

AWARD PUTS ARF ON THE WORLD STAGE

The Australian Road Forum has received international recognition with the presentation of its IRF Global Road Achievement Award in the United States.

The Award was accepted on ARF's behalf by Mr Wes Ballentine of Transurban at the IRF's Annual Meeting in Fort Lauderdale in October.

The prestigious Award recognises ARF's significant success in strategically reforming and rebuilding its membership over the last three years.

Started by the IRF in 2000, the Global Road Achievement Awards seek to honor and recognise road projects throughout the world that demonstrate excellence and innovation.

ARF member Maunsell also won an Award this year, while another member - the Queensland Department of Main Roads - is also a past winner.



Transurban's Wes Ballentine (right) accepts ARF's Global Road Achievement Award from IRF Director General and CEO, Patrick Sankey.



Winners of the 2007 Global Road Achievement Awards together at the presentation in Fort Lauderdale.

FORUM PARTICIPANTS GIVEN OPTIMISTIC PICTURE FOR ROAD ACTIVITY



Full house...the ARF Brisbane Forum held in November.

Participants at the ARF Forum meeting in Brisbane in November were given an optimistic outlook for road construction activity and spending.

In his regular report on the economic outlook for the roads industry, Adrian Hart, Senior Economist (Infrastructure and Mining) with BIS Shrapnel told participants road activity overall was forecast to remain at strong levels, with the projected commencement of a number of major projects in 2011-12 signalling a significant upswing.

While the private sector was seeing a flattening of activity associated with the completion of a number of major construction projects and a drop-off in subdivisions work, this was counterbalanced by further strong increases in the public sector which was keeping construction levels overall at a high

level.

"The message is that road activity is strong now and will be sustained at this level for the next few years, but be prepared for more work in the pipeline," Mr Hart said.

ARRB Director David Stuart-Watt provided Forum participants with an informative briefing on the Scoping Study on the Australian Truck and Bus Research and Information Centre (ATBRIC).

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- Visit our website – www.roads.org.au or
- Call the Executive Director, Ian Webb, on (03) 9821 5255.

The study was undertaken by ARRB Group, with the assistance of state and national governments and the road transport industry, to develop a viable proposal for the establishment of a new national centre to lead Australian research and information activities on the safety, efficiency and performance of heavy vehicles.

The study identifies a 'clear and urgent need' for a dedicated research centre, estimating the cost to establish and run the centre over five years at \$32 million.

Forum participants also heard from representatives of the various state road agencies, who delivered their usual round-ups of road activity within their respective jurisdictions.

The keynote lunch speaker at the

Brisbane Forum was Queensland Mains Roads Director-General, Alan Tesch, who provided an overview of the State's ambitious roads program and what QMR was doing to overcome some of the challenges it faced in managing the task.

Mr Tesch said one of the biggest ongoing challenges was the incredible population growth Queensland continued to enjoy.

The Government's response was an integrated planning and funding approach, reflected in the five-year Road Implementation Program, aligned with the 20-year policy direction of integrated transport plans – both on a statewide and regional basis – and, at a broader level, the Queensland government's South East Queensland Infrastructure Plan and Program (SEQIPP).

This approach not only helped the government manage the challenges associated with growth, but gave the private sector confidence to expand its operations, he said.

On the skills front, Mr Tesch said QMR was enabling a number of strategies to retain and grow its skills capability, including initiatives like the Transport Infrastructure Capability Scheme (TICS), which provides additional employee benefits – including salary loadings of up to 25 per cent – to reflect comparable movements in the private sector and attract and retain staff in positions identified as being “highly in demand”, as well as graduate recruitment.

Mr Tesch also outlined some of the program initiatives QMR was adopting to address the maintenance backlog.



Serious intent....Forum participants take in proceedings.

The Brisbane Forum was a full-house, attracting some 125 high-level participants.

“The Forum, as always, provided an excellent opportunity for senior road executives to come together and discuss the issues that matter, as well as catch up on what's happening in the industry,” said ARF Chief Executive, Ian Webb.

Our next Forum meeting will be held in March, and we'll be sending out information on this event in the new year.

“Given that the Brisbane Forum was over-subscribed, I'd urge both ARF members and non-members to book early.”



Participants at the Forum enjoy the Brisbane weather during a break in proceedings.

KEY TO SUCCESSFUL CONGESTION PRICING STRATEGY IS 'GIVE' AND 'TAKE', FORUM TOLD

Road congestion pricing has its best chance of winning public acceptance if it's delivered as part of an integrated, strategic solution that includes reliable and affordable alternatives.

That's the view of international experts Booz Allen Hamilton (BAH), who've most recently been involved in the process leading to the decision to introduce road pricing in Greater Manchester, in the UK

BAH principal, Mark Streeting, told participants at November's ARF Forum meeting in Brisbane that motorists in the UK now recognised the need for urgent action to address congestion, and were willing to accept solutions like road pricing if there was a 'give' alongside the 'take'.

"There's been a shift in the debate from 'why is road pricing necessary?' to 'how is road pricing delivered?'," he said.

"For congestion charging schemes to be successful, they must be acceptable to the public – acceptable in terms of cost, privacy and the benefits they bring."

The 'benefits' include such things as better public transport and roads, funded by the revenue raised by the congestion charging.

As a precondition of success, road pricing must be complemented by a comprehensive strategy surrounding supply (roads, public transport, walking/cycling) and management (network maintenance, optimal regulatory environment, high quality information systems), Mr Streeting said.

Mr Streeting presented a number of international case studies to demonstrate how road pricing was being applied overseas.

In London, the introduction of congestion charging has achieved four core goals - reduced congestion, radical improvements to bus services, improved journey time reliability for car users, and improved efficiency of goods and service distribution.

Revenues raised by the scheme have been used on transport improvements across London, particularly on buses.

Since the introduction of the scheme, congestion in the charging zone has been reduced by 30 per cent, and the number of bus passengers entering the zone has increased by 29,000 in the morning peak.

On a smaller scale, in Durham, UK, the introduction of an off-peak congestion charge has seen a reduction in vehicular traffic of 85 per cent in the cordoned area, a resultant lowering of vehicle emissions, and a 10 per cent increase in pedestrian activity.

Revenues raised by the scheme have been used to support a frequent bus service to and from the charging area. A survey carried out after the introduction of the scheme found a 70 per cent acceptance rate.

Mr Streeting also presented case studies for Oslo, Stockholm and Singapore, where congestion schemes have been successfully implemented.

Notwithstanding these experiences, he said it was important to recognise that transplanting solutions adopted elsewhere is unlikely to succeed, as city geographies, demographics and transport conditions can vary wildly.

Rather, a strategy for congestion relief needs to be led by an understanding of the problem, defined by when and where it happens, and 'monetising' it to calculate what the costs are that motorists impose on society at different places and times.

ARF Chief Executive, Ian Webb, told participants at the Forum that although road congestion pricing was currently an unpalatable concept to governments in Australia, it nevertheless demanded examination as a potential traffic management solution.

"The ARF is committed to putting this issue on the table and inviting a widespread, long-running debate involving government, industry and the community," he said.

"That's not to say we support the concept – rather, we support a frank and open assessment of whether it could work in this country.

"To that end, we have the benefit of being able to look at what's been done overseas and see what's worked and what hasn't - and more importantly, why."

Mark Streeting's presentation to the ARF Forum can be viewed at the ARF website, www.roads.org.au, - click on News and ARF Publication.