NEW RA POLICY CHAPTER TO LOOK FOR ROAD FINANCING SOLUTIONS

Roads Australia has launched a new policy group to focus on the pressing issue of how to fund and finance road infrastructure.

The new Road Funding and Financing Chapter was launched in Melbourne in March on the eve of RA's six-monthly Forum of road industry leaders.

The Chapter launch was attended by 35 participants from across the public and private sectors. Tim Boyle, RA's Vice President and the Chief Operating Officer of Sinclair Knight Merz, will chair the new Chapter.

The Chapter will focus not just on the immediate question of how to unlock financing for planned new road infrastructure in the current economic climate, but the broader question of how society pays for road construction and maintenance in the future.

The Chapter will work along similar lines to RA's congestion, sustainability and capacity chapters - that is, by providing a vehicle for all stakeholders - including the government and finance sectors - to exchange and test opinions, ideas and solutions, with a view to developing a broadly-based suite of options that can be referred to political leaders for consideration and action.

RA President, Ray Fisher, says the current economic crisis is undermining the ability of both governments and the private sector to fund and deliver new infrastructure.

"This infrastructure is critical in terms of pulling Australia out of the current crisis - both in terms of job creation and as a stimulus to economic activity - and setting us up for long-term prosperity," he says.

"We have to look outside the square to find the funding and financing solutions that can deliver this critical infrastructure - and that's the task with which this new Chapter is charged."

The National Gallery of Victoria provided a magnificent backdrop for RA's March Forum in Melbourne.

For more information about the Road Funding and Financing Chapter, contact RA Policy Director, Christine Keyes, christine@roads.org.au

Guests of RA member Fulton Hogan at the Forum lunch.

Victorian Roads and Ports Minister, Tim Pallas, addresses participants at the Forum lunch.

RA MEMBER PROFILE

QUEENSLAND MAIN ROADS

MAIN ROADS CONTINUES TO DELIVER...

Amid a climate of global economic slowdown and ongoing population growth, it's business as usual at Main Roads.

The department tasked with planning, delivering and maintaining the state's largest built asset – 33,550 kilometres of state-controlled roads and 6600 bridges and culverts – continues to deliver on its record program of works for Queensland.

"Main Roads has a vision to connect Queenslanders. This vision is an ongoing and far-reaching one – one that we will continue to refine, particularly as our population grows, our climate changes and our social and economic demands shift, to ensure the needs of Queenslanders continue to be met," Main Roads Director-General Alan Tesch said.

"But despite these challenges Main Roads remains committed to delivering a record $16.2 billion roads program over the next five years. This commitment will see the provision of effective and innovative road infrastructure to support the sustained long-term growth in Queensland."

Mr Tesch said the road construction industry was a key generator of employment and economic activity.

"In the current economic climate, road investment and activity in Queensland will act as a key generator of employment, not only in urban areas, but also in rural Queensland where the road network serves as the economic backbone keeping communities productive and connected," he said.

"While the planning and construction of new road projects both sustains and creates jobs across a variety of industries state-wide, preserving and rehabilitating the road network generates even greater employment impacts, particularly in our provincial communities."

One of Main Roads' key deliverables is planning for tomorrow's Queensland today. Mr Tesch said it was critical to the department's success that industry worked in collaboration with Main Roads in maintaining the infrastructure of today and in planning and building the infrastructure of tomorrow.

Aerial view of construction on Springfield interchange of Centenary Highway Extension.

"As we work to deliver and maintain a first-class road network across the state, our cooperative partnerships with industry are of critical importance and integral in our job of 'Connecting Queensland'."

"Main Roads recognises the mutual benefit that can be gained in working together with organisations through alliances and other contracting methods, to ensure the department delivers projects on time and with best value to the community.

"As we deliver road infrastructure projects well into the future, it is important to keep abreast of changing situations and methods. This is important as we continue carrying out the large task of delivering projects detailed in the state government's identified transport plans.

Construction on Bruce Higway Upgrade, between Woodlands and Veales, Townsville Region.

Mr Tesch said one of Main Roads' strategic priorities was to achieve reliable delivery of our Roads Program, to meet sustained long-term growth in Queensland.

"This can only be done in cooperation and collaboration with industry," he said.

Mr Tesch said Main Roads was strongly positioned for the next five years to meet Queensland's road infrastructure challenges, despite these changing economic times.

"In other words, we have a major and long-term commitment to building and maintaining road infrastructure for the future and a top priority is identifying the best possible way to deliver this infrastructure for Queensland," he said.

"This investment in road infrastructure is guaranteed to flow through to the general economy, and wider economic benefits will be realised from increased employment and reduced transport costs.

"We look forward to continuing to work with industry to achieve our vision of an effective and innovative road network for all Queenslanders," he said.

RA MEMBER PROFILE
LEIGHTON CONTRACTORS

Northern Hume Alliance paving works.

Creating partnerships

When it comes to road and bridge construction in Australia, Leighton Contractors is at the forefront, delivering numerous landmark projects for more than 50 years.

Whether it is upgrades, duplications, complex superstructures, tolled motorways or tunnels for new or existing road infrastructure projects, the Leighton Contractors approach is always the same.

As Leighton Contractors Executive General Manager Dave Wilson explains, the focus is on partnerships.

"Leighton Contractors has long been recognised as a leader in road and bridge construction due to our expert engineering and excellence in project delivery. But in the past five years what has truly transformed our business is our ability to build lasting partnerships with clients, commercial partners and the communities in which we work," Mr Wilson said.

Driving innovation on Northern Hume Alliance

In NSW, Leighton Contractors is part of the Northern Hume Alliance team which is showing first hand how the right partnership mix can generate innovation under the alliance model.

When the Northern Hume Alliance began paving works on the Hume Highway duplication south of Wagga Wagga, it became clear that winter temperatures on site would regularly fall below the minimum 5°C specification set by the Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA).

Given the potential for cold conditions to impact pavement performance and program delivery, Leighton Contractors and the other Alliance partners including the RTA, Maunsell Australia, SMEC Australia and Coffey Geotechnics took the decision to work together to find a solution.

After a three week review of existing paving methodologies, materials, mix designs and management of pavement operations, the Alliance developed a new set of procedures for pavement management in cold conditions which ensured against the negative effects on pavement strength and durability.

In doing so, the Alliance succeeded not only in advancing the Northern Hume Alliance project but also delivered benefits to the rest of the industry, including other contractors in the area facing the same issues.

Due to the commitment of the Alliance partners, a quick resolution to the cold weather paving issue was achieved and, significantly, the outcomes now form the basis of an RTA-wide approach to cold weather paving.

Industry Unity – the 'One Team' approach

Partnership and collaboration have also been the hallmark of the Deer Park Bypass project in Victoria.

Presented with a standard design and construct contract for the delivery of the Deer Park Bypass, Leighton Contractors and VicRoads, led by Trevor Boyd, hit upon the idea of creating a new and better approach to teamwork.

Forming a collaborative relationship, similar to an alliance, site staff from VicRoads and Leighton Contractors were encouraged to break down the 'us and them' ethos and instead share a common set of project goals. Everyone was encouraged to focus on what worked best for the project as a whole under the auspices of a 'One Team' approach.

Key areas such as safety, compliance, health, time management, training and

communications were set key performance indicators to measure the success of the concept. The 'One Team' worked from the same office and considered themselves to be Deer Park Bypass team members, rather than salaried employees from different companies.

This approach saw the emergence of unprecedented work practices, such as a Leighton Contractors employee serving as a VicRoads Superintendent's Representative. When it came to the important issue of workplace safety, rather than management dictating how to improve site safety, team workers were made accountable to their own leading hand who in turn was accountable to every member of their group. The project's safety auditor made the comment that "safety doesn't cost much on this project, as the project management listens to delivery members, rather than the delivery members listening to the management and issues are addressed immediately".

The success of the 'One Team' approach is considered to be a legacy for the entire construction industry. Apart from fostering a culture of mutual respect and unity, its success can be measured against the early delivery of the project – six months ahead of schedule.

Leighton Contractors Youth DriveSafe – Equipping Queensland's Learner Drivers

Leighton Contractors has a long history of community partnering but in 2008, that leapt to a new level with the Youth DriveSafe Initiative in Queensland. This successful pilot offered five hours of free driver training from RACQ recommended driving schools to 500 students from 10 secondary schools in South East Queensland. It aimed to equip school-based learner drivers with the essential knowledge and practical skills to set them on-course to a long and safe driving future.

Now in 2009, this initiative will expand, with further valuable packages of five free driving lessons for 625 young Queenslanders who might otherwise miss out on professional tuition. The initiative will extend beyond Brisbane to Townsville and the fleet of training vehicles will increase from four to five.

Youth DriveSafe Initiative Launch.

Last year's students have been surveyed and the results demonstrate that professional driving tuition helped develop keener road safety awareness among the youngsters. They say they are less likely to speed, and claim they have improved driving skills. Overall, the survey indicated the initiative has been very successful in having a real impact on road safety.

Leighton Contractors' key role in designing and constructing Queensland's roads has made the company conscious of the need for safer roads and safer driving. This was the foundation for the Youth DriveSafe Initiative which is part of a broader Leighton Contractors Northern Region Road Safety Program.

This year the program will add a research component in partnership with CARRS-Q, a group formed jointly by the Queensland University of Technology and the Motor Accident Insurance Commission. Furthermore, Leighton Contractors will become a sponsor partner of the 2009 Queensland Road Safety Awards, presented by CARRS-Q and RACQ.

At Leighton Contractors, we understand our success is based on the quality of our people, the relationships with our clients and partners, and the communities we work in.

For more information about our business approach and the values that define the way we work, please visit our website:
www.leightoncontractors.com.au

Like to find out MORE about RA and its members?

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