

20 March 2018

On Tuesday 20th March 2018, the College of Investigative and Remedial Consulting Engineers of Australia (CIRCEA) and the Institution of Engineers Australia (Sydney Division), jointly hosted a forensic engineering seminar at Harrick's Auditorium, in Thomas Street Chatswood.

The seminar topic was: *"Are you 'qualified' to give Expert Opinion?"*

The seminar was aimed at an audience who are involved in (or interested in) engineering and systems failures of various professional disciplines, to advise on damaged structures, civil disputes, construction collapses, forensic investigations, expert witness and legal services, as well as the engineering design and construction of stabilisation, risk reduction and remedial works.

Attendees arrived from 5:30 pm, to take advantage of the opportunity to network with industry representatives from a diverse range of backgrounds, including engineers of various technical disciplines, specialist investigators, remedial builders, insurers, legal persons and local government.

Greg Ewing spoke first to the audience about the affiliation between Engineers Australia and CIRCEA. Greg gave his personal support to engineers interested in expert witness and forensic investigations and said Engineers Australia consider this an important industry for the Continued Professional Development of engineers.

CIRCEA President Andrew Shirley then gave an introduction to the two guest speakers, Matthew Graham (Solicitor, Kreisson) and Derek Jorgensen (Loss Adjuster and Claims Assessor, Claims Partners). Before handing over to the guest speakers, Andrew described the history of CIRCEA and the vision to create a national network of forensic engineers and specialist investigators in conjunction with Engineers Australia.

The first guest speaker Matthew Graham described how a court defines an 'Expert Witness' and gave general advice for engineers or other specialists considering acting as an Expert Witness based on his experience from the perspective of the legal industry. Matthew's presentation provoked a robust audience discussion and a number of questions.

The second guest speaker, Derek Jorgensen explained the process of insurance claim assessment and the importance of being properly briefed on what the client wants from the investigation. Derek used a case study of a damaged retaining wall and house to explain the way insurance claims are assessed, leading the audience to better understanding of the responsibilities of an Expert Witness.

Throughout the seminar, the audience members were attentive and showed genuine interest in the topic. The audience questions and discussion with the speakers indicated a real potential for growth in the forensic and remedial engineering industry over the next few years.

CIRCEA and Engineers Australia have been encouraged by the level of interest shown in this seminar and enquiries from audience members as to how they can be involved in similar forensic seminars and training workshops.

As a result, CIRCEA and EA are now developing a program for future technical seminars, training workshops and practice note publications, together with Engineering Education Australia (EEA).

Upcoming events will be promoted via the Engineers Australia and CIRCEA websites.