ITE-ANZ Section President

Nicholas Szwed, P.E., MEngSc, MITE (M)
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In celebration of its 90th anniversary, ITE is recognizing each of its District Administrators throughout the year in a series of profiles. Each month this column will also feature historical facts and figures on the various Districts, including important dates and people throughout their history.

The Australia and New Zealand (ITE-ANZ) Section of ITE is a unique entity in the organization—the sole Section in ITE’s Global District. This small but mighty group of transportation professionals is gaining strength and numbers annually due to the dedication of its leadership and the increased engagement of its younger members. Unlike ITE’s other Districts, the Global District does not have a District Administrator. But, luckily, they do have Nick Szwed, P.E., MEngSc, MITE (M).

Nick has been an ITE member for 31 years and has served as ITE-ANZ president for more than six. “I found transport subjects at university more interesting than others and went on to do research into freeway merging,” he tells ITE Journal. “I started my career in the traffic engineering department of the state road authority. I played a key role in changing attitudes on how speed limits are set, such as convincing people that lowering speed limits saved lives. I currently advocate for introducing compulsory autonomous vehicle features to fight the road toll, as well as better protection for cyclists.”

Nick joined the ITE-ANZ board after transitioning from being a full-time employee with the state road authority to being a self-employed consultant. “I only needed to work part-time and had some spare time on my hands. I wanted to give something back to the community after a long career in transport,” he says. “But I had no idea what I was walking into. I thought I would join the board and learn the ropes before putting my hand up for any roles.”

However, Nick had not anticipated the level of burnout that the very strong board had after hosting the first Annual ITE Meeting outside of North America in 2005. “As they began to put back time into their personal careers, they unfortunately did not give enough consideration to succession planning,” he says. “The size of the group dwindled to almost nothing, and we failed to get a quorum at several meetings. The acting president talked about folding up the Section.”

During his first year on the board, Nick took on the role of secretary and learned the procedures without much guidance, and started to organize events and regular communications. Relying on his network in the transport profession in Melbourne, he started to recruit people to the board. A few years later when the ITE-ANZ president had to step back to focus on career and family, Nick canvassed strongly for someone to take up the presidency. No one was ready or willing, so guess who was left, in his words, “holding the baby?”ITE-ANZ now has co-vice presidents, and Nick hopes that this will lead to a new president being ready in the near future.

As for members he recruited to the board, David Nash (F), he says, is the best secretary the board could wish for. With succession planning in mind, he focused on recruiting younger people. Professor Richard Tay, Ph.D. (F) had also just joined ITE-ANZ and he reactivated the Student Chapter at Monash University, and has subsequently encouraged student involvement at other universities.
A significant development in the ITE-ANZ Section came about through professional connections Nick made early in his career. First, Rahmi Akcelik, P.E. (F) of SIDRA SOLUTIONS approached him about sponsoring an annual award for a postgraduate student from a tertiary institution in Australia or New Zealand, based on the quality of his research and potential to make a significant contribution to the profession. Next, John Reid (Australtraff) approached Nick to find ways to get involved in nurturing young professionals just embarking on a career in transport. “Together we developed the Worldwide Learning Opportunities (WLO) program, which has enabled seven young people to attend conferences overseas. Three of the seven attended Annual ITE Meetings.”

Laura Aston (S) came to ITE-ANZ via the Monash Student Chapter two years ago. After she attended the 2018 Annual ITE Meeting on a WLO scholarship, she organized the first Student Leadership Summit (SLS) in ANZ, and subsequently facilitated the formation of the Young ITE (YITE) group. YITE has taken the lead on planning ITE-ANZ seminars and supporting members of the ITE-ANZ board in a variety of ways, including being emcees for the night. YITE also spearheads a new social media strategy where they record, edit, upload, and distribute seminars via social media.

“I believe that the ITE-ANZ Board’s strength has been re-established, and with the strong Student Chapter activity at four universities and others coming on board, together with the formation of YITE, the future has been secured. … And maybe we can find a new president soon!” Nick says. “I get a great deal of personal satisfaction with helping others and I love the social contact and networking that ITE facilitates. In fact, I should have gotten involved with ITE earlier.”

### Getting to Know ITE’s Global District

#### Global District: Focus on Australia-New Zealand (ITE-ANZ) Section
ITE’s Global District is comprised of all members outside the United States and Canada, spanning more than 70 countries around the world. This profile focuses specifically on the ITE-ANZ Section, the sole Section of the Global District.

#### ITE-ANZ Membership
Current membership is about 260 members; approximately 35 live in New Zealand. ITE-ANZ also has a large group of friends with more than 1,500 subscribers who receive our communications and participate in Section events.

#### Student Chapters
- Monash University
- University of Canterbury
- Sydney University
- University of Melbourne

#### Section Leadership
- President – Nick Szwed, P.E., MEngSc, MITE (M)
- Vice Presidents – Sarah Zhang (M), Cassie Min (M)
- Treasurer – Eric Ye (M)
- Secretary – David Nash (F)
- Assistant Secretary – Daniel Gaschk (M)
- District 8 (Global) Director – Daniel Przychodzki (M)
- New Zealand Representative – David Mitchell (M)
- Academia & Students – Dr. Richard Tay (F), Dr. Sara Moridpour (M)
- Communications – Ben Thomson (M), Tabitha Yeoh (M)

#### Young Members Group
- Matthew Bennett (M), Daniele Rebbechi (M), Ruw Palapathwala (S), Cristian Jara Infante (S), Dat Tang (S), Jey Parthiban (S), Tabitha Yeoh (M), Cassie Min (M), Riddhi Kalra (S),
- Hesavar Manivasakan (M), Ben Thomson (M), Patrick Xue (S), Mitchell Young (M), Devika (S), Canwei (Steven) Pang (S), Dr. Ashim Debath (M), John Smelt (M), Ken Hall, P.E. (M), Ken Hall, P.E. (M), Dr. Ashim Debath (M),

#### Did You Know?
- ITE’s Global District has recently been expanding its student chapters around the world, mainly in India and Pakistan where there are relatively new student chapters.
- ITE-ANZ developed a strong seminar program regularly attended by up to 100 people. Its list of subscribers began to grow and is now more than 1,500 strong.
- From time to time, the ITE-ANZ board has advocated on issues that concern its members. Examples include: Rail Transport to Airport, Sustainable Transport (Cycling, Walking), Road Safety (Access to Crash Data), and Vehicle Standards (National Design Rules, Window Tinting, Autonomous Features).

#### Historical Facts
- In the early 1960s, most of the 20 or so members of ITE in Australia had developed an interest in ITE while attending the Bureau of Highway Traffic at Yale University, or programs at other universities as International Road Federation Fellows.
- The Australian Section was formed in 1972. It started in Sydney, but moved a few years later to Melbourne, given most members were located there.
- New Zealand joined Australia to form the ITE-ANZ Section in 1996.
- ITE-ANZ has three ITE Honorary members: Ted Barton, Andrew O’Brien, and Peter McCombs.
- In 2005, the Annual ITE Meeting took place in Melbourne, Australia, the first and only time an ITE international conference was held outside North America.