

OPENING SESSION

OPENING ADDRESS

Ian Goddard¹

I am grateful for the invitation to be with you today at the University of Wollongong, the University of the Year for 2001. This is my first official role as President of The Australasian Institute of Mining and Metallurgy for 2002, apart from chairing the first Board meeting of the Institute for the year on Monday.

It is significant that *COAL2002*, the Conference on Outburst and Gas Management and Strata Management Systems, is being convened by the Illawarra Branch, as it is one of the most active and committed branches in the Institute. The other organising entities are the NSW Coal Mine Managers' Association, the Gas and Coal Outburst Committee and the University of Wollongong.

A few words about the current status of the AusIMM.

Over the past three years The AusIMM has introduced new Member Benefits and Services, has started to "speak out" on issues affecting the members and has restructured and revitalised the internal processes and communication channels. At the same time it is maintaining emphasis on the recognition of Continual Professional Development and Education and on the delivery of technical publications, conferences and events, Codes and Ethical procedures.

The needs of the professionals within the Minerals Industry are continually changing as the Industry becomes truly global and employment practices change. The challenge for our professional institute is to remain relevant to their needs. However, the central need continues to be support for and recognition of continual professional development.

The internationalisation of the industry is opening up new challenges and thus the Institute will be exploring opportunities for international recognition of qualifications, the production of international publications and events and the expansion of our codes into the international arena in 2002.

For example, The AusIMM will be hosting the CMMI Congress in Cairns in May 2002 with the themes of International Codes, Technology and Sustainability for the Mineral Industry. Leigh Clifford from Rio Tinto has agreed to be the Congress Chairman.

The Institutes, which represent the professionals in the industry, as well as the individual professionals, have an important part to play both internationally and regionally in addressing these opportunities.

This will require both the enhancement of advanced technical skills and of skills which assist in the engagement of all those who perceive themselves to be stakeholders in the industry.

Conferences such as this provide the opportunity for professionals in the industry to gather and share knowledge. They are a very efficient mode of information transfer and subsequent reference to the proceedings from this event will enable those not present to upgrade their knowledge as well. We need professional engineers and scientists to develop their skills in the management of gas and coal outbursts for the benefit of the wider community.

Speaking of Proceedings, I would like to acknowledge the efforts of Dr. Ian Porter and his team from this Branch, who made the offer to produce the Institute's Proceedings to ensure that The AusIMM continued to publish a respected technical professional journal. That offer was accepted at Congress 2000 and I am sure you would agree that the quality of the volumes has been improved and it is now a significant journal in modern mining literature. So much so, that we are near to agreeing with the IMM in the UK (at their suggestion) for a joint publication with world-wide appeal.

In 2001, The AusIMM launched the report prepared by World Competitive Practices, on "**Rising to the Challenge – Building professional staff capability in the Australian minerals industry for the new century.**"

¹ The 2002 President of AusIMM

This report raised the question “Are we confident that the minerals industry has the professional staff capability to appropriately position it to meet the demands of tomorrow?” The report concluded,

- There is an urgent requirement for those in the industry to work together to improve its image and perhaps build new employment options for the people it needs. The Institute can take a lead role on this.
- Companies must look to their organisational systems and structures to identify and attract the people they seek, and to motivate, develop and utilise their professional staff.
- The Institute must find ways to ensure that the universities and other education providers are better informed of industry challenges and needs.
- Industry professionals, on an ongoing basis, need to review and develop their competencies.

Mining has a proud tradition in Australasia, particularly in coal. It has spawned many of Australia's most celebrated business leaders – leaders who have had a capacity to map a future for their companies and the industry itself. Current industry leaders must do this again if the industry is to achieve sustainable success.

Turning now to the subject of the Conference.

Although my career has been mostly with base metals and gold, I did spend 7 years in MIM's Coal Division in Queensland. Most of this time was spent as a “sunshine Miner” as I was the manager of the Newlands mine for the first 6 years of its life. There were no gas issues at that time, although there were plenty of others to keep me occupied.

My real introduction into the coal industry as a mining engineer took place twenty years ago, when I was transferred to Collinsville as Planning Manager for half a year. The Collinsville mines had a long-standing gas problem, not with methane but carbon dioxide. In the early part of last century, an outburst had disastrous consequences, with large loss of life.

At the time of my arrival, a number of research projects into the management of gas outbursts were underway. The Collinsville Research Manger was one Dr Ray Williams. I look forward to his paper later today. Ray educated me about coal in general and the problems of controlling gas release. He was very understanding of the limitations of a hard rock miner. I continued to visit Collinsville regularly during those years and kept in contact with Ray and progress on the research projects.

In his talks, the name Ripu Lama came up frequently. I realised that he was highly regarded in the industry and was recognised as the international “guru” on outbursts. I am pleased to acknowledge the presence of Ripu's wife, Barbara, here today. This conference is dedicated to Ripu and we will be hearing more of his magnificent contribution to the AusIMM, to this Branch and to the study and management of gas emissions and coal outbursts.

I would like to ask Barbara to come forward and receive a commemorative satchel from the Conference.

I note that the technical programme for the next two days has a wide range of subjects, from keynote address, to history, to theory, to case studies and an open forum on both days. Yesterday there was a Workshop. I congratulate Alison and Ernest and the team on their efforts. I would also like to acknowledge the sponsors, without whom conferences would not be so successful.

The management of outbursts and gas is extremely important to this nation for safety, economic and environmental reasons. I am sure that the Conference will be a great technical, professional and social success, meeting all of its objectives.

I have much pleasure in officially opening *COAL2002* – the 3rd Australasian Coal Operators' Conference.