



## **Society of Automotive Engineers Australasia**

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### **SAE-A initiates national gaseous fuels working group**

**The Society of Automotive Engineers – Australasia (SAE-A) will form a working party representing stakeholders in the gaseous fuels sector to explore the potential for increased use of Australia’s abundant gaseous fuel reserves.**

Launched following the Society’s second annual Gaseous Fuels Technology Conference held in Melbourne recently, the SAE-A will invite industry experts from academia, business and government to independently review the information available about liquid petroleum gas (LPG), compressed natural gas (CNG), liquid natural gas (LNG) and other gaseous fuels.

SAE-A Executive Director Max Chanter said the fuels debate is influenced by financial interests, each claiming to offer the best solution. “We need an independent party to review the claims and present the information in an unbiased way. We need to separate fact from fiction to ensure that key decisions influencing the long term viability of Australia’s economy and lifestyle are made on the basis of the best information available,” he said.

“The SAE-A will engage with industry stakeholders to gather information for the working group. This nation has huge gas reserves. In the public interest, we want to help ensure that the right policy decisions are made to gain the greatest benefit for Australia from these natural assets,” said Max Chanter.

#### **Increasing oil imports**

The common thread linking all presentations at the SAE-A gaseous fuels conference was that Australia has abundant gas reserves for the foreseeable future. Speakers emphasised that these reserves can be used to not only reduce transportation costs and emissions, but also reduce the nation’s dependence on imported oil.

Alex Dronoff, LNG General Manager of BOC, was among the many presenters to draw attention to Australia’s growing dependence on imported oil, and the logic in reducing that dependence through greater application of the nation’s gas resources. He said that by 2030 about 80% of Australia’s oil will be imported and that most diesel oil is now imported. He predicted that rising costs for imported oil will drive new applications of gas, such as the syndicate of 120 heavy vehicle owners in Tasmania that are investing in a cooperative gas venture to fuel their vehicles.

Building on the message he delivered at the 2008 Gaseous Fuels Technical Conference, RMIT Professor and automotive industry consultant, Dr Laurie Sparke said Australia will face an oil supply crunch in four to eight years as world economies return to growth and compete for declining crude supplies. He predicted that Australia will lose access to oil because it does not have long term contracts, it is remote from major supplies and it is politically and militarily a small player on the global stage. Following the recent National Energy Security Assessment, he said his view is that the Federal Government has not recognised the seriousness of Australia’s oil supply situation. Dr Laurie Sparke advocated conversion of existing and future vehicles to gas.

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## **Pressing the gas pedal**

While many conference presentations highlighted the benefits of gaseous fuels in terms of the environment and the economy, speakers also recognised that past efforts to promote these fuels to users had met with mixed success.

Tony Fitzgerald, Managing Director of Orbital Gas Products, said that the reputation of gas would increase as vehicle manufacturers fitted gas as original equipment to more and more cars and trucks. He said that of the 110,000 LPG vehicles introduced in 2008, factory fitted system represented only about 15,000 units. By 2015, he expects 175,000 LPG cars will be sold, with about 80,000 of them factory fitted.

Rare Consulting Managing Director, Mark McKenzie, said that natural gas will give Australia both emissions improvement and more internationally competitive transport costs, as rising fuel prices become a greater proportion of overall product delivery costs.

A number of speakers highlighted the fact that in response to growing numbers of enquiries from freight transport fleet operators, there was a significant increase in the number of natural gas vehicles demonstrated at the recent Brisbane Truck Show. Heavy vehicle producers Mack, Kenworth, Isuzu and Iveco all featured compressed or liquefied natural gas vehicles at the show.

Tim Littlehales, Strategic Resource Manager of Boral Limited, presented a case study about a fleet of concrete delivery trucks that is successfully converting to gas with a reduction in both fuel cost and emissions.

Melbourne University Professor Harry Watson highlighted the advances in gas technology, such as ultra lean burn, direct injection, jet ignition, turbo charging and use of the Miller cycle engine design, which can boost performance from gas, while helping to reduce CO2 emissions by up to 50%, compared to present petrol engines.

## **Contribute to the working group**

Max Chanter said the second annual Gaseous Fuels Technical Conference helped to progress the debate about applying Australia's gas reserves more effectively to the nation's transport needs. "We thank all who contributed to the conference, in particular conference partners – the Victorian Government and BOC," said Max Chanter.

Industry organisations and individuals interested to contribute to the gaseous fuels working group are invited to forward an expression of interest to the Society at [executive@sae-a.com.au](mailto:executive@sae-a.com.au).

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**Photo caption SAE-AGFTCPanelB1.jpg:** *Following its Gaseous Fuels Technical Conference in Melbourne recently, the SAE-A initiated the formation of a national gaseous fuels working group. On the expert panel at the conference were (left to right) Alizera Komsary, Iranian Transport Ministry; Dr Hien Ly, CFS International; Kevin Sansome, Creative Solutions; Richard Marshall, GM Holden; Dr Laurie Sparke, RMIT University; Tony Fitzgerald, Orbital Gas Products; and Brad Lawson, Wesfarmers Kleenheat.*

## **About SAE-A**

The Society of Automotive Engineers – Australasia (SAE-A) promotes excellence in automotive engineering and is committed to the protection and betterment of the environment. Its members are engineers, scientists and technicians working across the entire spectrum of the Australasian automotive industry – vehicle and component manufacturers; vehicle service, repair and aftermarket sectors; importers, insurance services, fuel suppliers, government authorities, and students. SAE-A is a Council member of the International Federation of Automotive Engineering Societies, and is linked to SAE-International and the International Pacific Conference on Automotive Engineering.

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