

OPEA Presidents Report 23/8/23

The OPEA acknowledges the many Traditional Owners of the lands on which we operate and pay our respects to their Elders past and present.

We recognise their strengths and enduring connection to lands, waters and skies as the Custodians of the oldest continuing cultures on the planet.

We remain committed to actively contributing to Australia's reconciliation journey through listening and learning, empowering more diverse voices and working together for a better tomorrow.

I would like to begin by thanking the current OPEA Executive Board for their efforts over the last fiscal year, and the AI team, particularly Kym, Karinya and Carolyn, for their support. At last years AGM we experienced a number of changes to the executive committee, but the group have been a pleasure to work with and with the majority re-nominating I'm looking forward to continuing our work of supporting the OPE industry.

The past year has been another turbulent one for the industry, coming out of a period of high demand and restricted supply into a period where supply has, for the most part, normalised but demand is contracting largely due to high inflation, increasing interest rates, and less favourable weather conditions with our climate moving from La Nina toward El Nino. These conditions are likely to be challenging for our industry for the next few years.

At our regular executive meetings we have had a number of informative speakers. James Thomson, the Lead for Standards & Product regulation at AI group, gave us a great insight into Standards Australia and the process involved in creating and updating standards. More recently Nigel Palmer & Anthony Bonaccorso from MTAQ showed us some of the Micro-credentials they are providing, highlighting the Battery Electric Vehicle unit focused on Outdoor Power equipment. This is an area of increasing relevance for workshops across the industry.

Through this year we have been creating a Business Plan for the Association to guide and focus our efforts, with two priority areas being Industry Training and Advocacy to government. To this end we have been part of the Victorian EPA industry consultation group, provided submissions to the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry on Biosecurity fees and to the Department of Employment and Workplace Relations on adult literacy and currently preparing a submission for the NSW EPA regarding amendments to the noise regulations. After many years of behind the scenes work by Carl Caboni as well as our former president, Milan Mejak, the OPEA is now part of the revision of AS 2657-1985 Powered Rotary Lawnmowers by Standards Australia

In closing I would like to thank those who are attending today's meeting but encourage you all to participate beyond this one meeting, whether that be providing feedback or ideas to the executive, speaking to others in the industry and encouraging membership or even considering becoming part of the executive team in the future.