Background
In 2006 Austroads engaged Meyrick and Associates to undertake an examination of the research requirements of the Australian road industry. The research was to focus on the research needs of the road industry to determine what research should be undertaken within Australia, why it should be undertaken, and whether there will be sufficient capacity to carry out the work. The report, Research Needs of the Australian Road Industry (1), outlined the research needs of the Australian road industry under four headings: current and anticipated research requirements, current research activity and capacity, effectiveness of sharing and drawing on international research, and the benefits of road-related research.

One of the suggestions put forward during consultation for ensuring future research capacity was a national research register, which could not only function as an awareness tool on current activities, but in the longer term track trends in research needs and spending and be used to estimate the value of research and forecasting likely deficiencies.

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Development of the national road research register

The focus of this article is to provide an update on the creation of a national road research register. This became an Austroads project in 2007, with ARRB Group developing the Road Research Register. It is currently maintained by ARRB Group under the National Interest Services (NIS) program, which is funded by the federal, state and territory road authorities to support the delivery of land transport information services in the national interest. The Register is aimed at making researchers and practitioners aware of recent research activities, in order to avoid duplication of effort and encourage possible collaborative initiatives.

A range of information for each listed activity is offered, including contact details, jurisdiction, subject categories and known outputs. Where an output is known to be publicly available online, links to that are provided. The Register is designed to provide users with enough information so that, even some years after completion of a research activity, those interested may be able to follow up for more detail. This offers the opportunity for value adding to the information and also hopefully, will assist in the broadening of researcher networks. The Register is freely available online at: www.roadresearch.com.au

The register is overseen by a Research Coordination Group made up of representatives from Austroads member organisations. As well as guiding the development of the register, the group members ‘champion’ the register in their own organisations. The group will also be in a position to lead other research coordination activities.

Whilst the Register was initially developed to cover research projects, the Research Coordination Group recently decided to broaden the scope to cover research related activities or investigations. This may include details on data held, informal investigations undertaken, and expertise in a specialist area — in addition to details of formal research related projects, in-kind support and product/process reviews.

The majority of material currently in the Register is comprised of research activities undertaken or funded by Austroads, its member organisations and observers with some academic and industry records also included. During 2011 a wider selection of organisations will be approached to provide information on their research activities. Information is however welcome at any time, and if you think you have something to offer, please email info@arrb.com.au.

Conclusion

The Register, while still in content expansion, has been attracting use from not just within Australia but internationally. Since June 2010, over 9,400 pages were viewed from around 600 visits. The majority of visits were from Australia but there was also access from New Zealand, United Kingdom, France, China and India.

To date there are over 1700 research activities lodged in the register. Readers and researchers are encouraged to browse the Register, promote it to their colleagues and consider whether they have information that could be included. Within Queensland Transport and Main Roads, the departmental contact is John Spathonis at Engineering & Technology Division. External organisations should contact me, Andrew Meier, at ARRB Group, ph 03 98811603 or email info@arrb.com.au.

References