

## Geotechnical and Civil Construction Material Testing Summary of the 32<sup>nd</sup> Accreditation Advisory Committee Meeting

This meeting took place on 29<sup>th</sup> February 2024 at NATA's Melbourne office.

### Committee Membership

- Mr Maurice Bradley joined the committee since the last meeting.
- Mr Tony Cullinane retired from the committee, and from the Chair.
- Mr Tom Kovacs was appointed Chair by the Board.

### Reports from Members

- Increasing use of advanced technologies such as Artificial Intelligence and intelligent compaction, highlighting the need for clear pathways to incorporate these innovations into existing testing standards.
- Concerns about declining technical expertise in the industry, with reports of insufficiently trained staff and improperly conducted tests impacting data integrity.
- Shortages of calibrated equipment and trained professionals, including concerns about the limited availability of calibration facilities for nuclear density gauges for asphalt testing.
- Issues with improper use of laboratory data, such as adjustments to results for financial incentives, and the lack of adherence to minimum testing standards.
- Limited training opportunities offered by industry organisations, contributing to skill shortages and a lack of future leadership within the construction materials testing sector.
- Challenges in ensuring labs meet specific standards, particularly in the context of new or emerging technologies and revised testing methods.

### Stakeholder Engagement

- NATA continues to maintain strong relationships with state road agencies in support of the Memoranda of Understanding.
- Discussions with regulators and industry stakeholders about the need for training pathways and support for technical excellence in the construction materials testing sector.
- Engagements undertaken with stakeholders to ensure that emerging technologies and methods align with industry needs.
- Raising awareness of ethical testing practices and data integrity challenges through forums and targeted discussions with regulatory bodies and accredited facilities.

### Service Descriptors

Service descriptors described in the NATA publication *Specific Accreditation Guidance – Scope of accreditation – service descriptors for infrastructure and asset integrity* are generally considered suitable and fit for purpose.

### Miscellaneous Discussion

- Calibration of nuclear density gauges for asphalt testing: Noted the limited availability of accredited calibration facilities for nuclear density gauges, emphasising the need for contingency planning to address potential shortages.
- Disbanding of industry associations: Noted the closure of key industry associations, reducing opportunities for collective advocacy and support for testing laboratories.

The next meeting is planned for late 2025.