

## **President's Report 2005**

This is the first President's Report to the membership of ARF since it has become the Australian Road Forum. Although this is our 53<sup>rd</sup> AGM, this meeting marks a new beginning for ARF.

### **The Creation of the Forum**

Two years ago we set out to establish a national peak body for road transport in Australia. At that stage the industry was represented by a number of effective industry associations, but was unable to present a common voice. There were few opportunities for key players within the sector to network or discuss policy on a system-wide basis.

In March this year the Federal Minister for Roads launched the Australian Road Forum and acknowledged it as the new national peak body for road transport stakeholders.

### **Membership**

This milestone has coincided with a significant increase in membership. At last year's AGM I reported that our membership had increased from 11 members to 24. This year I can report that it has grown from 24 to 40 at the time of writing this report.

The membership also represents a very diverse cross section of the industry. ARF's membership now embraces every significant sector of road transport.

### **Policy Development and Industry Representation**

Consistent with ARF's new role, we were able to make a significantly enhanced policy contribution during the year.

ARF developed a defined set of policy priorities which make it clear that we stand for important principles which our members have in common. High on this list is the need for long term, transparent road planning and funding which is not obscured by politics. In terms of specific initiatives the recent Forum meeting identified skills shortages and the need for increased attention to maintenance as immediate policy priorities. ARF will pursue these further over the next year and our Vice President is in fact meeting with the Federal Minister for Transport tomorrow in relation to them.

During the year ARF participated in stakeholder discussions with DOTARS in relation to AusLink, and our Chief Executive met with the Secretary of DOTARS on several occasions to discuss industry issues. Meetings were also held with State Ministers. Our Chief Executive met with the Shadow Minister for Transport in Canberra earlier in the month. Last week, along with three other significant industry associations, ARF consulted with the NSW Premier's Department in relation to their current review of motorways management in NSW.

These policy discussions are in line with ARF's new role. At the same time ARF does not seek to take the place of other industry associations which represent the interests of their members. ARF's role is to represent the ultimate interests which our members, including our industry association and government agency members, have in common.

## **Activities**

A key purpose of the ARF is to provide quality networking activities and opportunities for exchange of information on topics relevant to the industry.

ARF expanded its industry lunches and workshops during the last year. Events were held in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne and Adelaide. We are holding our first event in Perth next week.

838 industry members attended ARF events during 2004/5. They were drawn from 138 different companies and industry associations – 48 more than last year. Our speakers included Federal and State Ministers, the heads of state and federal road authorities and leading industry policy makers and academics.

ARF held a very successful national summit in Brisbane in March. The highlight was the annual dinner at which the John Shaw medal was presented to joint winners Dick Wharton and John Oliver. We also recognized 50 years of continuous membership of ARF by Shell Australia. This is a remarkable achievement.

Our sponsor for the annual dinner was Queensland Main Roads. They have not only generously supported a significant number of ARF activities, but their General Manager, Strategic Policy and Development, Neil Doyle, continues to give tremendous support to ARF as Vice President.

The most significant new event during the year was the first meeting of the Forum in Sydney on 29 September. 63 companies, agencies and industry associations gathered for the first time for a one day state of the nation report. The speakers included our industry's most significant policy makers. In view of the great contribution which MIG has made to the formation of the new ARF, it was very appropriate that the first meeting of the Forum was sponsored by Macquarie.

The Forum meeting fulfilled our commitment to establish an across the board umbrella body for our industry. The next meeting of the Forum will be in Melbourne on 8 March next year.

## **International Activity**

ARF continued to play an active role internationally. As ARF President I had the honour to continue to serve on the World Executive Board of the International Road Federation. In June our Vice President Neil Doyle led a delegation of 20 ARF participants to the World Meeting of ARF in Bangkok. ARRB Group mounted an industry exhibit at the meeting and sponsored a reception for conference delegates.

## **Acknowledgements**

I have already mentioned Neil Doyle. A number of other people should also be acknowledged.

Board Members gave generously of their time and industry knowledge. Ken Daley of Transurban stepped down as Vice President when he was posted to New York. John Dynan also steps down as Treasurer at today's meeting, having previously served as President. John has given great support to the ARF administration often on a daily basis. I would like to thank both Ken and John for the important part they have played in ARF's transition.

We are also grateful to our other industry colleagues on the Board, Michael Bresnahan, David Stuart-Watt and David Young. It is good to know that ARF will continue to have their contribution next year.

We thank the members who provided sponsorship to ARF events during 2004/5. These companies were ARRB Group, Boral, MIG, Queensland Main Roads, the Road Traffic Authority of NSW, Transport SA and Transurban. Abigroup are generously sponsoring today's lunch with Michael Taylor.

I would also like to acknowledge the chief executives of DOTARS and each of the state road authorities for the great support which they have given to ARF.

A number of important people have helped ARF behind the scenes. Rachael Rooney does a marvelous job in organizing our events. Our previous John Shaw medalists assist ARF in important and active ways. ARF receives generous help from Roads magazine who produce our reports to industry in each issue.

Finally, I wish to acknowledge the significant contribution made by Ian Webb to the successful restructuring of the ARF and the dramatic increase in membership over the past year or so. The ARF is fortunate to have Ian Webb as its CEO at this time.

## **The Year Ahead**

We have now effectively laid the foundations for an industry body of national significance. These include building a membership base commensurate with such a body, administrative resources to deliver the services which our members require, and appropriate budgetary support.

During the next 12 months we shall strengthen these foundations. However greater emphasis can now be given to delivering the policy and communication benefits which are the ultimate reasons for ARF's existence. We shall consolidate our Forum meetings as regular policy gatherings for industry's decision makers. We shall further develop our policy profile at industry level, building on the important work which has already begun this year.

These priorities are reflected in expanded key performance indicators for ARF. They are also evident in the growth of the Board and the establishment of a discrete Policy and Strategy Subcommittee of the Board.

This year seven members have nominated for service on the Board in addition to the President and we have had to amend the structure of the Board to accommodate their enthusiasm. Notwithstanding all of the positive developments which I have recorded in this report, there is none more pleasing than the endorsement which industry members themselves have given to ARF during the year. This makes it clear that industry shares our commitment to work together through a national body of this kind.

Ray Fisher  
President  
29 November 2005