

## Safety barrier assessment reforms a win for RA harmonisation initiative

Roads Australia's process of bringing industry and agencies together to review technical specifications has achieved its first 'win', with Austroads implementing reforms to the assessment of safety barriers.

Since the first industry-agency policy session held in Sydney in April, the Austroads Safety Barrier Assessment Panel has implemented process reforms to reduce the time taken to issue a determination on the status of safety barrier products.

The existence of the Panel avoids the need for safety barrier suppliers to make submissions to separate jurisdictions.

By implementing these and other process reforms, the Panel has been able to issue 14 determinations since June.

The key process reforms are:

- **Products are assessed only once.** The Panel will make a considered judgement based on information supplied by the safety barrier supplier. If the crash tests and information provided do not provide sufficient information for confidence in performance and operation, then the barrier system will not be accepted.
- **Acceptance of crash tests prescribed in the USA or Europe.** The tests required by the USA Federal Highways Authority or a representative of the European Union will be accepted as the totality of tests required for safety barrier assessment. Additional tests will not be requested by the Panel. However, if the tests submitted do not provide sufficient information to provide confidence of safe operation and safety for workers then the product will not be accepted.
- **Assessment outcomes are "Accepted", "Not accepted", "Legacy" or "Phase out".** "Interim acceptance" will no longer be issued. "Legacy" status allows retention in service until the end of service life. "Phase out" will remain in service to a fixed date. The date fixed for phase out will allow sufficient time for manufacturers, users and hire companies to amortise their investment and adjust their business model. Sudden changes in acceptance status will be avoided unless a critical safety issue emerges.
- **No expiry date on new acceptances.** Safety Barrier acceptances will be issued without an expiry date. However, the Acceptance Conditions preserve the right of the Panel and Road Authorities to re-assess the product and withdraw or modify acceptance conditions at any time. This would generally be in response to an incident or adverse reports from maintenance and operational personnel.
- **Retain existing time limited acceptances.** Existing product acceptances will retain the current time limited acceptance. Re-assessment as expiry becomes due will provide an opportunity to re-consider the suitability of the product in the light of current circumstances and check the consistency of acceptance conditions.
- **Remove assessment criteria not related to performance.** Assessment criteria that are not related to performance have been removed from the assessment process. Assessment criteria cover safety for road users, operational performance, durability, safety and efficiency in maintenance and Safety in Design.
- **Leadership team.** Panel business is managed by a leadership team based in Melbourne and Sydney, rather than a Chairman. This improves access to the Panel for safety barrier suppliers and control preference engineering.
- **Generic template.** Under our federated system of government the Panel Acceptance Conditions have no status until ratified by each Road Authority. The Panel will issue Road Authorities with an Acceptance Condition document that does not contain references to any particular jurisdiction. This will help harmonisation of conditions applied by each jurisdiction, although there may be some variations due to local issues.