

AUSTRALIAN ROAD FORUM

President's Report 2004

Defining a new vision for the ARF

It is now a little more than 12 months since it was decided to review the vision of the ARF shortly after celebrating its first 50 years. The then current small core of national members were asked to provide additional support to this effort and to take part in the strategic review and search for a new Executive Director following the retirement of Kay Thorne. We set a target of redefining the vision and way forward as well as doubling the national membership within 12 months.

We appointed a new Executive Director, Ian Webb, in December of 2003 and have since redefined and enlarged our purpose beyond that initial first stage and engaged the industry and government in a task force process that has involved 35 companies, government agencies and industry organisations.

We are now on track to launch the Australian Road Forum at the ARF Road Summit in March next year.

Membership

Membership of the National Council has increased by 218% - from 11 members to 24 at the time of writing this report. It is expected that by the time this report is tabled, the membership will have grown still further.

This result is at the upper end of the Board's planning expectations and exceeds the promise made to the National Council when we embarked on this new direction in the middle of 2003.

The National Council now represents a very diverse cross section of the industry and is well positioned as the embryo of the new national body.

The general membership (mainly local governments) continued to be affected by the new industry patterns as local governments outsource their roadwork. As a result the general membership declined to 28 members. This is to be expected to some extent as ARF repositions itself to represent a new national constituency at peak industry level.

Communications

One of the issues that were addressed early in the process was the need to increase the effectiveness and quality of communications with both internal and external stakeholders. The website has been restructured and now

provides lots of relevant information, links and is kept up to date on a weekly basis. It has become an important industry resource and is well patronized as evidenced by the counts of visits to the site.

ARF appointed the Roads Magazine as its official publication. Road News now appears in each issue as a special supplement. We would like to thank Roads Magazine for the support which it has given to the ARF and the peak body initiative.

The Executive Director has provided a constant targeted stream of communication updates to the membership including activities that engage and involve the membership.

Activities

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

Successful industry lunches and workshops have been held in Brisbane, Sydney, and Melbourne that have established ARF events as a focal point for industry. ARF events during the year were attended by representatives of more than 90 companies, government agencies and associations. Guests included federal ministers, and state ministers from Queensland, NSW and Victoria. This represents a quantum leap in both the numbers, diversity and attendance levels of activities and we can expect a further ramping up in this area in the coming year.

Apart from the general lunches we have held two single table functions involving less than 25 members and guests on each occasion and that provided a more intimate exchange of ideas on topics relevant at the time. Guests were Ian Campbell and Max Moore-Wilton respectively. These lunches were well received by those who attended and we will seek to increase these opportunities for members in the coming year.

We express our particular thanks to Queensland Main Roads, Readymix, MIG, ARRB Transport Research, Boral and Transurban who sponsored ARF events during the year. We also thank Rachael Rooney who did such a marvellous job in planning, promoting and organising the events behind the scenes.

We thank the John Shaw winners for their help in agreeing to come together as a group to support the ARF in important and active ways. We have initiated the first steps in forming the John Shaw Foundation that will promote postgraduate education in Road Engineering related fields in Australia. This will provide further recognition of both the John Shaw Award and the proposed Foundation. The current John Shaw winners have also provided the selection panel to adjudicate on current John Shaw Award nominees for this year and we expect to again make that award at a special John Shaw dinner in conjunction with the Road Summit in March 2005

I would like to personally thank our Executive Director, Ian Webb for his efforts and initiative in leading the ARF and achieving the development so far. Finally, I would like to thank the members for giving active support to the ARF and participation in the rebuilding and development of the vision and activities that implement this new vision.

Ray Fisher
President
16th November, 2004