

Recent LSAA Activities

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In 2007 the LSAA celebrated 25 years. When it started – as the Membrane Structures Association (MSAA) - the lightweight structures industry was in its infancy and we developed our design and fabrication skills largely in isolation from the rest of the world. Today, our members can stand proud on the world stage and regularly design and construct significant lightweight structures in all parts of Asia, the Middle East, Europe, the Americas and other corners of the globe.

After what everyone considered to be a very active association from formation times, the LSAA entered into a hibernation period following the 2002 Conference and Design Awards. A marketing exercise highlighted the need to at least develop a website as a service to members. A part time Executive Officer was appointed in late 2005 in an effort to revive the association.

In 2006 the focus was to establish a website (www.lsa.org) and to gather the considerable amount of technical material from past conferences and awards to be placed on the website. A one day seminar was held in Sydney which was deemed to be successful attracting some 62 attendees and good local and overseas speakers. Financially the seminar nearly broke even. The AGM was held at the seminar and a revitalized committee was elected.

Much of the 2007 year was focused on the 2007 Conference and extending the website. Several impressive papers and keynote speakers coupled with the Awards and site visit to Skilled Stadium gave the committee a great deal of satisfaction that the LSAA was back on track.

During the hibernation, membership fees had been waived. Following the 2007 Conference to the present time, the membership growth has been significant and now almost matches the numbers during the height of the 1980s to late 1990s period. Importantly, membership numbers continue to grow and now will help facilitate some effort in new projects.

The normal cycle of activities of the Association is to hold a one day seminar in the year following the Conference / Design Awards. In 2008, the form of the seminar was more a workshop on tensioned membrane structures. This was held in Melbourne in conjunction with the Structural Branch of Engineers Australia in Victoria.

The workshop was structured so that invited speakers – mainly from the committee – gave presentations covering all aspects of tensioned membrane structures design, fabrication and erection.

The decision to adopt this approach was influenced by a desire to gather material together so that the LSAA would have a number of suitable presentations (PowerPoint type) that it could adapt for different audiences and available time periods. In late 2008 and into 2009, the above material has been collated together and, with relatively minor extra effort, could be used for an educational drive. Combined versions with consistent formatting have been produced for engineers, architects and students for time periods of 2 or 4 hours.

At the end of May 2009, we were offered a booth at the Melbourne ACASPA Expo. In preparation for this, five display boards were produced which attracted some good feedback. This event brought the LSAA in contact with some of our members, ACASPA members as well as some organizations that we would have some synergy with. Considerable interest was expressed in the educational material that we had and this is a positive reinforcement to the direction for LSAA in the next period of consolidation.



LSAA Committee at the ACASPA Expo - Peter Lim (Vice President), Rowan Murray (Sec) and Joseph Dean (also on ACASPA Board)

The other main activity during 2009 has been efforts to develop closer relationships with Engineers Australia and the Royal Australian Institute of Architects. Both the EA and RAI have a need to provide continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities for their members. We have progressed with EA and have a formal agreement in place. You will notice that this conference "is supported by" Engineers Australia. This support does not involve financial transfers but in-kind support such as publicity and potential cost sharing.

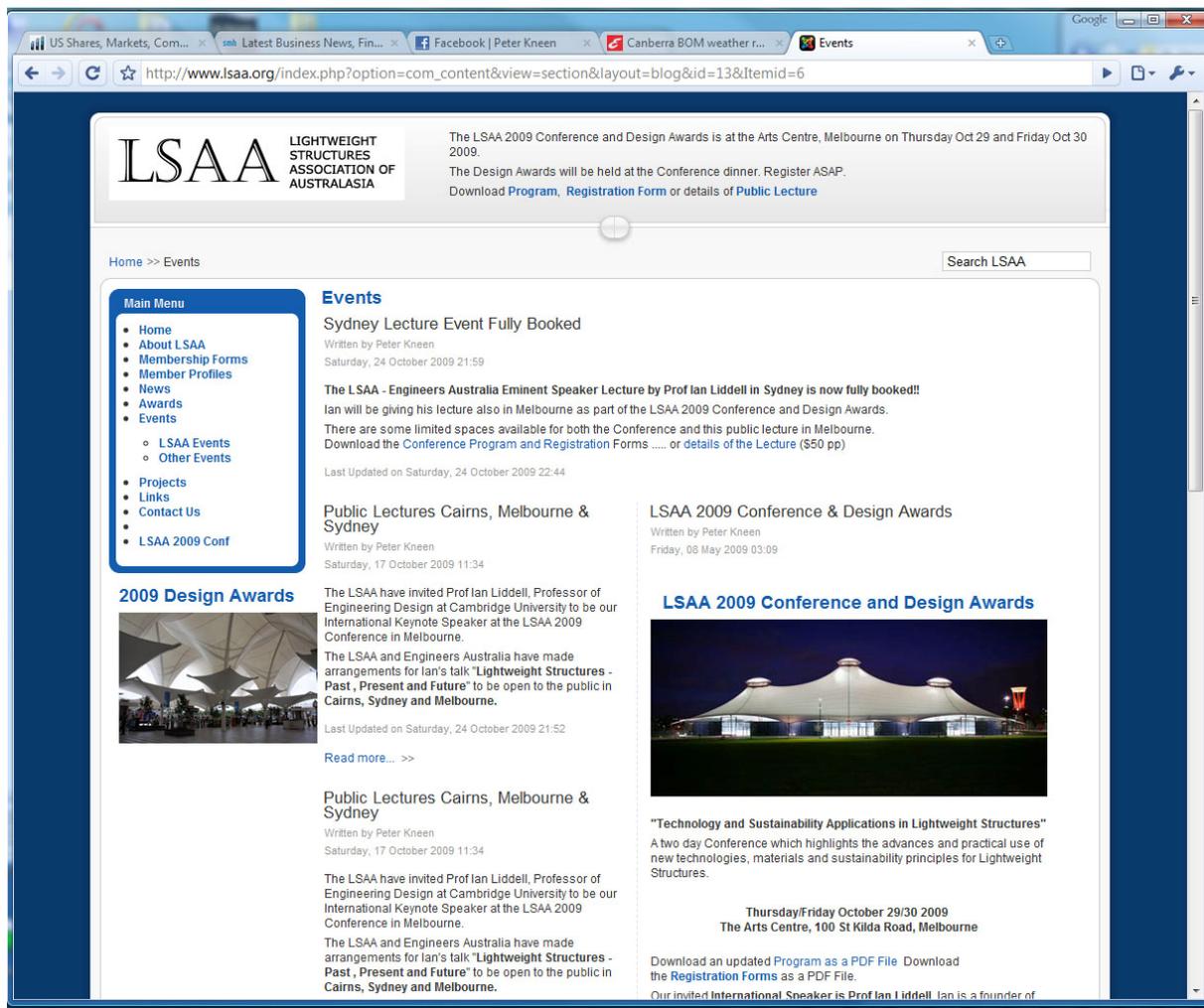
To progress with the RAI and being able to present our educational material to the different chapters involves some costs and an accreditation process. It is the intention of the LSAA to pursue this following the 2009 Conference.

As time permits, the LSAA wants to develop suitable relationships further during 2010 and will enhance these links partly through the website.

The LSAA website underwent a radical transformation from May 2009 onwards. Prior to this, all html code for the old website was written directly in a simple text editor. The new (current) website has used the Open Source "Joomla" system. Basically most items visible on the website are in the form of "articles" which are stored in a database under different "sections" and "categories". Examples of sections are Design Awards and

Projects. Examples of categories in the Projects section are small fabric structures, stadiums, facades and glazing etc. The menu structure essentially displays articles in the different sections and/or categories.

LSAA financial members who register on the site can be given access to hidden areas and can have the ability to write articles and, after vetting, have them published. Very few members have acted on this ability – the EO has endeavoured to maintain members profiles and add articles and projects as time permits. A start on most projects submitted for the 2007 and 2009 Design Awards has been made.



Screen dump of the LSAA Events Page in the revised website

The 2009 Design Awards attracted 28 entries spread uniformly over each of the four categories. It is clear that LSAA members continue to gain recognition at home and abroad for outstanding design and construction work. This was demonstrated at the 2007 Conference held at the Gold Coast in conjunction with the LSAA Design Awards and again with the current Design Awards.

A number of display boards highlighting the entries for 2009 have been produced along with displays of the winners for the 2002 and 2007 Awards. Some information boards describe the different types of lightweight structures.

The LSAA is keen to continue to raise its profile throughout the region.

