



President's Report – 2022 RA Annual General Meeting

This is my third opportunity to stand before you as RA President and reflect upon another year of achievement for our industry and our organisation.

As you're aware, it will also be the final occasion on which I do so.

So in this, my last formal address as RA President, I hope you will indulge me if I widen the scope ever so slightly and reflect not only on the past twelve months, but upon my term in the role.

I think it goes without saying that the last three years have been challenging and life-altering in ways none of us could have envisaged when I was elected at the end of 2019.

A worldwide pandemic that would fundamentally disrupt almost every aspect of business and daily life was not something that I had factored in.

COVID-19 changed every organisation in the country, and RA was not an exception.

We were suddenly faced with the prospect of not being able to deliver our programs in the usual way.



For an association which, above all, has always relied on its ability to connect members with each other and to decision-makers, this was a daunting proposition - made all the more troubling by the fact that no one could say with any certainty when it would end.

There are many individual events, moments and policy achievements that I could identify as highlights over the past three years.

But perhaps there are none of which I am prouder than to have worked with the RA Board and our team throughout that period to rapidly pivot and evolve the organisation's programs and delivery models in a way that continued to provide real and immediate value for our members, despite the limitations imposed by COVID-19.

There are not many industry organisations that can claim to have experienced an increase in membership during the depths of the pandemic.

The fact that RA was able to do so is a testament not only to the loyalty of our members, but also to the relevance of RA's offering and the point of connection that we are able to provide for the industry, right across the nation and for organisations of varying sizes.



I am also enormously proud these outcomes were achieved without relying on financial assistance programs that were offered by governments to not-for-profit organisations during the pandemic.

Needless to say, every organisation in the country has experienced some degree of change to its personnel and business model as a result of the COVID-19 experience. RA is no exception.

However, I am confident that our organisation today is even more agile, focussed, united and resilient than it was prior to the pandemic.

I am equally proud to have led the Board throughout a period that has witnessed:

- strong growth in our signature Fellowship and Emerging Leaders programs;
- a broader focus in our events programs that is drawing in new speakers and subjects;
- expanded efforts to enhance diversity and inclusion within our organisation and across the industry, both through the content of RA events and in our policy activities;



- an evolution of RA's policy engagement to embrace contemporary issues such as placemaking, digital engineering and asset management and a focus on freight; and
- elevating RA's profile through key publications and activities such as our Procurement Reform Report, the Journey to Net-Zero and the success of our inaugural industry visit to New Zealand.

Like RA, the nature of integrated transport is continuing to evolve. There is now a far greater focus on sustainability than was the case just three years ago, and the decarbonisation agenda is now mainstream for every level of government and every part of the industry.

A changed economic environment – with high inflation and skills shortages across the nation – is likely to accelerate changes to procurement models.

As a part of this, it will be necessary for our industry to seriously invest in its digital capabilities, not only to improve efficiency and safety, but also to attract the talented professionals we need to sustain us in the future.

Tied to this is the need for a renewed emphasis on asset maintenance.



Potholes are much in the news at present. They are also a symptom of ineffective approaches to maintenance. It's crucial for this industry to consider how digital technologies can be deployed to assist with asset monitoring and maintenance, so that preventative and corrective actions can be taken.

Getting the best economic outcomes from transport infrastructure isn't only about building it – it's also about looking after transport infrastructure in a way that can extend its life. This helps ensure the community gets the fullest benefit from the substantial investments made on their behalf by governments.

And of course, if we are to maintain social licence, it is essential that we continue to reach out to communities and consider how transport infrastructure can be delivered in ways that improve community amenity and contribute to a greater sense of place.

A moment ago, I mentioned RA's increased focus on diversity and inclusion as one of the highlights of recent years.

Maintaining this focus is essential if we are to have the sustainable talent pool needed to deliver complex project and ensure develop future leaders for our industry who understand and reflect contemporary values.



Without wishing to pre-empt the formalities of the AGM, let me just say how pleased I am that my successor as President will be Aneetha de Silva. Aneetha became RA's first female Vice President two years ago and she will again make history in a few moments by becoming our first female President. I think that is an enormously positive reflection of how RA is continuing to reflect the changing nature of our industry.

To conclude, I would like to emphasise how enormously grateful I am for the support of our members over the past three years as President.

The opportunity to meet and work with so many committed and talented people from across RA's membership is one I value enormously.

Although it will be in a different capacity moving forward, I nonetheless look forward to remaining actively engaged in RA's journey and connected with our members.

You are ultimately RA's greatest strength and I have no doubt your commitment, ingenuity and energy will drive RA on to continue delivering positive outcomes for our industry and for the community.

Thank you once again for the opportunity to serve, and I wish RA all the best moving forward.