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Policy Webinar Road Worker Safety

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ABOUT ROADS AUSTRALIA

[Roads Australia](#) (RA) is the peak body for roads within an integrated transport system, representing an industry that contributes \$207 billion annually to the economy and supports 1.3 million jobs.

RA brings industry, government, and communities together to lead the evolution of Australia's roads, integrated transport and mobility.

Roads Australia's 160+ members include all of Australia's transport agencies, road owners, major contractors and consultants, material suppliers, service and technology providers, and other relevant industry groups.

RA's policy focus extends across five activity streams: Safety; Capacity; Transport Reform; Customer Experience; and Sustainability with Diversity and Inclusion a commitment across each stream.

Visit our [website](#) for upcoming policy events to contribute to the debate.

BACKGROUND

In 2019, Roads Australia formed a Road Worker Safety Working Group (RWSWG) made up of a cross section of executives from industry, government, and peak body associations, with the objective of raising safety standards among traffic management and road workers.

The RWSWG arose from a recognition by the RA Board that our organisation should take a leading

role in ensuring the safety of our road worker community.

The key focus of the RWSWG is to ensure the safety of road workers at a time of unprecedented transport infrastructure spending. There is a strong pipeline of roads activity underway, with BIS Oxford Economics estimating a total spend on roads construction activity of \$106.8 billion over the next four years.



There are approximately 1,200 fatalities each year on Australian roads. Although no single reliable source of data exists about what proportion of these fatalities are road workers, it is clear from Safe Work Australia ([Work-related Traumatic Injury Fatalities](#)) that vehicle related fatalities in the construction industry are disproportionately high. Safe Work Australia has identified this industry group as a priority area.

Key issues focussed on by the RWSWG are:

1. Procurement processes.
2. Pre-qualification requirements.
3. Industry image and minimum standards.
4. Collaboration and international lessons.



EVENT SUMMARY

A road worker safety webinar hosted by RA on 26 August 2021 featured members of the RSWWG exploring current challenges, opportunities, and the latest innovations to make sure that those that work on our roads get home safe and well.

The webinar, hosted by RA Policy Officer, Sophie Chalmers, was moderated by Altus Executive General Manager, Sales, Strategy and Marketing and RSWWG member, [James Pennings](#).

James opened the webinar by providing background on the work of the RSWWG and the work of Altus in this area, before passing over to the other speakers for the event:

- [James Bennett](#), Operations Manager - Transport Technology and Services, [Ventia](#)
- [Jim Appleby](#), Chief Operating Officer, [Hiway Group](#)
- [Richard Delplace](#), Program Director – Transport Operations Network, [Austroads](#)

The webinar was proudly sponsored by [Altus](#).

Speaker presentations are available on the RA [website](#).

EVIDENCE BASED

RA's RSWWG has a strong consensus among its members that road worker safety must be one of the highest order priorities for our industry. It was noted that while there is more that needs to be done to improve this area of safety, industry is getting better at collaboration to advance this common goal, with the recent [Industry Statement on Speed Cameras on Worksites](#) as one such example.

Jim Appleby and **James Bennett** built on this theme with a joint presentation on how industry can take the lead to improve how we operate and keep people safe.

One key issue that has been identified as having a significant effect on the safety of road workers is the speed of traffic through roadworks. Extensive trials across industry have been conducted to understand this impact, including Downer's Ben Hur - a project designed to reduce the risk of working in and around live traffic.



More than 700 survey responses were received from Downer employees, with more than 70% nominating the speed of passing motorists as their number one risk factor. This view from the workers was supported by other evidence gathered by the project, which used speed radars to collect 40,000 data points on the speed of vehicles through worksites.

The results showed vehicles speed was on average 10kph above the posted reduced work site speed limit in urban areas, and 15kph on average above the posted reduced work site speed limit in regional areas.

Interventions were tested to observe the effect on vehicle speed, including speed radar advisory signs, bigger cones, and virtual lane reduction. Speed advisory signs produced a 24% improvement in compliance on approach; bigger cones a 12% improvement in compliance through works; and closed lane reduction a 13% improvement in compliance through works, thereby demonstrating a positive increase in speed compliance through the use of more visible hardware on worksites.

Projects such as Ben Hur have provided a considerable source of data to demonstrate that speed compliance and management is critical for a safe workplace and for those travelling in vehicles.

Reliable data to measure the impact of issues such as speed on road workers is critical to provide the necessary evidence base to support more action from all involved, however there has been no central repository that can actively share data and insights among industry bodies. [Australian Flexible Pavements Association](#) (AfPA) has recently started working on standardising and storing incident data across a number of their member companies – a way of collating evidence to support the pursuit of wider industry and regulatory change.



INDUSTRY INITIATIVES

In Australia, the barriers to entry for traffic management can often be low and the workforce is predominately casual. To ensure a focus on keeping safety standards as high as possible, James Bennett explained how Ventia reviewed their use of the supply chain to ensure that contracts are provided to the best traffic providers with measurable KPI's in place.



Further examples of Ventia adopting higher standards include a mandate within contracts requiring a highly qualified traffic manager to be on site at all times. With a focus on providing quality training for those on the ground, supervisors and incident response teams can assist in offering traffic management as a career path.

Technology and innovative solutions also play a key role in enhancing the safety of road workers. A number of notable industry examples were highlighted, including [Traffic Logistics](#) adopting the [MBT-1 Mobile Traffic Barrier system](#), the first in Australia; Arrowes [Automatic Cone Truck](#) and Ventia's collection of real time data with the aim to advance Truck Mounted Attenuators (TMA) functionality to reduce incident rates – all solutions to reduce risks to workers on the road. Education is also a powerful tool in influencing driver behaviour. Examples include [Fulton Hogan's](#) public awareness campaign, "See the cones. Obey the zones" designed to educate users about road workers up ahead, and Altus White Paper [Towards Safer Traffic Management](#), which looks at how innovative solutions can be utilised and leveraged.

GOVERNMENT ACTION

Governments are also playing their role to deliver safer outcomes.

Transport for NSW (TfNSW)'s [Traffic control at work sites \(TCAWS\) Technical Manual Issue 6.0](#) encourages the use of technological solutions such as E-Stops, boom gates and speed radar signs in place of an on-site road worker where possible.

Also of significance, TfNSW's Sydney Road Maintenance Road Asset Performance Contracts have a strong focus on improving safety outcomes for known risk areas such as workers on the road, with the aspiration of 'no worker on foot by 2030'.

These types of procurement initiatives encourage companies to deliver continuous improvements to safety through innovation and smarter work practices. This is an area of ongoing focus for the RA RWSWG.

Queensland's Department of Transport and Main Roads (TMR) has made that jurisdiction the first state in Australia to mandate the use of portable traffic lights on sites in high-speed zones, safely removing traffic controllers from the road. TMR has also introduced a [trial of speed cameras at worksites](#) to encourage road users to adhere to the speed limit – both tools to both manage speed and improve road safety.

AUSTROADS WORK

Richard Delplace provided an update on the [Austroads project relevant to the harmonisation of temporary traffic management \(TTM\) practice](#) across the ANZ road transport agencies.

The Austroads Guide to Temporary Traffic Management (AGTTM) is a 10-part best practice guide released in December 2019 and that provides technical guidance on the planning, design and implementation of TTM. The Guide aims to enhance the ability of road agencies and industry to meet work health and safety requirements and ultimately improve safety outcomes. Austroads is currently supporting agencies in their practical implementation of the Guide which will ensure TTM practices are streamlined and consistent across all Australian jurisdictions. A minor update to the Guide has also been released in September 2021 in response to industry and agency feedback from the initial release in December 2019.

In parallel, the project is developing the national TTM training framework that will specify mandatory training requirements for practitioners working on roads managed by the Austroads member Agencies. Rather than, as currently, individual training providers developing their own training material based on their interpretation of the applicable Skill Sets and Units of Competencies of the VET framework, Austroads is developing the national training material that will be licensed to



training providers approved by the road transport agencies. This approach will ensure practitioners are consistently trained to use the national guidance in their day-to-day jobs and that their qualifications are recognised across all Australian jurisdictions, not only in the one jurisdiction where they have been trained.

The National Prequalification Scheme for Temporary Traffic Management will provide a framework for companies seeking to be prequalified for TTM works, a mandatory requirement for any works managed by transport agencies. Similar to the AGTTM, the aim is to provide companies with mutual recognition to work across jurisdictions, and to implement reviews of companies and their performance on a regular basis to ensure best practice and consistent standards are being maintained.



Finally, the National Device Assessment Scheme is being developed as a type approval process for traffic control devices with the objective to harmonise practices, encourage innovation and minimise the administrative burden on industry in putting forward new solutions. This supports the industry's focus on using technology solutions where possible to enhance the safety of workers.

CONTINUING STEPS

RA is committed to progressing the work of the RSWG, including addressing priority areas highlighted in the webinar.

For anyone interested in learning more about the work of the RSWG they can contact the Roads Australia Policy Team on: policy@roads.org.au

You can also contact any of our speakers in this session who are all passionate about the topic of improving safety for road workers.

James Pennings concluded the session by highlighting that RA would make a donation to the [Safer Australian Roads and Highways \(SARAH\) Group](#) in lieu of speaker gifts.

RA is a proud principal partner of the SARAH Group, the organisation behind National Road Safety Week, a week observed during May each year that is dedicated to spreading the message to 'drive so others survive'.



EVENT OUTPUTS & NEXT STEPS

A snapshot of the event was promoted through Roads Australia's [LinkedIn](#) channel, with the presentations available on the RA [website](#).

RA will continue to host further webinars to promote road worker safety. The next is planned to be held in October 2021 and will explore best practice in work zone safety.

