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For immediate release

Engineers beat architects in design debate at NSW Parliament House

Few professional rivalries are as enduring as architects versus engineers, and on November 3 at NSW Parliament House, the two sides finally came together to laugh about it. On the question of who should design the future of NSW, the engineers proved the more convincing in the inaugural comedy debate between the two professions.

The architects sought a "higher plane" throughout the debate, advocating their broader—and perhaps more fashionable—view of the world. "Where an engineer knows a lot about a little, architects know a little about a lot," said Adam Haddow in the opening speech of the night. "Engineers are excellent people. They are occasionally well dressed."

Similarly, Tone Wheeler tried to reconcile the two professions but kept the architects on top. "Sometimes architects just make scribble; it's engineers who make it work. You have to join the two together, but you have to have this overarching vision to start off with."

The engineers attacked from the ground, appealing for less of the scribble. "Our view of architects is they've spent a long time designing from the top down; we have edifices, we have phallic symbols, we have visions," Rowan Peck responded. "How many paradigm shifts can we have?" Andrew Pratley protested. "Can't we just have one shift? Isn't one shift enough?!"

In the end, it was the engineers who topped the architects, perhaps through Pratley's settling of another of Sydney's great arguments: the Harbour Bridge versus the Opera House. "Have you ever noticed how many people wander up, stand on that beautiful engineering platform, turn 45 degrees to the left, and look at the Harbour Bridge? And that is the greatest contribution architecture has made to the state."

The engineers have been unbeaten in three comedy debates over the past year, having previously defeated Young Lawyers on the subject of politicians and The

Economic Society of Australia on the subject of infrastructure. The three debates can be seen at www.expressiveeng.com.au/debating

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The inaugural comedy debate between Engineers Australia Sydney Division and the NSW Chapter of the Australian Institute of Architects was held at the NSW Legislative Assembly on November 3. The adjudication panel of Craig Baumann (Member for Port Stephens and Parliamentary Secretary for Regional Planning), Elizabeth Farrelly (columnist and author) and Brandon Gien (Managing Director, Good Design Australia) awarded the debate to the engineers.

The engineers team of Rowan Peck (Director, Norman Disney & Young), Andrew Pratley (Associate, Expressive Engineering) and Veena Sahajwalla (Scientia Professor, UNSW) defeated the architects team of Adam Haddow (Director, SJB Architects), Helen Norrie (Lecturer, University of Tasmania) and Tone Wheeler (Principal, Environa Studio).

The Architects vs Engineers debate was organised and hosted by Expressive Engineering.

expressiveeng-archvseng11.jpg: Andrew Pratley during the 2011 Architects vs Engineers debate at the NSW Legislative Assembly. Photo by Chantelle Kemkemian.

About Expressive Engineering:
Expressive Engineering promotes technological sciences, design and innovation through corporate education and communication services. For further information:

Andrew Botros
Director, Expressive Engineering
+61 (0)402 112 106
abotros@expressiveeng.com.au