

Foreword

We live in perilous times with many global trouble spots and the worldwide threat of terrorism. Although the solution to these troubles is sometimes portrayed as more vigorous border protection and aggressive military action against countries or groups within countries, which are seen as the source of the threat, this will not produce a long-term solution. As technology advances, it is inevitable that so-called weapons of mass destruction will become more widely available, effective and portable. It is already clear that each attempt to forcibly eliminate sources of terrorism results in more people who are prepared to give up their lives for the cause they believe in or to avenge the loss of loved-ones.

Much deeper causes underlie the readiness with which extreme groups are able to recruit people to their cause. Poverty, unemployment, displacement and lack of hope and opportunity provide the ingredients that lead people to become susceptible to the messages provided by ruthless extremists who peddle hate and violence against what they portray as the common enemy and oppressor. The increasing disparity between rich and poor countries and rich and poor groups within countries magnify the sense of injustice and desperation. It is therefore a matter not only of social justice but also of self-interest that wealthy countries should be helping to build the capacity of poor individuals and countries so that they can escape this vicious cycle of poverty, lack of opportunity and desperation.

I am firmly convinced that education has a pivotal role in breaking this cycle. It empowers individuals and communities and gives them routes out of their difficult circumstances. Education in areas that will help to build the physical infrastructure of developing countries and which will favour the development of new industry and a sustainable environment will be particularly important. Education in engineering is particularly relevant in this context. The UNESCO International Centre for Engineering Education (UICEE) is dedicated to improving engineering education in developing countries and this journal contains many articles devoted to this cause. There are few subjects that are more worthwhile.

Richard Larkins AO
Vice-Chancellor and President
Monash University

