



Closing Address
Thursday, May 30 – approx. 4pm.

Andrew McConville
APPEA Chief Executive

Members, associates, corporate partners, special guests, Ladies and Gentlemen,

What an exciting and thought-provoking few days it's been here at my first APPEA Conference... *<include highlights commentary, new learnings, meetings, engagements, partnerships, media interviews and opportunities >*

So as we close the APPEA Conference for 2019 it's time for honest reflection.

The scope and size of the opportunity – for securing Australia's sustainable energy future, for being a vital engine of economic growth, for delivering better environmental outcomes and for being part a brighter future – are enormous if we can work together to get this right.

But getting it right will as much be about how we engage as it will be about the story we have to tell.

So if I can indulge you for a few minutes, I would like to outline the path forward for how, in the coming months and years, we can effectively Navigate the Future.

If the events of the last few weeks have shown us anything, it is that we must respect the leadership role of government but be prepared to use our voice *and* our influence ...

The recent Federal election campaign saw a much sharper focus on energy and resources issues than we have seen previously – some of it well informed and well intentioned ... and some of it perhaps less so.

But as the dust settles, the opportunity is now before us for genuine leadership. We will be thanked by nobody if we don't take that opportunity to deliver stable energy and climate policies and to achieve a growing internationally competitive Australian oil and gas industry.

And in doing so, we must not forget to champion the critical role natural resources play in underpinning our economic well-being and that hundreds of thousands of Australian jobs rely on a reliable, affordable supply of oil and gas.

To do this, we must more consistently engage with governments, policy makers, regulators and the community to do all we can to maintain access to the nation's oil and gas resources.

So, I am committed to ensuring we have the right plans in place to respond to any changes that may occur, and opportunities which may present, so we can move forward with our industry agenda.

Strengthening our political relationships and strongly advocating our policy positions with the returned Government will be a key priority for me as APPEA's Chief Executive and for the entire APPEA team.

We must seek to inform and support—but not replace—the responsibility of governments to decide public policy. It doesn't mean we should be silent if government is not acting in the public interest.

And so, we must be prepared and able to all deliver the same message ... we must consistently communicate ... consistently.

We must seek public policy outcomes that effectively address societal challenges because society's perception is our reality. Our aim must be to reach solutions that address the underlying problem, not the political fix, and we must aim to have consensus backing.

In short we must be part of the solution not part of the problem.

This may sometimes involve accepting public policy initiatives that could be counter-intuitive in the short-term, because in the long run they are going to help solve the problem and maintain our longer-term legitimacy.

In the world today, we have no option but to try and achieve outcomes that are consistent with key universal standards, such as United Nations Sustainable Development Goals and the UN Global Compact.

We need to continue to drive ambitious action through innovation to address social and environment challenges, including climate change.

We also understand that community support for the oil and gas industry relies on public confidence in operating standards and the manner in which the industry is regulated. We must listen and respond to the community's questions and concerns.

We should not be and are not, against strong regulation in our industry. Good regulation is vital to reducing risk and increasing community acceptance. But we must not stand for uncertainty nor accept unreasonable levels of sovereign risk.

We must be inclusive. Traditional lobbying is done between government and individual companies or trade associations. But advocacy for more ambitious public policy is more effective when it is done on a multi-stakeholder basis.

Public policy outcomes are going to be more impactful if all groups affected have had a say and provide a meaningful contribution in shaping them.

So we must become better at collaborating and creating partnerships that support mutual long term goals. We must make friends before we need them and we need to do the government's work for it in bringing parties together – going forward to government with solutions not problems.

Put another way, we must get more reputation credits in the bank. We must be prepared to consider and embrace active joint advocacy with NGOs, other civil society and industry groups, as challenging as this might be.

In my time in agriculture I saw it time and again in Europe and the United States, where unlikely partnerships between industries, companies and NGOs can have more impact on influencing policymakers, as each can compensate for the weaknesses of the other.

Drawing on this background, I'm eager to proactively engage with community groups, with NGOs and with the media to tell our story, highlighting the huge contribution oil and gas makes to Australia's economic prosperity.

In doing so we must ensure there's a more balanced, sensible and factual debate around energy, especially in terms of regulation and policies affecting this industry.

We have to work harder telling our story with the right narrative – the way we engage and the way we campaign – and be prepared to learn from those who in the past have been successful against us. Correcting the imbalance means the industry must do more to get the public debate back on an even keel.

Governments can often distrust NGOs as being purely ideologically motivated and can equally distrust business for being purely profit-motivated. Joint advocacy can deal with these legitimacy questions.

We must also be transparent and truthful. All too often, lobbying happens behind closed doors, and the worst kind of lobbying is characterised by misinformation and misdirection.

Public policy outcomes will always be more effective if people have confidence when they know what different groups are calling for and when they can trust the basis on which these positions have been developed.

We must invest to be capable of advocating with robust evidence as our base, but with community engagement as our goal – APPEA's Brighter Program is a great example of this

Brighter is helping our industry connect with the wider community, highlighting our contribution to contemporary lifestyles, regional development and the transition to a cleaner energy future.

I urge every APPEA member to support this unique campaign which needs everyone's buy-in.

But, of course, we have to aim higher and do more. We have to integrate through all channels and across all audiences.

We must be coherent and consistent in the positions for which we advocate and the performance that we deliver – these must be congruent because our reputation as companies and as an industry is a function of both perception and performance and if either is zero, the result is zero!.

For this we need a clear, simple narrative – and to embrace thought leadership - that reaches the intended audience with messages that matter and mean something to them. The WIIFM principle – what is in it for me, rings more true now, than it ever has.

But importantly, we must not and cannot be all things to all people.

So we need to double-down on just a few messages, a few key policies and make sure we deliver against them.

Let's make no apologies that we are here to achieve the best outcomes for our industry and in doing that, we can achieve the best outcomes for society. For the two are, and should be, completely aligned and in sync

As Martin Luther King said: "Whatever affects one directly, affects all indirectly."

We must also have the right skills and capabilities.

A great engineer may not be a great communicator and a great communicator is rarely a great engineer, but we must have both.

Lobbying to persuade governments to introduce new regulatory measures and reforms requires a different kind of skill set to engaging with NGOs, or the media, or traditional landowners, local businesses or farmers.

To conclude, I'm so delighted to be part of the oil and gas sector – we are an essential energy-providing industry for all Australians, businesses and export customers

We're now entering a new political environment where we have an important opportunity to drive change and reform through engagement and collaboration.

We need to embrace a new era of engagement with government and the full gamut of our stakeholders – including those who we haven't engaged with before. We must be prepared to use our voice and influence.

I am delighted that we have a vision and future direction but this needs 'buy-in' from all members and stakeholders – we all have a responsibility and a role to play. It is a vision and a direction that we must all embrace, and with it the responsibility we all have to be advocates for our industry.

I echo and fully support the comments by our APPEA Chair during the opening plenary: There is a new sense of optimism and a reform agenda emerging.

And the time is right!

Within APPEA we are building the roadmap for success and so for us, there's never going to be any better than right now. And looking to the future – the stakes for Australia and for our industry could not be higher ... we need to all work together towards "*navigating*" a least-cost transition to cleaner energy and energy security, for the "*future*".

My Mum is 82 and starting to ail, but she is an incredibly strong soul and has been a tower of strength for my brother, sister and me since we lost my Dad some 35 years ago.

Each time I visit her in Armidale, I am struck by this and by a quote which, for the last 25 years, has been posted in prime position on the kitchen fridge from Sarah Henderson, author of "From Strength to Strength",

"Don't wait for a light to appear at the end of the tunnel, stride down there and light the bloody thing yourself!"

Let's make sure our industry is not left standing in the dark.

APPEA is 'your' association and we're always here to help you, provide support and ensure your oil and gas businesses thrives.

My door is always open and my phone is always on.

(ends)