

REFINING CONTRACT DOCUMENTATION

AUS-SPEC HAS RECENTLY UNDERTAKEN A MAJOR REVIEW OF ITS CONSTRUCTION SPECIFICATION TEMPLATES. THE RESULTING DOCUMENTS ARE CLEARER, MORE CONCISE AND HAVE A STRONG LOCAL GOVERNMENT FOCUS.

The national local government specification system, AUS-SPEC, is updated by NATSPEC, a not-for-profit organisation, which provides a national master specification to the construction industry.

The AUS-SPEC specification system helps ensure technical and contractual consistency between councils, yet allows flexibility to edit and add specific requirements where necessary.

AUS-SPEC, a joint venture between NATSPEC and the Institute of Public Works Engineering Australasia (IPWEA), provides a range of specification templates, also known as worksections, for the construction and maintenance of parks, urban and open spaces, buildings, roads and bridges and public utilities. Over the last 12 months, AUS-SPEC undertook an analysis of these construction worksections.

This revision addressed a number of aims of the AUS-SPEC documents as a whole. These aims included the need to focus on local government, produce a national document, which accommodates regional variations, provide a reference-type specification that requires little customisation, and establish an industry standard template that improves quality and productivity.

Nandini Mehta, AUS-SPEC Manager at NATSPEC says these kinds of reviews are essential in order to keep all relevant construction information up to date, and

within current industry practice.

"When the construction methodologies, techniques and materials change, as they do from time to time, we need to update the documents to match current industry practice," she says. "In this review we had a local government focus so we can reduce complexity and provide more clarity in the documents."

Ms. Mehta explains that the worksection is essentially an editable construction template for engineers to create project specifications, which should be easy to use, and accessible for local councils across the country.

Ms. Mehta explains that information on new methodologies and practices is often sourced from publications available from state road authorities, Austroads and other industry organisation providing specialist services, such as AustStab. "We review these publications and include the relevant information in the AUS-SPEC documents to reflect current industry practice," she says.

AUS-SPEC subscribers and other external reviewers are given the opportunity to review the updated worksections and add any relevant comments or inclusions, which Ms. Mehta says is key to keeping Australia's construction and infrastructure sectors at pace with relevant and current practice.

This most recent review, for instance, included a substantial revision of the 1113 *Stabilisation* worksection template, which is aligned with new information incorporated

in the 2015 edition of AustStab's *Pavement Recycling and Stabilisation Guide*.

The revised worksection incorporates comments from external reviewers, including AustStab members, and changes in standards and other cited documents from August 2014 to August 2015.

The major amendments and additions to the document include updated information on industry practice concerning the likes of foamed bitumen, polymer-modified bitumen, bituminous emulsions, stabilisation at the subgrade level, as well as including more information on stationary mixing plants and in-situ mixing plants.

The review took into account ease of use for engineers and council workers by providing more clarity on the subject. Subgrade and pavement stabilisation notes, for instance, were separated in the review to make information clearer and easier to access. "When you're actively doing work in the field you have to monitor certain stabilisation tolerances, which is another clause that has been updated too," adds Ms. Mehta.

A new NATSPEC TECHnote, *DES 034 Pavement Stabilisation for Unsealed Roads*, was released with the 1113 *Stabilisation* worksection template update. Ms. Mehta explains that this TECHnote gives guidance on technical matters and discusses factors affecting the stabilisation of unsealed roads and it also displays basic procedures for binder selections.

Ms. Mehta asserts that the input from industry on these documents, particularly on the 1113 *Stabilisation* worksection template, was imperative during the review.

"We received a lot of comments from AustStab. The organisation's Chief Executive Officer, Leah Fisher, was very supportive and shared the document with AustStab's members, who then provided us with their valuable comments too. This enabled us to further improve the 1113 *Stabilisation* worksection," she says.

"To get feedback from industry is important. We usually get the information from Austroads and other organisations, but sometimes it can be challenging when you can't find the precise information. We update the document internally based on our research, but comments received from the industry provides us with a practical perspective from experts in the field."

Stuart Small, Project and Contracts Engineer at Great Lakes Council in New

South Wales, has contributed to a number of these worksection reviews (including the *Stabilisation* update) and sees the benefits in this latest update from a user's point of view.

He says that the latest review included an update to the layout of the documents, so much so that he began using the new format as soon as it became available in October for a new tender being advertised this December.

"It's very important to have the opportunity to provide feedback because we're striving to improve the level of service we provide to our local residents through our infrastructure," says Mr. Small. He adds that the council's contractors need an easy-to-read and concise document to follow, and this updated format allows for that.

Mr. Small explains that the bulk of the information that is customised for each project, selections, has been condensed into the appendices of the documents.

This means that engineers familiar with the template documents can focus more time on the appendices when pricing projects. Although, he says, it is always good practice to verify that no other important edits have been made to the core document, which are usually highlighted by a different text colour (brown).

"For those councils who don't want to go through and edit the core body of the template they can just go to the references," he says.

"It's very, very important to update these documents to keep up with best practice in the different industries covered, which is constantly evolving.

"If anything, those templates being impacted by evolving best practice, we ideally should be updating yearly." AustStab welcomes the opportunity to review the documents more frequently.

For more information on AUS-SPEC, please visit www.natspec.com.au. ■

ALL THINGS STABILISATION

THE CENTRE FOR PAVEMENT ENGINEERING EDUCATION'S (CPEE) HIGHLY REGARDED AND POPULAR INDUSTRY SHORT COURSE – "PAVEMENT RECYCLING AND IN-SITU STABILISATION" – IS RETURNING FOR 2016.

The Centre for Pavement Engineering Education (CPEE) is continuing its efforts to educate the roads sector on all things stabilisation after announcing the 2016 dates for its short course: *Pavement Recycling and In-situ Stabilisation*.

The two-day event is supported by AustStab, Austroads, Institute of Public Works Engineering Australia (IPWEA), Roads Australia and state road authorities.

The course caters to those in the pavement industry seeking a better understanding of stabilisation as a whole.

Engineers, project managers, supervisors and other specialists across all levels of government and industry are regular attendees at the course, which will be held in centres throughout Australia in 2016.

The course will enhance the knowledge of attendees on the types of stabilisation, binders, material characteristics and design and mix detailing involved in current industry practice.

Information provided at the course will give more detailed explanation to the types of stabilising binders used in road construction, their properties, manufacture and chemical reactions during the stabilisation process. Safety considerations associated with their use are also detailed.

Industry experts provide practical presentations supported by case studies showing the benefits of stabilisation technology. More details on the *Pavement Recycling and In-situ Stabilisation* short course can be found on CPEE's website: www.pavementeducation.edu.au. ■

2016 DATES AND LOCATIONS FOR THE CPEE PAVEMENT RECYCLING AND IN-SITU STABILISATION SHORT COURSE:

- Adelaide: 1-2 March
- Cloncurry: 16-17 March
- Sydney: 5-6 April
- Townsville: 25-26 May
- Bunbury/Busselton: 16-17 August
- Tamworth: 5-6 September
- Ballarat: 18-19 October