

# GEOTECHNICAL AND CIVIL CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS TESTING ACCREDITATION ADVISORY COMMITTEE

## 28<sup>th</sup> MEETING SUMMARY

This meeting was held at the NATA office in Melbourne on 6 July 2017. A summary of discussions is provided below:

- The Committee discussed progress in relation to the NATA Tabular scopes project and noted that certain equipment calibration activities historically undertaken within the Construction Materials Testing (CMT) field will now be formally recognised as a part of NATA's Calibration sector, while testing of cement and bituminous materials will now be re-classified under the Materials grouping. All other classes of tests currently covered under the CMT field will be incorporated into a new service area to be known as "Geotechnical and Civil Construction Materials Testing".
- Assessment consistency and thoroughness were discussed in the context of current time allocations for the on site assessment component. While the Committee will continue to consider the adequacy of the assessment time allocation, the immediate focus remains on improving the effectiveness of the time spent on site by assessment teams. It was considered that some information currently accessed during the assessment could potentially be collected and made available to the technical assessor ahead of the visit.
- The Committee discussed recent initiatives undertaken by NATA in respect of testing integrity in the construction materials area. External circumstances resulting in undue pressure placed on laboratory staff were discussed, including client requests to extend a method beyond its intended scope, restrictive timeframes for submission of test results or even the period of site access granted by the client for completion of testing. The Committee considered that further guidance on this issue is warranted. Scenarios where assessment teams have been confronted at assessments with an implausible reported result were discussed and the Committee has put forward recommendations to ensure that the full implications of any such findings are recognised and dealt with appropriately.
- The implications of sampling remotely, involving the use of operators based at a quarry, concrete or asphalt plant (rather than at the accredited base laboratory) were discussed. It was agreed that further work is needed to establish whether NATA's approach is providing the necessary level of confidence and consistency.
- The Committee discussed the implementation of automated testing technologies, where aspects of the assessment process might move beyond the capability of most technical assessors, even for existing well-defined test determinations. The Committee acknowledged that such situations warrant case-by-case consideration but agreed that numerous examples already exist and that an analysis should be undertaken in relation to these known examples, with a report to be provided to the Committee for consideration and possible further action.
- The emergence of state road agency test specifications which involve tighter reporting precisions than those listed in the referred Australian Standard methods was discussed. The Committee agreed that testing to a method which cannot be validated to the level of precision that is being reported would not be accredited and the implications of this should be raised with applicable road agencies.
- The Committee considered examples of test methods which contained an insufficient level of procedural detail to enable adequate consistency of results when undertaken by different laboratories. The Committee has recommended that guidance be provided to assessment teams to ensure that the requirements of IEC/ISO 17025 Clause 5.4.1 are implemented consistently.