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 Ramada Surfside Hotel & Conference Centre in Maroochydore, Sunshine Coast, QLD.

The theme of this year’s program was about promoting the importance of agility, innovation and being proactive in this constantly changing industry. The program focused on "Transitioning to the future - An agile innovative energy industry facilitating the changing needs of customers, community and shareholders".

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

This program was well attended with a total of 36 delegates. This year the program successfully hit a record number of female attendees with 11/36 being female. The program also benefited from two overseas delegates from the Solomon Islands.

The program was well supported with over 40 expert speakers and industry professionals from all over Australia. 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.

We were also very fortunate to host an Industry Senior Executive Forum consisting of Peter McIntyre (TransGrid), Merryn York (Powerlink) and Terry Effeney (Energex) who shared their valuable insight in to what it takes to become a successful leader in today’s complex and forever dynamic industry.

API is excited to announce that the 2017 Summer School Program will be held in Adelaide! Dates: 19 February - 3 March, 2017. Detailed information will be updated to the website soon.
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 conduct thorough research within their area/topic in order to come up with an effective & realistic solution.

This year there were 8 groups consisting of 4-5 delegates with topic areas ranging from Simulating NEM Trading and Electricity Futures, Multi-Vendor Interoperability and Fault Location in Overhead Transmission Lines, Productivity & Management of Aged Electricity Grid Assets, Distribution Network Improvement Project, Commercial Scale PV and BESS Systems, Demand Management & Energy Efficiency, Voltage Control on Distribution Feeder with High PV Penetration, and Effective Network Augmentation using Probabilistic Planning.

At the end of the two-week program, delegates turned in a detailed report and gave a 25-minute presentation to explain and share their findings. These presentations were graded by a diverse panel of 4 judges and were assessed on the clarity, engagement and quality of the presentation. This particular group of delegates especially impressed the judges as creativity levels shot through the roof. Each group did an outstanding job at engaging the audience and relaying technical information in an innovative way.

Congratulations to Trevor Lim (AEMO), Paul McNab (HyrdTas), Paul Davis (TransGrid), Woan Yi Hong (SA Power Networks), & Sabina Roshan (Western Power) for winning the 2016 “Best Syndicate Presentation Award” and $500 toward continuing professional development presented by 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 a range of different sectors in which 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.

While visiting Ergon Energy Modular Substation Construction Facility (pictured center), delegates were guided on a field tour and given insight into the modular manufacturing capabilities and innovative UAV equipment/systems and application. Delegates reported they gained a great amount of value after visiting Ergon Energy Manufacturing Facility, Noja Power Switchgear Factory & Energex Fisherman’s Island Substation.

API would like to extend a sincere thank you to the Ergon Energy, Noja Power and Energex for sharing your facility us. We truly appreciate your contributions & continued support.
NETWORKING & SOCIAL EVENTS

It’s not all lectures and study! 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 a Welcome BBQ, which was then followed by a friendly game of trivia. Syndicates competed against one another for the win.

Congratulations to Syndicate #8 Ian Askill, Cosette Francis, Sally Bell, Simon Hirshbein & Shane Venning for taking the title of the 2015 Trivia Champions!

On Friday, an enjoyable night was spent in Caloundra where the Summer School team enjoyed a relaxing sunset cruise along the Pumice-stone Passage followed by dinner at Sandbar Cafe. On Saturday, after squeezing in a few hours of syndicate work, delegates were able to relax and unwind at Noosa Beach. Delegates were then rewarded with an easygoing night out at the Noosa Surf Club for Dinner. There are even rumors that there was a bit of karaoke at the end of the night!

Sunday was a free for all as delegates were encouraged to take advantage of the wide variety of local attractions. API provided a bus tour to the famous Australia Zoo, Kart Track, Twin Waters Golf Course, and Maroochydore beaches (which was especially popular). The group was even able to squeeze in an early morning hike up Mt. Coolum to get a bit of fresh air and enjoy the beautiful coastal/hinterland views.

The final night’s Celebration Dinner was spent at Ebb Restaraunt on the waterfront. Delegates enjoyed canapes and drinks on the outside veranda overlooking the Maroochydore River. Dinner soon followed and after Mike gave a short farewell speech and Phil and Christina from Engineering Education Australia announced the much anticipated syndicate awards! The team was taken by surprise when the delegates gave a farewell speech of their own and presented Mike with a token (Roar Jersey, Mike’s favourite) of their appreciation. What a treat!

The delegates also got involved in various sport throughout the conference. Whether the group was swimming laps in the pool, cycling the coastal suburbs, jogging along the beach or participating in the infamous API organised annual tennis tournament, everyone was glad to get in some physical activity. Matches were hosted in the evenings after the conference. Advancing across the bracket each day, Luke Robinson (Western Power) and Dan Francis (Essential Energy) stayed strong and claimed the championship game on the final day! It was a great way for delegates to intermingle and network outside the professional work environment all while exercising at the same time.

Congratulations to Luke Robinson and Dan Francis for earning the title of “2016 API Tennis Tournament Champions!”
94% of Participants rated the personal value of program to their overall career development “Excellent/Good” in terms of “refreshing/updating knowledge and broadening understanding of best practice in power engineering”.

82% rated the number of lectures about right, 91% rated the coverage about right and 100% rated the treatment about right.

94% thought the number of site visits was about right with 92% rating the value/interest as okay to excellent.

91% obtained good to high value out of the Syndicate Work.

100% rated the social events enjoyable and felt they strongly enhanced the networking opportunities between other delegates and organisations.

79% rated the overall Summer School program as “Excellent”, with 18% rating it “Good Value”

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

"I would highly recommend the API summer school as it provides an excellent overview of the challenges being faced by the power industry. The contacts made from other areas of the industry will prove invaluable and provided an excellent comparison between businesses and roles."

"The API Summer School is truly an experience that you will remember for the rest of your life, providing exceptional career development opportunities to aspiring engineers through engaging presentations from leading industry professionals & researchers and networking with both presenters and other likeminded delegates, all within a fun and relaxed environment promoted by the organisers."

"The API Summer School delivers the latest technical and industry development education, through top industry leaders in a fun and simulating environment. You will learn, network and be thrown into the deep end with the syndicate work, in the end you will come out as a polished engineering professional. API SS is a must for experienced engineers."

"The API Summer School is a highly recommended program that has helped me gain a greater understanding of Australia’s electricity market and technical practices, and is a fantastic networking opportunity with other professionals in the power industry. Well worth it!"

"The API Summer School provides a great forum for broadening your horizons on the current and future challenges facing the electricity industry. It also provides and excellent networking opportunity through a good mix of work & social settings."

"You will never get such a broad and comprehensive look at the entire industry in any other forum which will change entirely how you approach your current work and career outlook. Be prepared for a lot of hard work but also some good times."