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Articles of a newsworthy or technical nature are always welcome for IRSE NEWS. Members should forward their contributions to one of the Editors listed above.

If you have a view about something you've read in IRSE NEWS, or any aspect of railway signalling, telecommunications or related disciplines, please write to the editor at irsenews@irse.org.

The first Presidential Paper for this year was presented in July in Brisbane as part of the Australasian Section's Technical Meeting. This thought provoking presentation "An engineer's journey to achieving conscious competence" by Cassandra Gash (on p2 of this issue of IRSE NEWS), while looking at the Australian context raised an issue worthy of broader consideration i.e. qualifications on their own do not directly translate to competence.

One State in Australia, Queensland, has a Professional Engineering Act that requires "that professional engineering services in Queensland or for Queensland, are carried out by a Registered Professional Engineer of Queensland (RPEQ), or alternatively by a person who carries out the services under the direct supervision of a RPEQ who is ultimately responsible."

Some of you may be familiar with the term 'soundness' or in engineering terms 'fit for purpose' but have you wondered whether the Competency Management System or Licensing Scheme used by your company adequately addresses non-technical things like ethical commitment.

Depending on your role in the profession and your level of responsibility there are different ways to assess ethical attitude. Some organisations recognise that demonstrable technical competence is not in itself sufficient to ensure sound decision making, especially when under pressure, say from a hard deadline like a commissioning. One way of determining how a person performs under pressure is by use of an interview panel and posing hypothetical scenarios that include ethical dilemmas.

An alternative approach is to require a higher level of professional registration for engineering decisions, like in Queensland. The RPEQ assessment system goes beyond log book type evidence and requires endorsement by three referees (peers), who themselves must be of similar standing as the applicant.

My thoughts are it would be a good time to refresh your memory of the requirements of the IRSE Code of Professional Conduct which can be found at irse.info/nip0m.

Peter Symons, President IRSE



A Class 221 Super Voyager approaching Crewe in the UK displaying its roof top radio antennas. Train radio antenna design will become more complex as radio technology evolves and reliable high bandwidth radio communications will be essential for both train control and customer purposes. Radio engineers will need to be involved in all the design stages of a train.

Photo Paul Darlington.

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