

**SPEECH AT OFFICIAL OPENING OF THE 24<sup>TH</sup> FIG INTERNATIONAL  
SURVEYING CONGRESS**

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**CONVENTION CENTRE, DARLING HARBOUR  
Monday 12<sup>th</sup> April 2010**

**HER EXCELLENCY PROFESSOR MARIE BASHIR AC CVO  
GOVERNOR OF NEW SOUTH WALES**

**PROFESSOR STIG ENEMARK, *President, FIG International***

**MR MATTHEW HIGGINS, *Vice President, FIG International (representing  
Australia)***

**MR JONATHAN SAXON, *representing the President of the Surveying and  
Spatial Sciences Institute (Mr Michael Giudici)***

**MR PAUL HARCOT, *Congress Chairman, Chief Surveyor of the Land  
and Property Management Authority of New South Wales***

**THE HON TONY KELLY MP, *Minister for Planning and Minister for Lands***

**MR WARWICK WATKINS, *Surveyor General of New South Wales***

**PROFESSOR TIM FLANNERY, *Eminent Scientist***

**DISTINGUISHED GUESTS, — NATIONAL AND INTERNATIONAL**

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**IT IS INDEED A GREAT PLEASURE TO JOIN YOU FOR THE OFFICIAL  
OPENING OF THE 24<sup>TH</sup> FIG INTERNATIONAL SURVEYING CONGRESS,  
AND TO EXTEND THE WARMEST OF WELCOMES TO EACH OF YOU  
WHO HAVE TRAVELLED FROM ACROSS THE WORLD OR ACROSS OUR  
CONTINENT TO SHARE YOUR KNOWLEDGE AND EXPERIENCE AT THIS  
IMPORTANT GATHERING.**

**I TRUST THAT DESPITE THE BUSY SCHEDULES AND THE  
CHALLENGING AND STIMULATING AGENDA AHEAD, YOU WILL HAVE  
TIME TO ENJOY THE BEAUTY AND RICH DIVERSE CULTURAL**

**OFFERINGS OF OUR HOSPITABLE CITY OF SYDNEY, AND TO OUR  
UNIQUE REGIONS BEYOND.**

**AT THIS POINT, I WISH TO RECORD MY RESPECT FOR THE  
TRADITIONAL OWNERS OF THIS LAND UPON WHICH WE GATHER, —  
THE GADIGAL PEOPLE OF THE EORA NATION — THEIR ANCESTORS  
AND DESCENDANTS, INDEED FOR ALL ABORIGINAL AUSTRALIANS  
WHO HAVE NURTURED OUR GREAT CONTINENT FOR TENS OF  
THOUSANDS OF YEARS.**

**I HAVE BEEN INCREASINGLY INTERESTED IN AND APPRECIATIVE OF  
THE CONTRIBUTION OF SURVEYORS — THE MODEST AND OFTEN  
UNSUNG HEROES OF CIVILISATION. I AM GRATEFUL IN PARTICULAR,  
FOR THEIR CONTRIBUTION TO AND THEIR CRITICAL ROLE IN THE  
DEVELOPMENT OF NEW SOUTH WALES SINCE ITS EARLIEST DAYS OF  
COLONIAL SETTLEMENT.**

**MY APPRECIATION WAS ENRICHED SEVERAL YEARS AGO IN  
ASSOCIATION WITH AN INVITATION TO JAMES MEEHAN HIGH SCHOOL  
IN THE WESTERN OUTSKIRTS OF SYDNEY.**

**BECAUSE OF THAT VISIT, I WAS DRAWN TO INVESTIGATE THE  
HISTORY OF THE SCHOOL'S NAME, THEREBY DISCOVERING A  
TREASURY OF EARLY COLONIAL HISTORY.**

**AS OUR NEW SOUTH WALES SURVEYOR-GENERAL HAD POINTED OUT TO  
ME SOME TIME AGO, THERE HAS BEEN A LONG AND CLOSE ASSOCIATION  
BETWEEN THE SURVEYORS-GENERAL AND THE GOVERNORS SINCE  
AUGUSTUS ALT ARRIVED WITH THE FIRST FLEET OF EUROPEAN**

**SETTLERS IN 1788 TO CONTRIBUTE SIGNIFICANTLY TO THE PLANNING AND ESTABLISHMENT OF EARLY SYDNEY.**

**IT IS WIDELY BELIEVED — MISTAKENLY — THAT THE OFFICE OF GOVERNOR OF NEW SOUTH WALES IS THE OLDEST PUBLIC OFFICE IN THE NATION. BUT THERE ARE COUNTLESS IMPORTANT REASONS TO PLACE SURVEYORS AT THE HIGHEST LEVEL IN OUR ESTIMATION. JAMES MEEHAN, CERTAINLY ONE SURVEYOR WHO COMMANDS MY ADMIRATION, WAS A YOUNG IRISHMAN TRANSPORTED AS A CONVICT TO THIS COLONY IN THE FIRST YEARS OF THE 19<sup>TH</sup> CENTURY. HE SEEMS TO HAVE BEEN — INITIALLY AT LEAST — SOMETHING OF AN INNOCENT AND GUILLESS INDIVIDUAL.**

**AS A YOUNG MAN IN IRELAND, A TEACHER AND A SURVEYOR UNDER HARSH ENGLISH OCCUPATION, WE ARE TOLD THAT ONE DAY HE PRESENTED HIMSELF TO THE ENGLISH AUTHORITIES SEEKING TO BE EXCUSED FROM FIGHTING AGAINST HIS OWN PEOPLE, BUT PREPARED, HE SAID, TO SERVE IN THE BRITISH ARMY ELSEWHERE IN THE WORLD.**

**FOR HIS HONOURABLE OFFER HE WAS ARRESTED AS A POLITICAL PRISONER AND TRANSPORTED TO SYDNEY, WHERE IN TIME HE WAS CALLED INTO SERVICE AS A SURVEYOR, AND INVOLVED IN VERY SIGNIFICANT PROFESSIONAL DUTIES IN PARRAMATTA, IN TASMANIA , IN BATHURST AND ACROSS THE GOULBOURN PLAINS.**

**MEEHAN ATTRACTED THE TRUST AND ADMIRATION OF OUR VISIONARY 5<sup>TH</sup> GOVERNOR OF NEW SOUTH WALES, LACHLAN MACQUARIE, WHO INVITED HIM TO GOVERNMENT HOUSE AND DECLARED IN A LETTER TO ENGLAND, — *'I HAVE... HAD AN OPPORTUNITY OF WITNESSING (MEEHAN'S) INDEFATIGABLE***

***ASSIDUITY IN THE FULFILMENT OF HIS ARDUOUS DUTIES. I BELIEVE THAT NO MAN HAS SUFFERED SO MUCH PRIVATION AND FATIGUE IN THE SERVICE OF HIS COLONY AS MR MEEHAN HAS DONE. ... HIS INTEGRITY HAS NEVER, TO MY KNOWLEDGE, BEEN IMPEACHED; AND I CERTAINLY CONSIDER HIM TO BE, BOTH ON ACCOUNT OF HIS PROFESSIONAL SKILL, AND THE FAITHFULL AND LABORIOUS DISCHARGE OF HIS DUTY, A VALUABLE MAN***<sup>1</sup>.

**LACHLAN MACQUARIE ARRIVED IN THE TURBULENT ENVIRONMENT OF SYDNEY TOWN IN 1810, — 200 YEARS AGO —DETERMINED THAT UNRULY AND DISHONEST BEHAVIOUR SHOULD BE CONTAINED, DESIRING THE ENERGY OF ITS CITIZENS TO BE DIRECTED INSTEAD TO THE DEVELOPMENT OF A STABLE AND PROSPEROUS COLONY FOR FUTURE AUSTRALIANS.**

**PERHAPS HIS COURAGE AND REMARKABLE VISION, TOGETHER WITH HIS HUMANITY AND FLEXIBILITY IN THE EMANCIPATION OF CONVICTS PREPARED TO MAKE AN HONEST CONTRIBUTION, MUST STAND OUT AS THE PATHWAY WHICH ENSURED THE ACHIEVEMENTS WHICH FOLLOWED AND BUILT OUR NATION.**

**THOSE EMANCIPATED CONVICTS BECAME THE ARTISTS, ARCHITECTS, BUILDERS, FARMERS, ENGRAVERS AND SURVEYORS, — INCLUDING THE ADMIRABLE JAMES MEEHAN, — WHO CONTRIBUTED SO SIGNIFICANTLY TO THE FULFILMENT OF LACHLAN MACQUARIE'S VISION.**

**IT IS SO FITTING THAT THIS SURVEYOR'S CONTRIBUTION TO THE NATION WILL BE REMEMBERED FOR ALL TIME IN THE STATUE WHICH**

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<sup>1</sup> "Meehan, James (1774-1826), Australian Dictionary of Biography – Online Edition

**WILL OCCUPY THE ONE UNADORNED NICHE ON THE HISTORIC NEW SOUTH WALES DEPARTMENT OF LANDS**

**I AM AWARE THAT IN YOUR CHALLENGING CONGRESS PROGRAM, WITH ITS THEME OF '*FACING THE CHALLENGES — BUILDING THE CAPACITY*', YOUR MINDS WILL BE DIRECTED MORE TO THE COMPLEX CONTEMPORARY AND FUTURE TASKS WHICH FACE YOU, — DEMANDING CHALLENGES DESPITE THE EXTRAORDINARY TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCES WHICH YOUR PROFESSION NOW COMMANDS.**

**THERE IS NO DOUBT THAT AS SURVEYORS, YOU WILL CONTINUE TO MEET THESE DEMANDS WITH THE DILIGENCE, INTEGRITY AND EXCELLENCE OF YOUR FOREBEARS.**

**MAY I THANK YOU — EACH ONE OF YOU FOR YOUR PARTICIPATION IN THIS INTERNATIONAL MEETING — AND WISH YOU WELL IN ALL THE CHALLENGES WHICH LIE AHEAD.**

**MY BEST WISHES ARE WITH YOU ALL FOR A SPLENDID GATHERING, WHICH I NOW HAVE THE PLEASURE OF DECLARING OFFICIALLY OPEN.**

**AND IT IS WITH GREAT DELIGHT THAT I NOW UNVEIL THE STATUE OF JAMES MEEHAN, SURVEYOR.**