

FROM THE CEO'S DESK

As Louis Nucifora, AAPA Chairman points out later in *Asphalt Review*, AAPA held its 13th Health Safety and Environment Conference in Melbourne in July.

This was a very successful event with over 100 delegates attending and on behalf of AAPA I express my thanks to the conference organisers, Hallmark Editions, and all the speakers.

The Conference gave delegates from industry, government and research organisations the opportunity to hear a wide range of speakers addressing current issues from the bitumen burns card to retaining skilled staff.

Louis introduced Gary Liddle, CEO of VicRoads to open the conference. In his presentation Gary emphasised the effective relationship between industry and government that is maintained by AAPA. He also emphasised the need for us all to work together to ensure that our worksites are safe. As an example he mentioned the often close proximity road construction and maintenance crews work to moving traffic and the demands this places on us to constantly strive for even better workplace safety.

Gary's opening was followed by a key note address by Trevor Distin, CEO of the South African Bitumen Association (SABITA). Trevor spoke of a range of international issues that may impact on our industry including the increasing interest in greenhouse emissions around the world, a topic very relevant to

Australia.

Trevor also highlighted differences between South Africa and Australia such as high unemployment in South Africa and low unemployment in Australia. However, despite this he noted that there is still a shortage of skilled pavement operators in his country. Like Australia this poses challenges to South Africa to ensure that operators are trained and then retained.

Retaining skilled people was highlighted by Julie Sloane. Her paper Workforce Trends, discussed the growing shortage of skilled workers, particularly in the construction industry. And she indicated that this shortage is likely to increase unless our industry takes positive action as fewer people are now seeking to work in our industry than ever before. Also some of those already in our industry may seek to move to the high paying mining industries in Western Australia and Queensland.

Julie advised that with very low levels of unemployment, employees will pick and choose where they work and who they work for. She said that employees are not interested in "kicking the goals" of their employer. Instead they want to "kick their own goals". Employers must therefore be aware of their employees' personal objectives and as much as possible align the corporate objectives

with them. This does not mean just giving employees more money but it may mean offering incentives such as more responsibility or access to training. It may also mean redefining some of their functions to align with their interests. Also, if a young person resigns to go to the mines in Western Australia employers should tell them that when they come back there will be job for them. After all, when they come back they are likely to be more settled and may have picked up new skills as well.

One paper presented summed up many of the issues raised by all the speakers. This was Michael Sharpe's paper in which he discussed the highly successful Safety Bro awareness campaign run in his company.

Safety Bro is a cartoon character developed by the management and staff of Sharpe Brothers to pass information on health and safety. Since his inception he has quickly been adopted by the Sharpe Brothers workforce as a member of the team, providing advice on a wide range of workplace issues. He has also been adopted as a member of many of the employees' families

providing a range of advice including good shows on TV. This showed how a workforce that works together can improve health and safety for the benefit of all. Safety Bro was also awarded the 2008 National Safe Work Awards for best workplace health and safety practices in small business.

In this edition of *Asphalt Review* three of the papers presented at the conference have been highlighted. These are:

- Advances in Road Construction Safety in Victoria since 2004 – the Vicroads Experience – Michael Rose - VicRoads
- Operate Safe Industry Self Governance Regime – Chris Olsen – Roading New Zealand
- Austroads Bitumen Safety Guide – Kym Neaylon and Allan Alderson - ARRB

These papers and the others delivered at the conference are available from the AAPA website www.aapa.asn.au.

While talking about safety it is appropriate to mention the paper in *Asphalt Review* by Kay Coppa on skin cancer. As we approach the summer months many of us are hoping for a nice tan. Also, if we work outdoors we all want to remove