

IEEE

New Zealand Central Section Annual General Meeting

Chair's Report for 2020

Overview

The IEEE New Zealand Central Section has had a different year in 2020, with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic impacting on all Section activities, especially during the first half of the year. Distinguished Lecturers from around the world were unable to travel and many Conferences and other global events were cancelled or converted into virtual events. Local events were also constrained by COVID-19 restrictions on the numbers of people who could gather in person. The in-person activity was compensated by a greatly increased volume of virtual events, some of which could be accessed at reasonable times of the day, which kept some members involved in the activities of the IEEE.

Another downside of the COVID-19 pandemic was the reduction in membership across the Section due to some members losing their jobs and students having a disrupted year of studies. Our Membership Development Coordinator has prepared a development plan for 2021, so let us hope that 2021 offers a more fruitful year for all IEEE members and especially those in our Section.

In 2020 we did again manage to hold our two most prestigious events, being the Postgraduate Symposium and the Joint Institutions Breakfast Seminar. The first of these events is primarily focussed on our postgraduate student members, while the latter is focussed on our industry collaboration. Both events were held a little later in the year than normal and were configured to satisfy COVID-19 restrictions. Even so both events were once again well received by members. More details on these events are provided below.

I would like to pass on my sincere thanks to all those members who helped to organise and support the reduced range of activities undertaken by the Central Section during this year. Many people have contributed to this programme of activities and it is this volunteering spirit that makes the Section successful.

I also wish to take this opportunity to wish all members of the New Zealand Central Section a happy Festive Season and hope you enjoy some relaxing holidays with friends and family. It

will be good to welcome in 2021 with renewed vigour. Hopefully 2021 will offer many more opportunities for us all to maximise the value from our IEEE membership.

Administration

A total of 9 administrative meetings were held during 2020, with the final administration meeting of the year being this AGM. The list below gives the meeting dates, number of attendees and a reference to the associated minutes:

Date	Type	No. of Attendees	Minutes	Comments
4/03/2020	Committee	11	https://ewh.ieee.org/r10/nzc/Archive/2020/IEEE%20NZCS%20Committee%202020-03-04.pdf	Standard Skype Committee Meeting
1/04/2020	Committee	9	https://ewh.ieee.org/r10/nzc/Archive/2020/IEEE%20NZCS%20Committee%202020-04-01.pdf	Standard Skype Committee Meeting
6/05/2020	Committee	8	https://ewh.ieee.org/r10/nzc/Archive/2020/IEEE%20NZCS%20Committee%202020-05-06.pdf	Standard Skype Committee Meeting
3/06/2020	Committee	9	https://ewh.ieee.org/r10/nzc/Archive/2020/IEEE%20NZCS%20Committee%202020-06-03.pdf	Standard Skype Committee Meeting
1/07/2020	Committee	10	https://ewh.ieee.org/r10/nzc/Archive/2020/IEEE%20NZCS%20Committee%202020-07-01.pdf	Standard Skype Committee Meeting
5/08/2020	Committee	14	https://ewh.ieee.org/r10/nzc/Archive/2020/IEEE%20NZCS%20Committee%202020-08-05.pdf	Standard Skype Committee Meeting with focus on Postgraduate Presentation Symposium
2/09/2020	Committee	13	https://ewh.ieee.org/r10/nzc/Archive/2020/IEEE%20NZCS%20Committee%202020-09-02.pdf	Standard Skype Committee Meeting
21/10/2020	Committee	8		Extraordinary meeting to prepare for AGM
17/12/2020	AGM			Annual General meeting

The website provides comprehensive details of the items on the agenda and their discussion outcomes in the form of minutes. They are accessible from the Committee page of our website.

My thanks go to our active group of committee members:

- Xiang Gui,
- Steven Le Moan,
- Yi Mei,
- Donald Bailey,

- Richard Harris,
- Abhipray Paturkar,
- Ramesh Rayudu,
- Gourab Sen Gupta,
- Mengjie Zhang,
- Kanwal Zaida,
- Bing Xue,
- Chanjief Chandrakumar,
- Bach Nguyen Hoai,
- Fangfang Zhang,
- Sridhar Pulikanti,
- Nurul Sarkar.

My special thanks go to Richard Harris who has done a tremendous job keeping the IEEE NZCS website up to date and vibrant, even given his personal challenges with ill health.

[Concur Expense Claim Process](#)

On a specific administrative note, this year the IEEE Headquarters introduced the Concur Expense Claim process at the Section level. It has been progressively released across the Headquarters and Regions during 2019 and 2020 was the year for the Sections to adopt. As Chair, I have been engaged in learning about this new process since early September and have found it to be well designed for the USA, Canada, and a few other Sections where the local currency can be used, but for New Zealand, in its current form, it is highly problematic.

As a pre-requisite, I have opened a Concentration Bank Account for the New Zealand Central Section, which is essential for the Concur Expense claim process to work. I have also registered myself with a personal Western Union beneficiary account so that I can receive payments from the Concentration Bank Account. Our Treasurer has transferred a nominal sum of USD330 into the Concentration Bank Account, again to enable the process to work.

After some difficulty, the money finally made its way into the Concentration Bank account and I have been able to prepare a report to this effect. Unfortunately, as predicted, the foreign exchange transaction between the two Banks cost around 10% of the total value of the transaction. The amount currently available for use in the Concentration Bank account is USD305. These and many more issues have been explored by myself in conjunction with headquarters staff.

Fundamentally the full Concur Expense process has not been fully tested in all situations involving foreign currency transactions and for the New Zealand Central Section represents a costly and backward step in financial management. I have made it very clear to IEEE headquarters that the New Zealand Central Section will not be using the Expense Reimbursement process until such time as it can deliver cost effective financial transactions with the efficiency of our current processes.

Affinity Groups

WIE Activities

The WIE affinity group was reformed earlier this year with formal notification on 6 October 2020 and now has a strong committee to provide leadership. A program of activities is being planned. Financial support has been committed by the Section.

The WIE group has undertaken the following activities during 2020:

- Provision of support for the Massey and University of Victoria in Wellington student branches for the holding of their Postgraduate Presentation Symposium (see below),
- Participation in the Joint Institutions Breakfast Seminar (see below).
- Participation in a t-shirt design competition hosted by Association for Women in Sciences (AWIS) for women in STEM (Science Technology Engineering and Math).

Kanwal, our WIE Chair won the t-shirt competition with her design – congratulations.

YP Activities

A new committee has been launched to support the YP group. The committee is in the process of planning activities post the COVID lock down periods. Financial support has been committed by the Section.

Three events have been supported by the Young Professional team to date in 2020 as follows:

- Provision of support for the Massey and University of Victoria in Wellington student branches for the holding of their Postgraduate Presentation Symposium (see below),
- Participation in the Joint Institutions Breakfast Seminar (see below),
- On 17 November The IEEE New Zealand Central Section Young Professionals group held an event entitled “**Transitioning from Academia to Industry**” which explored the necessary skills and strategies to smoothly move out of an academic (university) environment and into a career within the industry. Following the panel discussion, pizza was provided to support networking for the 30 participants.

Student Branches

Student branches are operational at both Massey University in Palmerston North and Victoria University of Wellington in Wellington. On 29 August, these two branches combined with the Young Professionals to hold their annual Postgraduate Presentation Symposium. There were presentations by 27 postgraduate students from across both campuses during the day and awards were made to the best presenter and runner up on the day. Four highly commended mentions were also made. This event costs around NZD1000 which was funded by the Section. The Section committee considers this to be an excellent use of the R10 incentive program funds.

The Victoria University of Wellington Student Branch also participated in the Joint Institutions Breakfast Seminar.

Other events are being planned by the student branches, but the COVID-19 conditions have constrained events during 2020.

Summary of Section and Chapter Events

The program of professional activities has been constrained by COVID-19 conditions which have applied throughout 2020. The organization of events has been challenging while working under the ever-changing NZ COVID-19 Alert Levels.

The first event planned for Section participation in the new year was the Region 10 Meeting which was to be held in Vietnam at the beginning of March 2020. Unfortunately, this event had to be cancelled due to COVID-19 travel constraints. A virtual event was subsequently held a few weeks later, but this was a poor substitute for the planned in person event due to the long periods required in front of a screen and the less than ideal participation hours due to time zone differences. This was an early lesson that virtual events can be useful but need to be structured to enable participants to have a good experience.

The tri-annual Sections Congress was the second international event that the Section was to participate in during 2020. Again, this event was cancelled as an in-person event and then re-scheduled as a virtual event. The lessons learned from the Region 10 Meeting were implemented with the virtual event being held over 2 weeks with 1-2-hour sessions and with most sessions being scheduled twice at different times to better accommodate time zone variations for participants. This approach worked better for many participants but involved a commitment of time over the two-week period that was hard to sustain amongst usual daily routines.

The major professional event which is held annually is the Joint Institutions Breakfast Seminar. This year the event was held later than usual on 14 October 2020 due to COVID-19. The size of the event was also constrained by COVID-19 conditions. However, given these constraints we managed to hold a very well received event at the Wellesley Boutique Hotel (our usual venue) with 28 people in attendance distributed as follows:

IEEE	14
IET	6
ENZ	5
Visitors	3
Total	28

Our speaker for this event was Andrew Rushworth who is Managing Director of Zero Emission Vehicles Limited. Andrew kept the audience highly engaged with both his presentation and subsequent Q&A session. The cost for this event is distributed between the attendees and

each of the three participating Institutions which resulted in a cost of under NZD300 for IEEE NZCS. This is an excellent event for sharing between institutions and for engagement with industry.

Chapter Activities

There are currently three chapters directly associated with our Section:

- Joint Chapter in Signal Processing and Information Theory,
- Power and Energy Society Chapter,
- Computational Intelligence Chapter.

In addition to the above chapters that are directly affiliated with their respective IEEE Societies, our Section is actively involved in National (New Zealand) Chapters affiliated with other major IEEE Societies including:

- IEEE Communications Society,
- IEEE Instrumentation and Measurement Society,
- IEEE Robotics and Automation.

Many of these groups have had activities curtailed during 2020.

Communications Society Joint Chapter Events

The Communications Chapter has run two virtual events in 2020 through to the end of October. These events are as follows and more details can be found on the Section website:

- 1st IEEE Communications Society (ComSoc) Distinguished Lecturer (DL) Virtual Lecture organised by the IEEE Joint NZ North, South, and Central ComSoc Chapter with Professor Mohammed Atiquzzaman (University of Oklahoma), USA as the speaker on the topic of Connecting Space Assets to the Internet: Challenges and Solutions, held on Wednesday 16 September 2020 via Zoom with free registration.
- 2nd IEEE Communications Society (ComSoc) Distinguished Lecturer (DL) Virtual Lecture organised by the IEEE Joint NZ North, South, and Central ComSoc Chapter with Professor Arumugam Nallanathan, (Queen Mary University of London), UK as the speaker on the topic of Artificial Intelligence in Massive IoT Networks, held on Wednesday 28 October 2020 as a Zoom Meeting with free registration.

Unfortunately, the New Zealand Wireless Workshop which was to be held in Wellington in 2020 was cancelled due to the COVID-19 conditions applying at the time of the scheduled event.

Conferences

The IEEE Central Section, as part of the IEEE Communication Society in New Zealand, annually supports the international conference now known as ITNAC. Last year it was held in Auckland at the AUT University premises. This year the conference returns to Australia and

was held in Melbourne with assistance from RMIT University from 25-27 November, largely in a virtual format. The next NZ version of this conference is expected to be held in 2022.

On 25-27 November 2020 the 35th Conference on Image and Vision Computing New Zealand was held at Victoria University of Wellington. It supported both physical and virtual presence. Image and Vision Computing New Zealand (IVCNZ) is New Zealand's premier academic conference on all aspects of computer vision, image processing, computer graphics, virtual and augmented reality, visualization, and HCI applications related to these fields.

In 2021 New Zealand is hosting the Region 10 Tencon 2021 Conference in Auckland. The New Zealand Central Section has made a commitment to assist with hosting this conference in December 2021.