

ROAD WORKER SAFETY WORKSHOP

17 JULY 2019 - SYDNEY

Deputy Safety Stream Chair, Jeff Doyle, chaired a Roadworker Safety Workshop on 17 July 2019. Sponsored by 3M and Altus Traffic, the workshop brought together more than 60 industry leaders who were in accord about the sense of urgency and importance of coming together under the RA banner to consider how best to manage the risks posed to roadworkers while providing a safe road environment for all road users.

Roads Australia recognises that working on roads and roadsides poses significant risks to workers and motorists with changed roadway conditions, disrupted traffic flow, limited working space, and movement of construction and public vehicles in close proximity to workers and worksites.

The workshop was striking in that each attendee commenced by sharing their deep commitment to improving roadworker safety, with the following individual priority themes emerging:

- credibility and respect for roadworkers (current poor public perception of roadworkers);
- public behaviour at work sites (improving social awareness and driver compliance);
- the role of government and industry to work together to improve awareness / education and consistency;
- discrepancies between the low acceptance of occupational health and safety risks generally, not flowing through to our standards for roadworkers;
- the need for regulatory change (especially improved pre-qualification standards) and consistency;
- the need to improve uptake of technology and innovation to improve safety (take opportunities to remove the person from danger); and
- take opportunities to collaborate widely.



Our key areas of focus for the day were:

- Procurement and safety
 - *How can procurement methods and approaches be improved to deliver safer outcomes or roadworkers and the public?*
- Technological innovation
 - *What are the barriers to adopting new technologies and innovation that could improve the safety of roadworkers?*
- Industry performance
 - *Is industry treating roadworker safety seriously? Where can we improve?*
- Regulatory environment
 - *Does the current regulatory environment (standards, approvals and compliance) do enough to underpin road safety? How could it be strengthened?*

The workshop heard from industry speakers and delved deeper into the issues raised during a lively panel session with the three speakers.

1. *The Operating Environment: Lines, Signs and Regulations*, Kosta Karagiannopoulos, 3M.
2. *Safety at Road Worksites*, Dr Dan Sullivan, Austroads
3. *Roadworker Safety Opportunities and Priorities*, James Pennings, Altus.

Breakout groups considered each of the key areas of focus, with the discussion of technological innovation enhanced by the tour of the 3M Innovation Lab offered to all participants.

Outcomes

The wrap up session confirmed endorsement at the workshop for the following outcomes:

1. Procurement processes

- a. In collaboration with the Capacity Stream procurement policy work, explore whether traffic management safety objectives can be separately addressed in tender to enable clarity of what level of safety standards is included in the bid cost. This would send a message about the importance of safety in the conduct of the project as well as better support the client to assess value for money and compare project bids.
- b. In collaboration with the Capacity Stream procurement policy work, raise awareness amongst clients that a greater contract length supports investment in the professionalisation of the roadworker safety workforce and in innovation that improves safety and reduces long term costs. RA should open a conversation with government to explore opportunities to achieve these objectives collaboratively.

2. Pre-qualification requirements

- a. The workshop strongly agreed that there was a need to lift the bar by raising the minimum standards for pre-qualification. In collaboration with the Capacity Stream, the working group can explore options for lifting formal regulatory standards in consultation with Austroads. There was also an appetite for the working group to liaise with relevant industry partners to identify whether industry should take the lead and develop a voluntary standard that can be developed and applied more quickly. Government should also be consulted in this process.

3. Industry image

- a. It was recognised that there is a general industry need to enhance our image and this is particularly true in the roadworker safety space. It was agreed that the working group should explore opportunities to promote the industry through positive story-telling, and raising awareness of our lifting of standards and the service we provide to the public.
- b. As an industry we should also consider how we value our roadworkers, and this may lead to the public following our example.

4. Regulatory compliance and consequences of non-compliance

- a. All participants agreed that along with fit-for-purpose regulation, there is a need to improve the compliance checking regime and the consequences of non-compliance. This was relevant for industry and also the public traveling through worksites. The working group should develop a considered high-level position on compliance and consequences with respect to the key areas of road worker safety for RA consideration.

5. United Kingdom experience and lessons

- a. Reference was made to the United Kingdom experience throughout the workshop presentations and group report-backs. As such, the workshop proposes that the RA Board considers a future RA Study Visit to the UK to focus on roadworker and road safety. This could be done as RA only or in collaboration with other interested groups, such as Austroads and ARRB. If agreed, the working group will be charged with proposing visit objectives and a high-level program to the RA Board.

6. Public awareness and communication

- a. Identify options to work cooperatively with law enforcement bodies (such as the police) to facilitate improved roadworker safety outcomes at road sites. This may utilise technology, early notice, sharing information or other avenues.

- b. Consider ways in which industry can improve our communication with the public, to enhance road worker safety. For example, research suggests that the public has become cynical about reduced speed requirements at road sites and compliance is low because the public often sees an unattended road site. Whether new signage such as '*changed conditions, unattended work site, 40 km/h*' would mean that attended work sites would have higher reduced speed compliance is something the working group should consider.

7. Collaboration

- a. The working group should comprise or invite representatives from relevant industry groups as well as key workshop participants.
- b. The approach to all roadworker safety issues should be done as collaboratively as possible to take stakeholders on the journey with us (raising awareness) and also to improve and fast-track the opportunities for improving roadworker safety.

The detailed composition of the working group and its terms of reference and resourcing will be proposed by the Safety Stream leadership, Rodd Staples (Chair) and Jeff Doyle (Deputy Chair).

Roads Australia thanks all participants for their contribution to advancing the important issue of roadworker safety.

Safety Stream Deputy Chair

Jeff Doyle

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