HumEng Update

News from Engineers Australia's Humanitarian Engineering Community of Practice

https://humeng.engineersaustralia.org.au/

JULY 2020

Welcome to our first HumEng Update. We're intending that this should be published regularly, and often enough to ensure that all of our Community of Practice (HECoP) members are informed of our current activity, and encouraged to participate. **A particular welcome to the new members who have joined in recent weeks.**

The HOME and ABOUT tabs on our web portal explain who we are and how we operate.

Our intent is to:

Foster the application of professional engineering discipline to the leadership, management, design and delivery of humanitarian undertakings

The first half of 2020 has made it very difficult to mount the start-up effort originally intended following the launch of the Community of Practice at the World Engineering Convention in November last year.

We have now, however, resumed normal operations and will be working hard to ensure that we can deliver the capabilities and interaction implicit in our statement of intent.

Recent activity

Key matters discussed at our June Steering Committee meeting were:

- Participation by HECoP representatives in forthcoming workshops conducted by IEEE and HENA (the humanitarian engineering network of universities engaged in HumEng education).
- **Development of an initial WEBINAR, to be conducted 13/8/20 from 1200 to 1300 (AEST). The subject will be "Delivering Humanitarian Engineering in a COVID-19 World". Guest speakers will be from RedR and EWB.**
- Agreement on the worth of regular member communication (hence this newsletter!).
- Recognition that registered HECoP membership (at the time of writing) is now 56, and that some items on the discussion forum and the BOK have been viewed and responded to in considerable numbers.
- Agreement to formulate a strategic plan to apply efforts to developing all aspects of HECoP so that the full operating capability is achieved by 2021.

Meet the Team

With each issue of the newsletter we will introduce a member of the HECoP team and pose some questions which we hope will help others in their humanitarian endeavours.

In this issue we are featuring the **Chair of the HECoP Steering Committee** -

Professor Robert F Care AM BE PhD FREng HonFIEAust FTSE FRSN CPEng EngExec

- **How did you become involved with Humanitarian Engineering?**

When starting out my career as a highly analytical structural engineer, Humanitarian Engineering (HumEng) was not high on my agenda. It certainly was not addressed during my University studies or if it was, I missed it. It was not until I joined Arup in 1977 that I became aware of it and over time and with postings in places like Papua New Guinea my interest developed. When RedR was formed in Australia in 1992, I was keen to become involved but it was not until 2004 that I joined the RedR Board. I believed this was where I could make my biggest contribution.

Becoming part of RedR Australia, and now as the Chair (second time – I was also Chair 2008-2010), is one of my proudest achievements as an engineer.

- **What humanitarian engineering projects are you currently working on?**

I took on the role of RedR Australia Chair in May 2020, following Elizabeth Taylor's ten-year tenure RedR Australia continues to evolve as an entity, now managing under contract the Australian Assists program for the Australian Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), expanding its geographical remit, moving beyond purely disaster recovery toward building community resilience and post-disaster recovery. It is an exciting time.

Second is my role as Professor of Practice at University of New South Wales Sydney, specifically with the Humanitarian Engineering subject material. A particular area of interest is in the Ethics of Humanitarian Engineering, one area I lecture.

Finally, I have been involved in establishing the Community of Practice for Humanitarian Engineering (HECoP), and I am currently the Interim Chair of the Steering Committee. The HECoP will help explain the essence and boundaries of Humanitarian Engineering by capturing and updating the concepts, skills and practices that are generally accepted and known within the field.

- **What has been your proudest moment as a humanitarian engineer or humanitarian engineering fan?**

I don't think I have a proudest moment, as such. Observing all the great work and self-sacrifice of the many deployees of RedR Australia, and other similar organisations, I cannot help but be proud and delighted even when the most difficult circumstances prevail.

- **Why is humanitarian engineering important?**

I start from a position that all engineering is for humanitarian purposes, otherwise why would we be doing it. Humanitarian Engineering is a special branch of engineering focussed on marginalised and disadvantaged people in the world facing difficult circumstances. This speaks to Engineering's prime purpose and specifically the Code of Ethics that Professional Engineering commit to.

- **What is your top tip for engineers and engineering fans who want to apply their skills in humanitarian contexts?**

Focus on community needs not just, what you think we should be doing. Listen – it is the prime skill in communication and be sensitive to other's cultures.

- **What should people get in touch with you about?**

I am happy to be contacted about anything to do with the HECoP, RedR Australia or the role of Universities in Humanitarian Engineering. I am passionate about mentoring and coaching others and learning from those experiences.

PLEASE PARTICIPATE

The value of the Community of Practice will be in the active participation of its members. We encourage you to participate (via the web portal) in the discussion forums, to add to the Body of Knowledge (BOK), and to participate in webinars and other events.

You may also contact us at humeng@engineersaustralia.org.au

We hope you will enjoy and benefit from membership of and participation in HECoP, and look forward to your participation in the August webinar.

You will be notified separately about forthcoming webinar content and registration details