

## President's Report 2019 – AGM Speech

It is my great pleasure to report to you on the activities and accomplishments of Roads Australia for the 2019 calendar year.

### **Membership**

Our membership continued to grow with the addition of 13 new members for a net gain of five, taking our total membership at year end to 155.

Let me take this opportunity of acknowledging and thanking those new members for their support - Bitumill Civil, Coffey Testing, Dial Before You Dig, Fredon Industries, Gamuda, HWL Ebsworth, the Institute of Transport and Logistics Studies at the University of Sydney Business School, Infrastructure NSW, Land Surveys, Minter Ellison, MU Group, Pinsent Masons and SPG.

### **Policy Achievement**

At its March meeting your Board endorsed a three-year rolling Strategic Plan for Roads Australia.

This Plan identifies the priorities and challenges we want to pursue and - more importantly - the actions we want to take to positively contribute to transport policy and outcomes in this country.

Most importantly, the Plan cements in place a subtle but important distinction in how we see ourselves – that is, we are, and will continue to be, the champion of Australia's road network, but within the context of an integrated transport system.

The Plan also revises our framework for policy work, adding a new Safety stream alongside our existing streams of Capacity, Transport Reform, Journey Reliability and Sustainability.

These five policy streams have been engaging with stakeholders throughout the year to build on our past policy work and realign it under the new Strategic Plan.

The Capacity Stream's focus this year has largely been on skills and capacity, including skilled migration, and procurement efficiency. The Sustainability Stream has continued to provide a forum for discussion and improvements to the Commonwealth's City Deal initiative. The

Journey Reliability Stream has continued to champion a customer-centric approach to transport service delivery, and the new Safety Stream has tackled the challenges of raising awareness and improving outcomes around roadworker and road safety, with a particular focus on the key issue of mental health in the construction workplace.

A key Transport Reform Stream activity this year has been our third international study visit - this time to North America - and the subsequent launch of a report that highlights the findings and sets our recommendations for governments to prepare Australia for the mobility challenges and opportunities ahead.

I commend to you the report from the study visit, as well as the Annual Review which includes a more detailed outline of policy initiatives throughout the year. Copies of both publications are available here today.

## **Services to Members**

Roads Australia prides itself on providing a diverse range of events for networking and policy engagement. This year we will host a record 95 events attended by well over 9,000 participants across the country.

What is truly remarkable about this program is that it is delivered by a handful of staff, and more than half have of the events are free to members.

Some 720 guests attended our flagship networking event, the John Shaw Dinner, in May to see the 2019 Medal presented to Professor David Hensher of the University of Sydney's Institute of Transport and Logistics Studies.

Our Annual Summit was addressed by the Deputy Prime Minister, the Honourable Michael McCormack, and NSW Transport and Roads Minister, the Honourable Andrew Constance. Our international keynote was Professor Carlo Ratti from MIT Boston, who painted an illuminating picture of the role of technology and data in developing efficient mobility solutions in urban environments.

Australia's transport future was a key theme explored at the Summit, alongside procurement, road safety, capacity and diversity issues. A highlight of Day Two was our Young Professionals workshop, which attracted a whole new and younger audience to our flagship conference.

The themes explored at the Summit were largely mirrored at our one-day Forums in Melbourne, Perth and Brisbane, albeit in a local context.

The RA 'single-table' experience has been one of our greatest (and most copied) success stories, providing an intimate forum for government and industry leaders to meet and discuss issues in a frank and open environment. RA hosted 23 such events in 2019, including one in Melbourne with Victorian Premier Daniel Andrews.

On top of that, we hosted 25 major industry lunches around the country, collectively attracting thousands of attendees, including Premiers, Ministers and top transport administrators.

The RA networking experience extended this year to Abu Dhabi for the World Road Meeting in October. Together with Austroads, we led the Australian delegation to this significant international event that brings together ministers and agency heads from around the world. We were again joined by the Deputy PM.

The Fellowship Program has been another of our major success stories, creating an alumni of hundreds of up and coming leaders from government and industry, each supported by individual mentors drawn from the top echelons of our membership. We have just inducted our sixth Fellowship intake for the coming year, and demand for places in this industry leading Program continues to outstrip supply.

For the first time in 2019, the fruits of the Fellowship Program were served up to the next level of young professionals via a Fellows-led group mentoring program.

We are indebted to John Holland Group for its continuing sponsorship of this landmark program.

Our spin-off Young Professionals Program has also taken on a life of its own. In 2019 we hosted a record 12 Young Professionals events nationally, including our session at the National Transport Summit. Over 2000 of our industry's youngest and brightest have attended these events.

The YP Program would undoubtedly not be the success it is without the steadfast support of Arup, and I take this opportunity to thank them for their investment in our industry up and comers.

While on the subject of thanks, I want to acknowledge the tremendous support we have received from our 2019 Patron Sponsors – Advisian, Altus Traffic, Arcadis Australia Pacific, Arup, Aurecon, Cardno, Coffey and SMEC Australia – as well as the many members (of which there are too many to list) who have sponsored individual events throughout the year.

Cardno, of course, also deserves special mention as the long-standing sponsor of our Insider newsletter, which is now circulated to more than 16,000 stakeholders across our industry.

### **Diversity and Inclusion**

The Australian engineering and construction sectors have relatively poor records in terms of diversity and inclusion in the workplace. RA has been working with our members to turn this around.

Among our initiatives and activities in 2019, we provided opportunities for young talent to present at key RA events; we increased our percentage of female Fellows and Mentors in the Fellowship Program; we continued to offer complimentary parental leave seats at all major events, allowing parents to stay connected to industry and support the return to work; improved the gender balance across all speaking programs and roundtable events; and we continued to work with stakeholders like CareerSeekers and Major Road Projects Victoria to drive practical outcomes in the industry workforce.

### **Acknowledgments**

I've already mentioned our John Shaw Medallist for 2019. At today's lunch we will present the 2019 RA Technical Excellence Award. However, it would be remiss of me not to acknowledge our 2018 winner, Dr Harry Asche from Aurecon.

I want to thank your Board members who I have worked alongside this year, and make particular mention of my two Vice-Presidents, Marko Misko and Scott Olsen, who do an incredible amount of work for you behind the scenes.

During the year we had two Board resignations – Ken Kanofski and Gillian Miles. I thank both of them for their service and commitment to members. We also welcomed Rodd Staples and Corey Hannett to fill those two vacancies.

At today's lunch we will formally farewell from the Board a true legend of Roads Australia, our immediate Past President Ray Fisher. Ray was the driving force that brought RA back from the edge of extinction in the early 90's and created the template for today's success. Thank you Ray for all you've done, not just for this association but the industry at large.

I also want to thank our Policy Stream Chairs and their Deputies - Clare Gardiner-Barnes, Aneetha de Silva, Marko Misko, Scott Olsen, Rodd Staples, Michelle Huey, Steve Cooley, Jay Stricker, Dan Reeve and Jeff Doyle.

I want to thank our CEO Michael Kilgariff. If there's one thing harder than taking the reins of a failing organisation, it's taking those of one that's incredibly successful. That is the challenge Michael accepted at the end of 2018, and I'm delighted to say that we are today even stronger than we were a year ago.

Michael is, of course, assisted by a team of people who collectively punch well above their weight. On your behalf, I thank Rachael Rooney, Mark Bowmer, Hannah Sauvarin, Marlie Curtis, Thao Nguyen, Veronica Ong, Sophie Chalmers, Leslie Najera, Prue Northey and Rowena Moran. We recently welcome Quentin Crombie to the team as our new Policy Director – so welcome aboard Quentin.

Finally, as this is my last Report as President after a tenure of nine years, I want to thank all our members for whom it has been the greatest privilege and pleasure to serve.