SUCCESSFUL PROJECT GOVERNANCE AND CONTROLS SYMPOSIUM IN CANBERRA, AUSTRALIA

By Kym Henderson, Vice President of Global Outreach

The Project Governance and Controls Symposium (PGCS) was held in the Australian national capital, Canberra, at the Australian Defence Force Academy on 6-7th May 2015. With 95 delegates in attendance, the University of New South Wales, Canberra (UNSW Canberra) sponsored event was a huge success featuring a prominent line-up of keynote speakers that provided a range of perspectives from both government and the private sector across the two day program.

The success in delivering such a high quality program this year takes the Symposium to a new level and provides an exciting foundation for the 2016 Symposium, already scheduled for the 11-12th May 2016. Again, the event will be held at Australian Defence Force Academy reflecting the continuing commitment and sponsorship provided by UNSW Canberra.

The Project Governance and Control Symposium is dedicated to improving project performance management in Australasia across both the public and the private sectors, with a significant focus on Australian Federal Government. The 2015 theme "Providing what the project sponsor needs" resonated with delegates and speakers alike.

The quality of the Symposium was a direct reflection of the continuing support from the Australian Department of Defence, but this year enhanced by contributions from the Australian Taxation Office, with keynote speakers including:

- Ms. Roxanne Kelly, Lead of the Australian Department of Defence implementation of the "First Principles" Review. Her presentation addressed the activities of the review committee, the method by which the review was conducted, the rationale for change, and the Australian Federal Government's acceptance of 75 of the 76 recommendations. All of this heralding what will be a significant period of organizational change over the next two years.

- Air Vice Marshal Chris Deeble provided insights into the importance of relationship management as a foundation for delivering performance outcomes, and used his more recent experience as the project manager for the Joint Strike Fighter – Australia program as the case study example. This is currently Australia's largest ever acquisition project – acquiring 76 Joint Strike Fighter aircraft and associated infrastructure for the Royal Australian Air Force at a cost of $15.4 Billion.

- Ms. Belinda Robertson, Assistant Commissioner for Enterprise Portfolio Management at the Australian Taxation office provided some deep insights into how a large government organization has developed and implemented a methodology for aligning a large number of disconnected project ambitions with a clearly articulated set of top level business objectives.

A number of professional associations also provided their views on the challenges, opportunities and initiatives being undertaken by their respective organizations in the project governance and controls space. The Symposium provided a unique opportunity for delegates to hear keynote presentations at the same venue from organizations that generally do not appear on the same program:

- Ms. Yvonne Butler, CEO of the Australian Institute of Project Management;
- Ms. Deb Hein, CEO of the International Centre for Complex Project Management;
- Mr. Steve Wake, Chair of the Board of the British Association for Project Management; and
- Mr. Sean Whitaker, member of the Project Management Institute, Board Volunteer Advisory Committee

Contributing to the diverse perspectives provided during the event, plenary presentations by:

- Mr. David Fox, General Manager of L&A Pressure Welding Pty Ltd (a small specialist manufacturing company based in western Sydney) described the journey of researching as part of a Master's degree and applying an EVM like and Earned Schedule based project controls system to a manufacturing environment. The business benefits and competitive advantage which have been derived were of particular interest; and
- Mr. Valdi Gravitis, currently Director Enterprise Performance and Portfolio Management, in the New South Wales (NSW) state government Office of Finance Services, described the benefits of a project portfolio improvement initiative based on the voluntary implementation of an EVM based project control system in a NSW Government agency.

A number of speakers identified the criticality of "C" level executive ownership as the key to project success and identified that project controls cannot operate effectively without the engagement of senior management. The critical need for frank, fearless and timely reporting of status and issues to enable senior executives to make positive project and portfolio management decisions was also highlighted. Creating a culture where this type of information is not only available, but is accepted and used effectively, is a key issue in delivering high performance results across the project, program and portfolio domains.

The PGCS has attracted positive feedback from many sources, including an article in "The Mandarin" at http://www.themandarin.com.au/33023-project-managers-centrelink-upgrade/?pgnc=1. The article directly quotes keynote speakers at the Symposium in the context of advocacy for project manager and governance engagement from conception through to benefits realization in major public sector projects.

CPM – PGCS COOPERATIVE AGREEMENT

A Cooperative Agreement initially aimed at cross promoting each other's events has been approved by the CPM Governing Board and signed off by both organizations.

CPM has supported the reestablished PGCS as part of our global outreach mission with CPM President, Mr. Gary Troop travelling to Australia in 2013 to keynote and provide much needed support for that event.

The Cooperative Agreement also establishes the framework for CPM and PGCS to pursue other opportunities that are mutually beneficial and to work together on enhancing existing efforts related to our common mission of advancing EVM and other project performance management techniques.

CONCLUSION

CPM has provided active support which has directly contributed to the success of the reestablished PGCS as part of our global outreach mission.

The range of presentations at the PGCS 2015 informed, educated and entertained. All of the slide presentations can be found at the Symposium website: http://www.pgcs.org.au which also features a growing selection of resources to support project managers and project governance and controls specialists at all levels.

An exciting PGCS 2015 has taken place which makes next year's event "a must" for those who want to be at the leading edge of the project management, governance and controls professions in Australia.

Entrance to the PGC Symposium venue at the Australian Defence Force Academy, Canberra

Ms. Roxanne Kelley, Lead of the "First Principles" Implementation making a point during her keynote presentation which outlined the case for the extensive changes which will occur within Australian DoD over the next 2 years.

Air Vice Marshal (2 star) Chris Deeble, Royal Australian Air Force Program Manager, Joint Strike Fighter – Australia responding to a question during his keynote presentation.

Ms. Belinda Robertson, Assistant Commissioner for Enterprise Portfolio Management at the Australian Taxation Office (ATO) describing the journey for developing and implementing a methodology for governing and controlling the projects within the ATO portfolio.

Networking drinks at the Australian Defence Force Academy Officer's Mess