President’s Address
17 May, 2017

Mr Chairman, distinguished guests, delegates, Ladies and Gentlemen

Thank you for the opportunity to join together with you all again this year at Floodplain Management Australia’s 57th annual Conference. May I at the outset offer my thanks to everyone involved in this fantastic event.

Firstly our Sponsors - particularly:

- **Insurance Council of Australia as our Platinum Sponsor** – FMA has a very productive partnership with ICA, including developing Fact Sheets for flood insurance and sharing of flood data. I urge everyone to stop by the ICA Conference booth to learn about the work of ICA and to discuss how we can continue to assist insurers reduce premiums by providing better flood data and effective flood mitigation measures, such as in St George and Roma, Queensland.

  Thank you to Karl Sullivan and ICA.

- **NSW Office of Environment and Heritage as Gold Sponsor** - we’ve also worked closely with OEH over many years through this Conference, the annual Floodplain Risk Management education course, our Quarterly Meetings in Sydney and many other forums.

  Thank you to Duncan McLuckie and all the team at OEH, many of whom are at this Conference.

- **Silver Sponsor BMT-WBM**, which has always supported this Conference and has worked with many agencies, Councils and corporations throughout the year.

  Thank you to Chris Huxley and BMT-WBM.
Thanks also to:

- Mark Babister and Richard Dewar from WMA Water - long time sponsors
- NSW SES and Belinda Davies, Elliott Simmons and all the crew at SES
- Royal KaskoningDHV, regular participants at our Conference
- HDR who are our lanyard sponsors, with Mark Forrest who has travelled from the United States to be with us – I am also pleased to say that HDR is the first American Member of FMA and is therefore leading the USA in floodplain management networking
- Surface Water Solutions and Krey Price, who partnered with Mark Forest to provide the HEC-RAS training course.

We will acknowledge all our sponsors and exhibitors throughout this week but for now please allow me to thank you all collectively. We are all looking forward to learning more about your products and services.

I also wish to thank:

- Our Steering Committee with expert local guidance from Nathan Evans of Newcastle City Council
- Our Program Advisory Committee under the leadership of Danny Rose, with members from every State and Territory
- Our one day Workshop organisers Danny Rose and Duncan McLuckie
- Our FMA Executive Officer Glenn and his team, Dominique and Annette
- Our highly experienced Professional Conference Organisers, East Coast Conferences
- The Speakers who have prepared a fantastic array of first class presentations and poster displays
- Our visitors from the United States, the Netherlands, Singapore and New Zealand.
This year it is with great pleasure that I especially welcome our delegation from Viet Nam. Thank you to each member of the delegation, and to Associate Professor Jaya Kandasamy from the University of Technology Sydney, for coordinating this visit and participation.

Finally, and most importantly, I thank all of you who make this event such a great success year after year.

The extra good thing about this event is that all of you involved in floodplain management in some way are making a positive difference to the world around us.

As we know, floods kill more people and cost more than any other natural disaster.

Whatever we can do to mitigate those impacts is an extremely important aim in terms of helping our respective communities.

Whether you’re a Councillor, a planner, a consultant, a government officer, a sponsor, an insurer, an equipment provider or even an engineer like myself, your involvement in floodplain risk management and this Conference is aimed at making things better.

Our Queensland and Northern New South Wales colleagues are again showing the way after the recent Cyclone Debbie.

Our hearts go out to our Member Councils at Mackay, Rockhampton, Lismore, Tweed and all those affected by the recent events.

Once again we’ve seen more fatalities, more damage to private and public assets and enormous insurance payouts.

And the Red Cross estimates that the social cost of these natural disasters represents at least 50% of the real damage bill.

This year marks the tenth anniversary of that major storm and flood event we’ve come to vividly remember for the Pasha Bulker cargo ship being blown onto Nobbys Beach here in Newcastle.

But we also remember the terrifying footage of people caught in flood waters in Newcastle and Wallsend, people crying and cars swept away in the night.
People who lose everything never get over it.

Post-traumatic stress disorder, depression, divorce and even suicides are real factors, and people who can’t move back into their houses often have to move in with friends or relatives and that is obviously a real trial for all concerned.

Floodplain Management is not about stopping floods. It’s about proper planning for them and mitigation of them.

It’s not about stopping development. It’s about common sense and wise land use planning.

It’s about planned emergency response and community education.

Even with the best planning, natural disasters are going to occur whether we think so or not. Climate change will bring about increased rainfall intensity and that means bigger floods more often.

As recent events have again demonstrated again the Natural Disaster Relief and Recovery Arrangements between our State and Federal governments are in need of overhaul.

Thankfully, our Federal Minister Keenan is attempting to do that by driving the consultation process with our state and territory jurisdictions. At the end of the day, we need a fairer and more helpful deal for Local Government to achieve cost effective “betterment” of damaged assets. The nation needs to invest in mitigation measures to rein in the $billions of damage each event.

FMA strives to get this message out there through our networking, our advocacy, our annual training course at the University of Technology in Sydney, our FMA Flyers, our website and our National Conference.

At the state level there have been some very positive developments in helping communities prepare for their next great flood. These include release of the Victorian Floodplain Management Strategy, the Hawkesbury-Nepean Valley Flood Management Strategy and the Brisbane River Catchment Flood Study. We will learn something of these projects during the Conference.
One project which NSW Members have had input to is the NSW Flood Data Portal, managed in partnership between the NSW State Emergency Service and the Office of Environment and Heritage, and jointly funded by the Commonwealth and NSW governments. I recommend that you see the portal in action at the SES booth.

We are thrilled with the fantastic response we get every year for Conference abstracts and we are delighted with your attendance every year, including here at the wonderful City of Newcastle. It is great to see our National and International involvement growing as I mentioned earlier.

This association is a fantastic resource so I encourage everyone here to share your experiences, and swap business cards, to continue our network throughout the year.

Delegates, I would like to encourage you to use your FMA as a platform for “speaking up” and raising the profile of sensible floodplain management.

Last year I talked long and loud about the cost of flood damage every year. Since then, major flooding has occurred in every state and territory in Australia. Once again it has been played out before our very eyes with costs estimated in the $billions and climbing every year unless we “speak up”.

Sadly, President Trump has apparently cut funding for FEMA flood mapping and other FEMA programs in the United States. With all due respect to our American colleagues, that is exactly what should NOT happen to make America great again. Our colleagues in the ASFPM are “speaking up” to their congress to try to stop those budget cuts.

Once again floods have recently occurred in several states of the USA, also in Peru where at least 75 people have died, and, as we speak, in Montreal Canada where they are dealing with last week’s major flood.

It goes on year after year.

FMA has been the peak body for floodplain management since 1961 when Bob Menzies was Prime Minister of Australia and John F. Kennedy was President of the USA.
With a rapidly developing world, the work you do and the advocacy for floodplain management has never been more important.

We have grown into a great network nowadays but we can’t stop there.

There are two groups in this world….those who are FMA members, and those who are about to become FMA members, when they discover us!!

This week, I would welcome your ideas on how we get known to those remaining Corporates and Government Agencies, Councils, and others who are yet to join us in this mission.

I’ve mentioned the late John F. Kennedy.

If he was here today I’m sure he would say to us:

“….Ask what you can do for your country… and for your FMA”.

So today, let me invite all of you to become an FMA “Champion” this week, and let’s make the world a better and safer place.

Thank you again for being here today.

I gives me great pleasure to now officially declare the 2017 Floodplain Management Australia National Conference open, and I wish you all the very best for a great week in Newcastle.

Thank you.

Ian Dinham