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VCMLA Newsletter

Issue 4

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2007 Fees carried forward. 2008 is free

New look Newsletter

Welcome to the new newsletter of the Victorian Construction Materials Laboratory Association. Members of the committee have been somewhat busy in their professional and personal lives throughout the 2007 year and we have not had the opportunity to provide a regular update of what has been happening in our industry. We intend on providing four issues of the newsletter per year and will rely on content, information, articles of interest, topics of discussion etc from our members and readers. So please send anything of interest to the committee for inclusion.

Message from the President

2007 has been a disappointing year for achieving our goals as an association. There are numerous excuses I could present as to why but to what end. What we need to show is a way forward and in saying that the committee and myself have decided that the fees generated during 2007 will be carried forward into 2008 and a renewal notice will not be issued. We have included in this newsletter the dates set for the 2008 committee meetings and dates of two open meeting for our members to attend, which will provide open discussion and guest speakers on specific topics. Please make an effort to support your association.

Cheers

Ernie Gmehling

**A Third NATA
accreditation
suspended.**

Industry News – Another one bits the dust.

Where is the geotechnical testing industry going, the short answer seems to be downhill. Over the last eighteen months Victoria has had three geotechnical testing laboratories have their NATA accreditation suspended. The reasons behind this are numerous and specific but we are not about to delve into those details, but rather look at this disappointing trend. Is this a true indication of the caliber of our industry? Have we become driven by the dollar or is it pressures from site supervisors, it may even be a lack of staff training. The construction industry is in a state of growth with more work than we testing labs can cope with or rather are suffering from finding competent, efficient skilled staff. It takes years to skill up a competent field technician and sadly we are losing these skilled staff to higher paying jobs elsewhere in the market place or to the highly paid mining industry. What are the answers? It would be appropriate if the senior members of our fraternity offer some answers, or maybe it is those young up and coming technicians can provide some guidance as to why they decide to leave. Please feel free to drop us a line, this is a topic worth discussing.

It seems NATA might just be on the right track with their direction of imposing a high level of skills for the people that sign off reports. It seems that at least two of the recent suspensions may have been avoided if those responsible had the necessary skills, knowledge, experience and training.

CE009 Committee 2007

For those that don't know, the CE009 committee is a group of individuals that represent various industries and organisations which reside over Australian Standards for AS1289 and AS1141 as well as many other standards that the geotechnical, quarry, concrete and asphalt industries use. Listed below are those people and are there for each and every-one of you to express an opinion too. The VCMLA is represented by Ernie Gmehling, contact details (ph 0401 924 205 or email: ernie.gmehling@optusnet.com.au) feel free at any time to contact him regarding your concerns about a current test method.

How the review process works: Before a standard is released for use, it goes through a rigorous process of discussion, dissection and review. Each method is updated typically every five to ten years and is sent out for public comment. Now I know for a fact that many of you out there wouldn't know this process existed. I can say that in the first 15 years of my career I was one of those that did not know how it all worked. If you are lucky enough to be in the loop, or interested enough to visit the Standards web site you will have the chance to review standards as they are updated. So understand that if you want to have your say it is up to you to make the effort to regularly check for drafts out for public comment.

Below are some of the standards that are currently in review at various stages of the process. The next scheduled meeting is for November 20th 2007.

**Not happy with a test
method - contact your
representative or one of
the members on the
CE009 committee.**



CE009 committee 2007

AUSTROADS	Joe Sivwright
Assoc of Geotechnical Testing Authorities (QLD) inc	Peter Davis
Australian Building Codes Board	Gary Luck
Australian Chamber of Commerce & Industry	Dom Meadley
Australian Geomechanics Society	Tony Bretreger
Australian Stabilsation Industry Association	George Vorobieff
Cement Concrete & Aggregates Australia	Ion Dumitri
Cement Concrete & Aggregates Australia	Tom Kovacs
Department of Planning & Infrastructure (NT)	Adam Grainger
Ecla	Chris Stabb
Engineers Australia	Peter Bayetto
Engineers Australia	Andreas Nataatmdja
NATA	Bettina Poxlietner
The University of Mebourne	Sam Yuen
The University of Sydney	John Small
VCMLA	Ernie Gmehling

- AS 1289 3.1.1
- AS 1289 3.1.2
- AS 1289 3.2.1
- AS 1289 3.3.1
- AS 1289 3.3.2
- AS1289 3.4.1
- AS1289 3.5.1
- AS 1289 3.8.3
- AS 1289 3.8.2
- AS 1289 3.9.1
- AS1289 6.7.3
- AS 1141.3.3 - 999
- AS 1141.51-1996
- AS1141.53-1996
- AS 1141.71-1998

Test methods in various stages of review by the CE009 committee.

VCMLA LOAN TEST SIEVES

It is now a NATA requirement (as of 1 January 2008) that all labs accredited for Particle Size analysis comply with new requirements of calibration on plate and wire woven sieves. Just to remind you the new requirement for punch plate sieves has been changes to a minimum biannual calibration. While the wire woven sieves must be checked using a reference set of sieves used only for this purpose. The VCMLA committee has purchased a complete set of 2.36mm down to 75um sieves for this purpose to be loaned out to its members for a small fee. The cost per use is \$ 50.00 and is based on the collection and return to Ground Science at Factory 11, 8-20 Brock Street Thomastown. Upon collection a conditions report will be completed by both the receiving party and the dispatch person. The same process will occur upon return. If the condition of the sieves is unacceptable a clean charge of \$15.00 will be incurred. If a sieve is damaged the cost of replacement may be born by the loan company depending on the age of the sieve. It must be emphasized that the loan period is for one week only to allow all members the opportunity to use them.

VCMLA Committee drawing board.

Your committee

Ernie Gmehling – chairman

Con Ravira – Vice Chairman

Dom Meadley – Secretary

Malcom Talbot – Treasurer

Geoff Hughes – committee member

Tom Seymour – committee member

Peter Fry – committee member

It is a shared view locally and nationally, that it is difficult to find skilled staff in the field of geotechnical testing. Most of us try the first option of asking around the office, “does anyone know of any young school leavers looking for a job”, and more often than not the answer is no. The question is always asked; “where do you find your staff”?

The VCMLA committee has discussed this topic and considered maybe we need to start promoting our profession to school leavers and other interested adults. We need to promote it as a career and a long term option for our young technicians. It was obvious we needed a brochure outlining the benefits and option available to them. It is hoped that this brochure will soon be complete and a number of copies will be made available to members free of charge. If members require a larger quantity a fee will be incurred.

The idea is to attend career days either as an organization or as a representative of your company. Other avenues are to promote any available positions through local secondary schools in your area, via the career departments and notice boards. Obviously you will need to make contact with the appropriate staff at the school before the brochure can be placed in the school. The brochure will have a blank place on the rear to allow businesses to place a company stamp with their details.

Education options

Where are we at with the new NATA requirements regarding obtaining a qualification in soils? As an association not very far!!! It's a complicated matter due to the small numbers in our industry. To start with educational facilities are reluctant to start a program with small numbers that are not sustainable. The committee has decided to sit back and observe what is occurring in Queensland as they are well down the track in this regard. There is a lot of hard work to be done to get something up and running and to be honest none of us have the time to commit that sort of free energy and effort.

What we can say is that at present Box Hill Institute of TAFE offers an Associate Diploma in Engineering (civil) and if you are interest you should contact the engineering department for the appropriate application fees. Ph 03 0000000 We however want to be able to provide qualifications as a certificate III, IV and V

For information on laboratory qualifications in Queensland visit the department of employment and training web site at; http://tsx.dtir.qld.gov.au/cgi-bin/dycgi03.exe/inetsite/app/qtis/qtis_a-z.stm?ta_type=Traineeship scroll down to laboratory technician and follow the links.

Important dates to remember

- Committee meeting** Wed 12 December 2007
- Committee meeting** Thurs 6 March 2008
- Members meeting – guest speaker** Thurs 10 April 2008
- AGM** Wed 4 June 2008
- Committee meeting** Thurs 12 June 2008
- Committee meeting** Wed 10 September 2008
- Committee meeting** Thurs 4 December 2008

JANUARY 2008

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