



A passion for learning and supporting others wins Mitch Graham the EEA Young Engineer of 2023 Award

Mitch Graham, Unison’s Fault Avoidance and Constraints Engineering Team Leader has an extensive CV for a young engineer, brimming with achievements, accolades and awards. It speaks to his drive for continuous learning and passion for facing down challenges and seizing opportunities.

As the recipient of the EEA’s 2023 Young Engineer Award, Mitch was supposed to attend the IEC’s General Meeting in Cairo however plans had to change at the last-minute. While still able to attend online sessions, Mitch acknowledges that it was disappointing not being able to meet others in person and make new industry connections.

“Ours is an incredibly supportive industry full of people more than willing to share their time and expertise, things we need to grab with both hands because that is where the learning happens and new opportunities arise.”



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Networking, sharing knowledge and learning from others are all things that drive him.

“I am passionate about learning, but I am also passionate about sharing knowledge and lifting those around me.

“Our industry is at a significant turning point as global economies work toward decarbonisation. It’s a time of major change which, for me, makes it an exciting time to be working here.

“Young engineers like me are getting opportunities to step into exciting roles as there is a shortage of skilled people and so much to do”.

“I consider myself incredibly lucky to be offered these opportunities - you can get thrown in the deep end but that is a fantastic way to learn and learn fast.”

He acknowledges that it can also be a bit daunting especially for those who may look at all the challenges the industry faces and find it overwhelming.

“That’s when it is important to reflect on what you can control versus what you can influence. You have to let go of the things you can’t control and focus on areas where you can make real change.”

Mitch sees organisations like the EEA as playing two key roles in supporting the industry – the first is to be future focused, advocating for the change that’s needed and keep the regulators and decision makers firmly focused on enabling good sustainable outcomes.

“We have to be more future-focused and proactive in preparing for change not just responding to it. If we want to be ready for the changing energy future, we can’t be rear-facing and basing our regulation on what we have previously done” he says.



Mitch accepts his award from EEA President Josie Boyd

The second is to foster the collaborative nature of the industry to enable knowledge sharing and support, something that is particularly valuable to young engineers.

“Gone are the days where the Principal Engineer decreed what was to be done and that was that. There is much more opportunity now for our young engineers to contribute and they can bring enormous value to the industry.

“They tend to be very open to new ideas because they are still learning, they haven’t developed any single, fixed approach to how things should be done.

“They also bring a deeper understanding of the issue of sustainability by virtue of their exposure to it from a much earlier age. The concept of sustainability has always been ingrained with what they do, and it shows up in their thinking.”

Mitch encourages all young engineers to put themselves forward for the Young Engineer Award as a way to test themselves, expand their industry knowledge and build their networks.

“Any form of self-reflection can be challenging but that is the value of it - to take stock of where you are now compared to where you want to be. The Award process itself it is another way of helping you get here by opening the door to new opportunities.”

Mitch joined Unison in 2011 as an undergraduate summer student for five years. He became full-time in 2016. As part of his training, Mitch was exposed to all aspects of Unison’s distribution network business.

He spent a summer working in the field with crews, another in the control room and time with the asset management team, before becoming a professional and chartered engineer.

Mitch has also been involved in a wide range of other industry activities including chairing the EEA Overhead Line Design Forum, becoming a New Zealand founding member of the CIGRE B2 overhead lines panel, and while at university, serving on the Executive Board of the Emerging Leaders Development Programme.

He is most proud of his work on Overhead Conductor Condition Assessment and Renewal Planning which has advanced collective understanding and led to the development of a soon-to-be-published EEA Overhead conductor condition assessment guide.

Outside of work, Mitch’s time is shared between his family, and sporting pursuits. After representing New Zealand on the international stage in Canoe Polo, he is now a referee, coach and mentor to other aspiring athletes.