



2022 CEO's Workshop Report

18 May 2022



About the CEO's Workshop

Each year, RA invites CEOs from amongst our membership to participate in a workshop that helps to determine policy objectives for RA.

Having government and industry as part of our membership allows RA to actively facilitate policy leadership.

The annual CEO's Workshop is a clear demonstration of this approach, as senior leaders from the public and private sector sit down and collaboratively identify opportunities for RA to develop solutions to challenges now confronting our industry.

The workshop's outcomes also build upon RA's ongoing efforts to champion a diverse, inclusive, sustainable and values-led organisation and industry by drawing upon

direct perspectives from industry leaders as to how our workforce can attract and retain talented individuals from diverse backgrounds.

This year's workshop was held in Melbourne on 18 May, the day prior to the opening of the 2022 Transport Summit. It was attended by around 70 people, comprising CEOs and senior representatives drawn from RA's membership and other key industry bodies.





Looking at ‘purpose’

One of the flow-on impacts from the COVID-19 experience is that many organisations are asking themselves some of the deeper questions around ‘purpose’ – considering precisely what the unique value is that they provide - and considering what adjustments are needed to ensure they are in-sync with contemporary community values and expectations.

As an ESG lens quickly becomes the norm across our industry, peak bodies like RA must be able to clearly demonstrate how their industry is making an active and positive contribution on issues such as sustainability, and diversity and inclusion.

This is a conversation that RA began in the second half of 2021, continued during our Board Strategic Workshop in March, and expanded upon during this year’s CEO’s Workshop.

Setting the scene

To help define the parameters of the discussion and stimulate thoughts around purpose for workshop participants, the session commenced with a presentation by Michel Masson, Consultant, Spencer Stuart (and former CEO of Infrastructure Victoria).

Michel’s presentation encouraged participants to think broadly about the organisational aspects of RA that are particularly unique – and asking ourselves about the ‘gaps’ that would be left for our stakeholders if we didn’t exist.

As part of their subsequent deliberations, workshop participants were able to identify several services and areas of policy leadership that are unique to RA.

These related particularly to the way RA is able to connect government and industry within our membership, and to provide a considered and whole-of-industry perspective in its engagement with governments and decision-makers.

With this purpose ‘lens’ in mind, workshop participants broke into four groups based around the four policy themes contain in the RA Strategic Plan 2022-2024:

- People
- Place making
- Resilience
- Data & Technology



People

Naturally, people are at the heart of RA's purpose, just as they are at the centre of our industry's activities. Transport infrastructure exists as means of connecting people to places, to goods and to each other.

Highlighting the value and centrality in daily life of the infrastructure and transport services that RA's members plan, construct, maintain and operate is central to maintaining the industry's social licence to operate.

As a peak body, RA's focus should be on highlighting the impact of that contribution – and showcasing how the industry is working to change so that it is better aligned with contemporary community values.

In this context, several policy opportunities for RA were identified:

- Embrace the emerging national consensus around the need to lift productivity across the economy as an opportunity to vigorously pursue procurement reform, encourage harmonisation of regulatory frameworks and eliminate duplication/inefficient practices, particularly in contracting.

- Use the breath of RA's membership to facilitate earlier and more collaborative engagements between all parties involved in the delivery of transport infrastructure (including governments, clients, designers, contractors and suppliers).
- Recognise digital disruption as a genuine opportunity for the industry. Highlight how digital and technology-based solutions to the design, delivery and maintenance of transport infrastructure assets can not only result in improved efficiency, safety and asset management outcomes, but also make our industry a more attractive career destination for highly skilled and tech savvy personnel.
- Demonstrate how the industry is working to create a more diverse and sustainable workforce for the future by showcasing real examples of what RA members are doing to improve engagement with (and participation by) community segments that continue to be underrepresented in our sector. These include women, members of the Indigenous community, those from migrant and refugee backgrounds and young people.





Place making

There was strong alignment between many of the priorities identified by this group and those highlighted by the 'People' group in the workshop. Fundamentally, the group saw a need for RA to shift from an 'asset' focus to a 'people' focus, noting that 'mobility' and 'place' are inextricably linked as part of the ecosystem that creates thriving cities and places.

Governments are increasingly recognising this reality in their own structures, with several jurisdictions having a single minister responsible for both planning and transport, and virtually all now having integrated transport departments/authorities rather than standalone road agencies.

Workshop participants saw an opportunity for RA to embrace a more wholistic approach that focuses on ensuring the community can access transport systems that simultaneously enhance mobility and create more liveable places. In policy terms, this means focussing on the following priorities:

- Emphasising and embedding 'integration' as RA's core focus, noting that thriving places require a good balance of roads, public

transport, active transport (walking and cycling) and e-mobility.

- Recognising that good place making practices present an opportunity to address negative community perceptions around road infrastructure. RA should work with members to highlight how effective planning and delivery of transport infrastructure enhances community amenity, rather than detracting from it.
- Drawing conversations around the movement of goods/freight into more of RA's policy activities and events program. The ability to transport goods to local communities is an essential aspect of integrated mobility and improved community amenity.
- Using the increased salience of sustainability as an opportunity to promote best practice approaches to place making (e.g. embedding complementary active transport infrastructure with road and rail projects, and providing accessible vehicle charging facilities to help accelerate the transition to low emissions vehicles).





Resilience

For the purposes of its conversations, this group defined ‘resilience’ as being the ability to deal with change rapidly and responsibly. The discussion not only explored the physical resilience of transport assets, but also the financial resilience of the industry and the personal resilience of its workforce.

As with other workshop participants, the resilience group identified the breadth of RA’s membership profile – drawing together government and private sector organisations involved in every stage of delivering and operating transport infrastructure – as a key strength to be leveraged.

Sustainability formed a major element of the group’s conversations. With governments pursuing the ‘build back better’ approach, industry should consider how infrastructure assets could be repurposed into new assets, promoting the theme of circularity.

The group’s view was that if this is to occur, RA is ideally placed to bring government and industry together to have the discussion needed to challenge and change long-standing assumptions around specifications and standards that are inhibiting the expansion of the circular economy – and in some cases, adding to project costs.

Priority actions the group set out included:

- Leading efforts to encourage jurisdictions to review standard and specifications to encourage greater sustainability across the lifecycle of transport infrastructure assets. This includes building criteria for the recycling and repurposing of assets into tenders for projects.

- Continuing to pursue changes to procurement that will facilitate greater financial resilience for the industry – particularly around the allocation and management of risk, which continues to cause great uncertainty in the market.
- Taking active steps to protect and enhance the resilience of our industry’s workforce by addressing skills shortages. There needs to be a more coordinated and nationally consistent approach to identifying where and when skills shortages are likely to occur. The response needs a mixture of short-term solutions (skilled migration) and longer-term strategies (better skills training and more effective marketing into schools highlighting the benefits of careers in the sector).
- Encouraging greater personal resilience for existing members of the workforce by ensuring people can access effective support systems. As well as investing in programs to support better mental health outcomes, this will also require a focus on initiatives that ensure people feel safe and valued in their workplace.



Data & Technology

This group envisaged data & technology as the ‘blood that flows through the veins and arteries of the industry’ and considered how RA could best act as a point of connection between parties who collect data and the owners of transport assets.

This led the group to consider how to accelerate the implementation of innovation. The group noted government priorities around things like electric and autonomous vehicles, and that there are groups in Australia doing exciting, innovative work in this space. However, sometimes these groups lack a capacity or understanding of how to ‘connect’ with decision-makers in government – and this is an area where RA is ideally positioned to assist.

The group also explored the need for increasing productivity across the industry. This could be advanced by being able to share resources more easily across state boundaries. Yet, constraints on the way that government procures consulting engineering (as one example) currently prevent that. There are different engineering registration schemes in different states, and different software that the government agencies dictate industry must use.

These baked-in inefficiencies mean we are missing opportunities to do better.

The group identified several priority actions to drive change:

- Working to identify regulatory inconsistencies and roadblocks that are preventing effective deployment of technologies and information sharing which could enhance the productivity of the sector. RA is well placed to highlight these on behalf of industry and encourage the development

of nationally consistent approaches that will unlock opportunities.

- Encouraging governments (in particular) to view technology as an ‘enabler’ rather than something that needs a comprehensive ‘strategy’. Technology evolves so rapidly that long-term prescriptive strategies almost risk being redundant before they are released. RA can play a role in identifying how technology can help both governments and the private sector meet their shared goals and promoting regulatory approaches that facilitate innovation.
- Use technology as a means of marketing how the industry is changing (e.g. moving away from pen and paper systems towards digital approaches to engineering, construction and asset management). Portraying the industry as one embracing technology will be advantageous in attracting the next generation of skilled workers we need.
- Understanding that ‘data’ and ‘technology’ are distinct (albeit related) concepts, it would be helpful for RA to embrace the term ‘digital innovation’ in its communications and public conversations, as this will help convey more effectively to the community the potential benefits across a wide range of outcomes, including productivity, safety, sustainability and workforce engagement.



Where to next?

The priority actions identified by workshop participants will now be used to design the work program for RA's five policy streams for the year to come.

More broadly, the thoughts articulated by each group will be used by RA in our continuing discussion around purpose – and specifically, in an examination of how RA could become more outwardly focussed and connect better with the communities that we serve.

This not only incorporates our own industry community, but also the wider public who don't necessarily live and breathe transport and infrastructure policy on a day-to-day basis.

These considerations will be the basis of an RA Board conversation planned for August 2022, which will determine a series of next steps to help progress RA's continuing evolution.



Policy strategy on a page







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