851 (I'm sure it will come in handy one day) and a number of other relevant and useful pieces of information.

Having chosen Taronga Zoo as a site visit, after a bit of contention within the WinterComms' team (they ALL wanted to go), I ventured out for my first real brush with the facility managers that are so important to my work.

Instantly, I was impressed with how friendly and approachable everybody was. While taking our guided tour of the enclosures at Taronga, it was easy to fall into conversation with people about their work and what had brought them to the conference.

I was also impressed with the friendly Taronga Zoo staff who keep their operation running successfully for 365 days of the year. The extent of the construction team's efforts on the soon-to-be-opened Great Southern Oceans enclosure was also impressive. With just one road in and one road out, 20,000 cubic tonnes of concrete had been transported to the challenging site. The Project Manager for construction summed up the difficulties the team had faced. "It's been a challenging project working on a cliff side adjacent to Sydney Harbour; it's the most challenging project I've been involved with in 20 years."

After seeing the giraffes against the stunning backdrop of the Sydney Opera House and bridge, it was off to Telstra Stadium for lunch and a tour of the extensive facilities.

The conference was officially, and festively, opened that evening with the Chairman's Welcome Reception. I quickly got in the swing of the gambling and promptly lost half of my money on the Blackjack table, which established the pattern my finances would take for the rest of the night. The highlight was definitely meeting more friendly and positive facility managers.

It was an early start the next morning, joining WIFM members for an informative and relaxed breakfast get-together. Speaker Kerry Lodge talked about her experiences setting up a green office programme for BP 10 years ago, when 'sustainability' was not yet on anybody's agenda. It was easy to see how valuable WIFM meetings are as an information-sharing forum. Members were clearly at ease with sharing experiences, problems and victories encountered as facility managers.

Later that day after an informative panel session on PPP's, and a delicious lunch, it was straight back into the Bayside Auditorium for Keynote Speaker Dr Geoffrey Pembroke's speech on Sustainable Innovation in the New Millennium. And my, what an interesting speech it was. From first telling us how he'd earlier had a bit too much to drink from his hotel minibar – "You're not drunk if you can lie on the floor without holding on", he went on to later boast the benefits of being a hermaphrodite worm. It was at this point that I stopped taking notes. Often the most gullible person I know, it wasn't until the very end (after much laughing) that I discovered Dr Pembroke was in fact a hoax speaker by the name of Graeme Bowman. I applaud FMA for the inspired idea of adding such an entertaining Keynote speaker to the programme!

The afternoon was wrapped up well with keynote Alex Ritchie, Executive Director of Brand Experience. His dynamic and creative presentation conveyed succinctly the importance of creating and living a company brand.

Later that night was, of course, the Gala Dinner held at the majestic Sydney Town Hall. It impacted upon me how important the night is for acknowledging the work being done in the Facility Management industry and for celebrating its incredibly bright future.

The next morning after a good strong cup of coffee, it was time to settle into the final day of the conference. Most of my day was spent on the FMA Australia / Facility Perspectives booth in the Exhibition centre which provided a great opportunity to talk with people about the magazine's future editorial prospects and to gauge feedback on our first issue. I also had the pleasure of talking to Kerry Lodge and WIFM Chair Kirsten Smith about a range of facility management topics – keep your eyes peeled for those interviews in the next edition of Facility Perspectives.

Saying goodbye to friends I'd made during the conference was a little sad but I was excited about heading home with a greater understanding of the people we call facility managers. My lasting impression is that facility managers are friendly, hardworking and passionate about the industry they work in – which is truly commendable in any field. My sincere thanks goes out to FMA Australia staff for making *ideaction 2007* such a fantastic experience and I have no doubt they will endeavour to make next year's Gold Coast Conference even better.



Award Winners

1. Frank Riley, Brisbane City Council, accepting FMA Australia & Programmed Maintenance Services Facility Manager of the Year Award from Mark Piskowski (Programmed Maintenance Services) and FMA Australia Chair Andrew McEwan
2. Derek Wilson accepts Branch Committee Member of the Year Victoria award from FMA Australia Chair Andrew McEwan.
3. Christine Kelly accepting her award for NSW Branch Committee Member of the Year.
4. Lex Dewar accepting his award for QLD Branch Committee Member of the Year.
5. Michael Russo, Investa Property Group, accepting the FMA Australia & Tungsten Young Facility Manager of the Year Award from Steve Taylor (Tungsten) and Andrew McEwan
6. Kristiana Greenwood and a victorious Victorian Branch with their award for Branch of the Year.
7. Winners of the FMA Australia & Rider Hunt Tenetech Industry Achievement Award, Cooperative Research Centre for Construction Innovation: [L to R] Peter Scuderi (CRCCI), George Spink (CRCCI), Paul Ackhurst (Sydney Opera House), Stephen Ballesty and Andrew McEwan.
8. Wayne Ryan, Air Can Serve Co, accepting FMA Australia & Transfield Services Environmental Award from Phil Warren (Transfield Services) and Andrew McEwan