



## **PRESIDENT'S REPORT 2009**

Dear GITA member,

The past 12 months have been challenging for GITA Australia & New Zealand as an association and confronting for the Board of Directors. Despite this, GITA has preserved its highly regarded reputation and brand, remains financially viable and is well positioned for future success.

The major achievement of the year was, as usual, our annual conference. Due to a series of management and staff changes, our preparations were severely interrupted. Indeed GITA was largely unprepared for the annual conference and it is with much relief that, thanks to the enterprise and ability of our current CEO, Malcolm Barnes, and the efforts of individual Directors, that in the space of three months, we were able to plan, prepare and conduct a successful conference in Melbourne in September. The proceeds of the conference (which constitute over 60% of our annual income) were sufficient to sustain the viability of GITA for another year.

The strength of our relationship with our platinum sponsor, Open Spatial, in particular deserves special mention. Without the ongoing support of our sponsors, the association would be unsustainable. The loyalty of sponsors, exhibitors and our members enabled us to deliver one of the highest quality conferences ever. The cooperation and support provided by the Sofitel on Collins, Melbourne, was another factor in achieving a satisfactory financial outcome and the quality of the venue was simply outstanding. The list of speakers was world class and included industry leaders Warwick Watkins, Bruce Thompson, Ross Fraser, Dan Paull, Adam Smith, Daniel Hansen and Gregory Barras. We were also honoured to have GITA North America representatives C. Douglas Liebbrandt and Talbot Brooks; and GITA Japan representative Yoshifumi Yamaguchi.

Earlier in the year, in April, we conducted a highly successful seminar on underground infrastructure at the Australian Technology Park in Sydney. This event was a joint venture with SSSI-NSW and was well supported with over 70 attendees. The theme showcased the achievements of the Sydney Down Under project – a collaborative undertaking led by the City of Sydney and Lands NSW, and supported by GITA members including EnergyAustralia, Sydney Water, Telstra and Jemena. Other participants included the Roads and Traffic Authority, Sydney Metro Corporation, and Optus.

Despite the success and quality of our events in 2009, GITA endured significant turmoil with our management and staff following the sudden resignation of Chris Stoltz in September 2008, the appointment of Chris Hanlon in January 2009 and his subsequent departure in May.

The Board recognised the vulnerability of the association to sudden staff movement and has acted to reconfigure the association's operational structure. We have improved the day-to-day operations of the association while significantly decreasing costs. The operational structure is lean, agile and responsive with increasing use of the very technology that we all espouse. Importantly, there is now a much greater emphasis on delivering value to our members and sponsors both in Australia and New Zealand. There is more work to do – we need to update our constitution, review Board governance processes, redesign membership management procedures and re-establish the GITA brand in New Zealand – but we have

made a good start and we have a management team with integrity, innovation and initiative - much more like the North America model that works so well under Bob Samborski and his team in Denver.

It was with some sadness that I announced in August that I would be stepping down as Chairman and President of GITA and would not seek re-election to the Board. I intend to remain a member of GITA despite leaving EnergyAustralia last week and hope to be able to assist the new Board through a smooth transition. I also hope to be able to contribute from time to time in an operational context.

In conclusion, I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge the outgoing directors:

- Ron Lister, our immediate Past-President;
- Bruce Douglas, a Past –President;
- Mark Billing;
- Jon Black; and
- Anthony Miles.

With a global brand, a sound reputation and growing evidence of a turnaround in the economy, I am confident that the future of your association has never been brighter.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'G Oaten', on a light-colored background.

Greg Oaten