The API Summer School is the pre-eminent Accelerated Development Residential Program in Power Engineering in the southern hemisphere which the API is proud to be able to offer to the energy industry. Every year, API organises an intensive two-week residential program that provides a hands-on learning experience in a first class environment. This year’s program was held at Potters Conference Centre in Nulkaba, Hunter Valley, NSW (pictured right).

The theme of this year’s program focused on “Transitioning to The Future – A Flexible, Agile Industry Adapting to Meet Customer Expectations for the Provision of Energy.

The daily schedule was chock-full with varied blends of different learning styles ranging from lectures, guest presentations, case studies, syndicate work as well as field tours and site visits. The format is designed to allow close interaction amongst the expert speakers/presenters and delegates to promote networking and cross training.

This program was well supported with over 40 expert speakers and industry professionals from all over Australia as well as a few from overseas. Speakers came from various positions ranging from specialists, lecturers, managers to CEOs and were from different sectors of the industry including commissioning, energy retailing, regulation, customer mgmt, asset mgmt, environmental planning, manufacturing, consulting, network utility and renewables.

Pictured left are presenters Georgios Konstantinou (AERI, UNSW) & Andy Wearmouth (Chief Engineer, Verve Energy). We were also very fortunate to host an Industry Senior Executive Forum consisting of Ed Wilson, Peter McIntyre and Rod Howard who shared their insight in to what it takes to become a successful leader in today’s complex and forever dynamic industry.
LEARNING THROUGH SYNDICATE

Each year, facilitators consisting of industry professionals, propose an unsolved case-study along with a current problem/need that the industry is facing. Delegates are asked to join a syndicate group/topic in which they are not currently working in so that they can widen their knowledge and broaden their outlook. Throughout the duration of the Summer School, delegates research their area/topic in order to come up with an effective solution.

This year there were 11 groups of 3-4 delegates with topic areas ranging from transmission, condition monitoring of high voltage insulation, distribution improvements, future grids, PV + EV, demand management & energy efficiency, earthing risks, transmission line design, power system load modeling, and exploration of the challenges relating to earthing standards, specification, type testing and change management.

At the end of the two-week program, delegates turned in a detailed report and gave a 25-minute presentations to explain and share their findings. These presentations were judged by Paul Rainbird (Energex) Mike Zammit (Endeavor Energy) and Kendall Klingaman (API) and were graded on the clarity, engagement and quality of presentation. Although the returning facilitators and judges made remarks as to how they were especially impressed with the quality of presentations this year, there was a stand out group.

Congratulations to Hugh McDonald Bala Shammugam and Adam Ward for winning this year’s “Best Syndicate Presentation Award” presented by David Williams from Engineering Education Australia!

FIELD TOURS & SITE VISITS

API organised various site visits to leading companies within the industry to help delegates gain practical insight into sectors they might not typically know much about. These tours are designed to provide the opportunity for delegates to gain insight, network with industry leaders and increase their overall knowledge. Delegates reported they gained a great amount of value after visiting the following companies.

- AEMO Control Centre, Norwest
- Endeavor Bella Vista Substation
- Earing Power Station
- CSIRO Energy Centre
- AusGrid Charleston Substation

API would like to extend a sincere thank you to the companies listed left who hosted us. We truly appreciate your special efforts and contributions.
It’s not all lectures and study! In order to help break up the learning activities, API provided various team building and social networking events during the evenings. Upon arrival, delegates met for the first time and enjoyed Welcome BBQ, which was then followed by a friendly game of trivia. Syndicates competed against one another for the win. Congratulations to Syndicate #2 Andrew Kunst, Ben Chapman and Peter Butchard for taking the title of the 2015 Trivia Champions!

On Friday February 20th, an indulgent night was spent at Tuscany Wine Estate where the Summer School team enjoyed a relaxing night out with great food. On Saturday, after exploring the AusGrid Charleston Substation and a visit to Newcastle Beach (and an impromptu wild dolphin spectacular), delegates were rewarded with an easygoing night out at the local’s favorite Harrigan’s Irish Pub. While there, the group enjoyed a buffet style feast, cold drinks and live music.

Sunday was a free for all as delegates were encouraged to take advantage of the wide variety of local Hunter Valley activities. API provided a bus tour to the Hunter Valley Gardens and another for wine tasting which seemed to be popular. Fifteen delegates took advantage of their surroundings and relished learning about and tasting the local wines all while enjoying the beautiful scenic views along the way.

The final night’s Celebration Dinner was spent at Hope Estate where upon arrival the group was lead behind the scenes and shown where the wine makers mixed their wines. They were able to taste straight from the barrels before arriving on the outside veranda overlooking the valley where they enjoyed pre dinner canapés. Dinner soon followed with a short farewell speech from Mike before Kendall and David announced the much anticipated syndicate award!

The delegates also got involved with rewarding sport competitions. Whether the group was kicking around a soccer ball or watching their colleagues compete API organized a boules tournament as well as a tennis tournament that started with 8 teams. Matches were hosted in the evenings after the conference. Advancing across the bracket each day, “The AusNet Team” (Francis Lirios and Terry Jong) stayed strong and claimed the championship game on the final day! It was a great way for delegates to communicate and network outside the typical work environment all while exercising at the same time.

Congratulations to “The AusNet Team” Francis Lirios and Terry Jong for earning the title of “2015 API Doubles Tennis Tournament Champions!”
85+% of Participants rated the personal value of program to their overall career development “Excellent/Good” in terms of refreshing/update knowledge and broadening understanding of best practice in power engineering.

81.6% rated the number of lectures about right, 94.7% rated the coverage about right and 97.4% rated the treatment about right.

71% thought it was about the right number with 70+% rating the value/interest as good or excellent.

84% obtained good to high value out of the Syndicate Work.

84+% rated the social events enjoyable and felt they strongly enhanced the networking opportunities between delegates.

68.4% rated the overall Summer School program as “Excellent”, with 28.9% rating it “Good Value”.

100% of delegates responded they are prepared to recommend the Program/Summer School to their colleagues/managers.

“This program will help you reach the next level in your career. Great learning, great opportunities and great networking. It really is a “must do!”

“The API Summer School provided an excellent opportunity to network, gain a big picture industry perspective and advance insight into multiple organisations. It has truly been an empowering experience.”

“The API Summer School attracts the highest caliber of speakers in the industry, who have both expertise in subject matter and a vision. The delegates also are of the highest quality. Its is a journey that should inspire most, if not all, participants to be industry visionaries.”

“The API summer school is a fantastic opportunity to learn from some of the top academic lecturers and senior industry managers in the country, while also networking with other power engineers. I consider it to be a career highlight and will always look back fondly on my experience.”

“The API Summer School is a definite must-attend for professionals involved in the Power Industry. The lectures, tours and talks will definitely build on your kit bag of tools which you can draw upon as you progress through your career. The two weeks is well worth the effort and the API personnel are able to make it fun. It's like going back to school but this time you're well aware that it's going to lead you to the path to success!”

“This program has given me a broaden range of knowledge (existing and future) to enable me to go further in my organisation. This is very essential for my career development. In fact, the level of knowledge that I obtained from both industry and academic lectures in these two weeks is almost equivalent and more than what I have learned from university over the four years period.”

“API Summer School provides an excellent opportunity to take a step back from your daily role and get a big picture view of our industry and the challenges ahead. It has given me some great ideas that I will be taking back to my role in our business to tackle these challenges. It was also a fantastic networking opportunity that I have not experienced in any other training or conference event. I highly recommend the API Summer School!”