

**THE ASSOCIATION OF
GEOTECHNICAL TESTING
AUTHORITIES (QLD) INC.**

**PO Box 451
TOOWONG QLD 4066
FAX: (07) 3870 4570**

**AGTA 2001
Committee Officers**

Chairman

Paul Thompson
Ph: 07 3208 6966
Fax: 07 3209 1047

Email:
admin@qldgeotechnical.com.au

Deputy Chairman

Paul Fraser
Ph: 07 3881 3511
Fax: 07 3881 3513

Email:
cqa@bigpond.com

Secretary

Amanda Macfarlane
Ph: 07 3870 3844
Fax: 07 3870 4570

Email:
georgepatterson@nata.asn.au

Treasurer

Mike Sandilands
Ph: 07 3800 3832
Fax: 3800 7928

Email:
mikes@bowlargeotechnical.com.au

Deputy Secretary/Newsletter Co-Ordinator

Peter Simson
Ph: 07 3848 5193
Fax: 07 3848 9627

Email: peter.simson@sunwater.com.au

Non Executive

Ron Richards
Ph: 07 5495 1633
Fax: 07 5495 1733

Email: ronnierichards@hotmail.com

Peter Davis

Ph: 07 3870 0291
Fax: 07 3879 5980

Email:
un_Darwin@d13.aone.net.au

Jim Perry

Ph: 07 5449 8945
Fax: 07 5449 8945

Email:
rolfeperry@oxemail.com.au

Published by:

Geo Tech Temp Pty Ltd
P O Box 346

Strathpine Shop
STRATHPINE QLD 4500
PH: (07) 3881 3110 FAX: (07) 3881 3513

The views expressed in this newsletter are those of the contributors and not necessarily shared by all members of the Association of Geotechnical Testing Authorities (Qld) Inc.

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Editorial

Welcome members to the first edition of the new millennium. Hopefully everyone is fit and well after the Xmas break and ready for a fruitful year now that the dreaded GST has become part and parcel of our working lives. Some interesting features lie in the following pages, including coverage of the AGM in December, an article on a new roller that has arrived on Australian shores for the first time and an interesting profile of the "Dial Before You Dig" organisation and the service it offers the construction industry.

You will notice on this page a breakdown of the committee officers for Year 2001. These people are the elected representatives of AGTA, and should you wish to discuss any matters pertaining to our association please contact them; they are there for that purpose. Whilst on the subject of our new committee, the focus of "People in Profile" this edition is our Secretary, Amanda Macfarlane. Amanda has been a tireless worker for the Association since its inception, and I am sure some of you reading this will agree that it is high time this segment has a feminine aspect.

A new feature in this edition is "Netwatch". "Netwatch" is a segment that I hope to include in each edition this year highlighting websites on the internet that may prove to be useful to the Geotechnical fraternity. It would be greatly appreciated if any members out there could contribute to this segment by sending in details of any website relating to our industry.

As with previous issues an AGTA membership application form can be found within. If every member utilized this form and got one fellow worker or Geotech company or industry associated business to join AGTA this year, just imagine how much stronger a presence we would have in the construction industry.

In closing, I would like to thank our NSW counterpart – ECLA (Engineering and Construction Laboratories Association) for submitting an article updating their activities of recent. AGTA and ECLA are associations travelling the same road and any affiliation between us can only be of benefit to both parties and the construction industry.

**Terry Ferguson
Executive Editor**

Chairman's Report

As you will be aware AGTA will soon be using professional management in the day to day running of the Association. The Committee will still control all aspects of the Associations direction and decision-making. Our aim is to have more free time to work on the important issues facing our members.

As I have discussed in previous newsletters, AGTA is being recognised as the Association representing our field of expertise. Recognition by all councils and government departments will remain one of our goals. Our membership is at a level now that we can confidently approach these organisations, as truly representing the industry. Gone are the days where the Association was looked upon as a bunch of hopefuls. Serious interest has been shown recently by some Government departments and other private organisations who have been waiting to see if AGTA could gain recognition. Now that we have the recognition we are hoping to have them as members. As members it is in your interest to support the committee by maintaining a drive for membership. Encourage others in your area to join, organisations such as councils, would benefit by membership of AGTA.

The committee would also like some guidance as to what you would like to see as topics for our general meetings.

We haven't had much feedback from our regional members as to whether they would be interested in the general meeting being video taped. If you don't tell us what you want from your Association there is little we can do to help. Letters to the Editor is an excellent place to have your say.

I look forward to hearing from you.

Paul Thompson
Chairman

A Point of Interest

A quote from Seth – Age 5: Dayboro Kindergarten, when asked what he would like to be when he grows up:

“A hole digger, I want to dig holes, I'll dig holes in grass or dirt or roads or wherever you want a hole”.

Editors Note: Sounds like Seth will make a great Soil Tester.

Hall Of Fame

Snapshot of Disaster

Lighten Up

“A Little Religious Lesson”

A burglar broke into a house one night. He shone his flashlight around, looking for valuables, and when he picked up a CD player to place in his sack, a strange disembodied voice echoed from the dark saying “Jesus is watching YOU”.

He nearly jumped out of his skin, clicked his flashlight out and froze. When he heard nothing more after a bit, he shook his head, promised himself a vacation after the next big score, then clicked the light back on and began searching for more valuables.

Just as he pulled the stereo out so he could disconnect the wires, clear as a bell he heard “Jesus is watching YOU”.

Freaked out, he shone his light around frantically looking for the source of the voice. Finally, in the corner of the room his flashlight beam came to rest on a parrot. “Did you say that?” he hissed at the parrot. “Yep”, the parrot confessed, then squawked “I’m trying to warn you”. The burglar relaxed. “Warn me, huh? Who are you?”

“Moses”, replied the parrot. “Moses?”, the burglar laughed. “What kind of people would name a parrot Moses?”.

“Probably the same kind of people that would name a Rottweiler Jesus”, the bird answered.

Stopped on the beach by a wildlife officer, a poacher was told he’d be fined for taking lobsters without a permit. “What do you mean?” the man said “I didn’t break the law. These two lobsters are my pets. I’m just going for a walk with them.”

“Nonsense,” the officer replied.

“It’s true,” insisted the man. “They go into the surf for a swim, and when I whistle they come back.”

“This I’ve got to see”, the officer said. So the man tossed both lobsters into the waves and the officer said, “OK, Now let’s hear you whistle for your pet lobsters to come back to you”.

“Lobsters?” asked the poacher. “What lobsters?”

Net Watch – Surf’s Up

Are you interested in what the internet has to offer the geotechnical testing industry?

Then hang loose, wax up your boards and check out these *Groovy* sites.

guideme.com

Geotechnical Soil Testing Bookstore

www.dme.qld.gov.au

Department of Mines & Energy – Geology Maps

www.bom.gov.au

Bureau of Meteorology

www.agso.gov.au

Australian Landslide Database

Editors Note: Maybe with the inception of the Site Classifier’s Licence, fewer of these tragedies will occur.

Industry Related News Making the Headlines

Extract from "The Courier Mail" on 3/1/2001

Proposed Calendar of Events -AGTA 2001

DATE	EVENT	COMMENT
<i>24 January</i>	<i>Committee Meeting</i>	<i>Changeover/Strategic Planning</i>
<i>21 February</i>	<i>Committee Meeting</i>	<i>Strategic Planning</i>
<i>20 March</i>	<i>Newsletter No. 1</i>	<i>Cover AGM, New Committee</i>
<i>21 March</i>	<i>Committee Meeting</i>	<i>General Meeting Topic</i>
<i>18 April</i>	<i>Committee Meeting</i>	<i>Final Planning for General Meeting</i>
<i>01 May</i>	<i>General Meeting</i>	<i>GTA's role in urban development</i>
<i>16 May</i>	<i>Committee Meeting</i>	<i>Activities Review</i>
<i>20 June</i>	<i>Committee Meeting</i>	<i>Activities Review</i>
<i>17 July</i>	<i>Newsletter No. 2</i>	<i>Cover General Meetings/Activities</i>
<i>18 July</i>	<i>Committee Meeting</i>	<i>General Meeting Topic</i>
<i>15 August</i>	<i>Committee Meeting</i>	<i>Final Planning for General Meeting</i>
<i>29 August</i>	<i>General Meeting</i>	<i>Topic to be Decided</i>
<i>19 September</i>	<i>Committee Meeting</i>	<i>Activities Review</i>
<i>17 October</i>	<i>Committee Meeting</i>	<i>Activities Review / AGM</i>
<i>20 November</i>	<i>Newsletter No. 3</i>	<i>Cover General Meeting & AGM</i>
<i>21 November</i>	<i>Committee Meeting</i>	<i>Final Planning for AGM</i>
<i>05 December</i>	<i>AGM</i>	<i>Social Event / Elections</i>

Advertising Space Available Now!

- *Want the Geotech Industry to know what your Company has to offer?*
- *Want to sell industry equipment? What better way than to advertise in the AGTA Newsletter.*

*For Information Phone Lisa or Terry
3881-3110*

Notable Quotables

Immortality

- Surely God would not have created such a being as man, with an ability to grasp the infinite, to exist only for a day! No, no, man was made for immortality.
Abraham Lincoln

- I don't want to achieve immortality through my work, I want to achieve immortality through not dying.
Woody Allen

Career

- The test of a vocation is the love of the drudgery it involves.
Logan Pearsall Smith
- The price one pays for pursuing any profession, or calling, is an intimate knowledge of its ugly side.
James Baldwin

Chance

- Enjoy yourself, drink, call the life you live today your own, but only that, the rest belongs to chance.
Euripides
- Every possession and every happiness is but lent by chance for an uncertain time, and may therefore be demanded back the next hours.
Arthur Schopenhauer

Current Membership Roll Call

Membership No.	Name
001	Thomas McCabe
002	Ullman & Nolan Geotechnical
003	Civil Quality Assurance (Qld) Pty Ltd
004	Tony McDonald
005	GJ Brandon & Associates Pty Ltd
006	Amanda Macfarlane
007	South Qld Soils Pty Ltd
008	Wide Bay Geotechnical Services P/L
009	Brisbane City Council
010	Geo-Tech Temp Pty Ltd
011	Geotest Engineering Services Pty Ltd
012	Bowler Geotechnical Pty Ltd (Browns Plains)
014	Queensland Geotechnical Pty Ltd
015	Noel Thomas
016	Paul Thompson
017	Lloyd R Davies
018	Roadtest
019	Vimbury Pty Ltd trading as Earthtech Laboratories
020	John V Simmons
021	Soiltech Pty Ltd
022	Boral Construction Materials Country (Qld) Raw Materials Laboratory
024	Golder Associates Pty Ltd
025	Soiltest Australia Consulting Engineers P/L
026	Peter Murphy
027	H&M Testing Pty Ltd
028	SunWater Civil Engineering Laboratories
029	Ron Richards & Partners Pty Ltd
030	Geotech (SC) Pty Ltd trading as Soil Surveys Technical Services
031	CSE Aust. Pty Ltd
032	Gold Coast City Council
033	Strata Test Pty Ltd
034	Will V Aus
035	Kase Enterprises
038	Soil Engineering Services
039	Civil Tech Pty Ltd
040	Karreman Group
041	Anthony J. McKenna
043	Border Tech
044	Tiaro Shire Council
045	Geo-Investigations Pty Ltd
046	Alan Bartlett
047	Chris Brincat
048	Graeme Sheppard
049	Stephen Vlatko-Rulo trading as Duke Contracting Services
050	Mark Hallett
051	Crows Nest Shire Council
052	Dennis Edwards
053	Doug Faithfull
054	Bit of a Byte
055	John Kippen
056	Col Fulcher
057	Terry Blackburn
058	Ross Battison
059	Redlands Soil Testing
060	APOD Soil Testing
061	Carl Conran
062	The Dirt Professionals
063	Qualtest Laboratory Pty Ltd
064	James Perry
065	Shane Hicks
066	Gary Bruyeres
067	Christopher Thurley
068	Railway & Drilling Equipment
069	Kieran Byrne
070	Cairns Engineering Testing Services Pty Ltd
071	James E Dick
072	Bordertech Pimpama Geotechnical Engineering Services

Annual General Meeting

AGTA – 2000

AGTA's Annual General Meeting for 2000 was held at the Paddington Tavern in Spring Hill on 12th December. The evening's program consisted of the nomination and election of committee members to steer the association into the third millennium, followed by drinks and savouries. Although the numbers attending could have been greater, an enjoyable night was had by all. Many thanks to Amanda Macfarlane for organising the venue and refreshments.

After the nominations and the election of the committee officers was complete, the committee format was as follows:

CHAIRMAN	Paul Thompson
DEPUTY CHAIRMAN	Paul Fraser
SECRETARY	Amanda Macfarlane
TREASURER	Mike Sandilands
DEPUTY SECRETARY	Peter Simson
NON EXECUTIVE	Peter Davis
NON EXECUTIVE	Jim Perry
NON EXECUTIVE	Ron Richards

The new committee consists of several of last year's officers plus the injection of some new faces, which, as a unit, gives the association a very sound and experienced representation. Whilst congratulating the new committee, I would also like to offer a special thanks to departing officers – Chris Bloxson, Steve Cusack and Greg Greenhalgh for their time and effort throughout 2000.

Photo 1

AGTA Chairman and Deputy Chairman for Year 2001: Paul Thompson and Paul Fraser

Annual General Meeting
AGTA – 2000 cont.

Photo 2

The AGTA “engine room” for the coming year:
Treasurer - Mike Sandilands, Secretary – Amanda Macfarlane and
Deputy Secretary – Peter Simson

Photo 3

Non executive committee officers for Year 2001 –
Ron Richards, Peter Davis and Jim Perry

Industry Editorial

On Monday November 27, 2000, Banbury Engineering and the Civil Contractors Federation in conjunction with Bomag GmbH & Co. OHG, conducted a seminar at the Ballymore Rugby Club in Brisbane to present the latest developments in compaction technology. The showpiece of the seminar was the introduction of the Bomag high performance Variocontrol system for single drum rollers. The highly informative seminar was well attended by all facets of the construction industry, including the geotechnical fraternity.

The following information, explaining the technology and field uses of the Variomatic Roller has been kindly supplied by Banbury Engineering:

Variomatic Roller

Modern vibratory rollers are equipped with two amplitudes and frequencies to increase the flexibility of the roller. High amplitudes with low frequencies are useful on thick layers where high compaction energy is requested or can be used. Small amplitudes and high frequencies are needed on thin or critical to compact layers but also to compact the upper part of layers in order to achieve good compaction results throughout the complete layer.

Machines with individual setting possibilities for amplitudes and/or frequencies have been developed. Those systems however are restricted in their maximum amplitudes to somewhat low levels and need to be set by the operator. Exactly here, the decision for the best setting must be made. But generally, nobody knows exactly what will be the best. The result: No increase in efficiency and quality.

Vario principle

After many years of development, Bomag displayed the Vario roller technology at the Bauma Fair in Munich in

1995. The Vario roller was especially designed for asphalt application. It allows individual settings of the vibration direction due to a two exciter shaft vibration system generating bi-directional vibration instead of circular vibration as standard vibratory machines.

The bi-directional vibration, which always runs at the same amplitude, could be set manually for best working conditions. But also here, the operator was in charge to make the right decision.

Variomatic roller

Only one year later, in 1996, Bomag introduced the Bomag Variomatic roller BVM. This was a breakthrough in roller technology since introduction of the vibratory technology. The BVM is the automatic version of the former Vario roller.

Equipped with acceleration transducers and a computer, the machine sets itself to the highest energy output which will be accepted by the material to be compacted. Setting one exciter shaft against the other, the vibration direction can be changed individually.

Industry Editorial cont.

The BVM reacts to different layer needs such as different degrees of compaction, mixture changes etc. If necessary, the BVM sets itself from highest to lowest compaction output within less than a second. The productivity of a BVM equipped roller is the highest ever. The quality achieved is the best possible.

Due to the individual settings of horizontal to vertical vibration direction, the BMV combines the good results of high and low amplitude applications automatically, fast and operator independent. The results are more uniform compaction with higher densities in less time.

Fields of application

Difficult to compact longitudinal and transverse joints become uncritical with Variomatic. The BMV sets to horizontal vibrations while operated in automatic mode, if the roller shows the tendency to bounce during compaction process on well compacted areas.

In critical vibratory operations such as soil compaction on top of an underground car park, the BVM roller,

operated in manually selected horizontal vibration direction, allows to use the vibratory compaction advantages without critical vibration loads to the roof deck.

Also, BVM applications on bridges and close to ground vibration sensible buildings, are successfully completed many times.

During compaction, the Variomatic roller sets its vibration in relation to the travel direction. This results always in best energy introduction. With automatically, compaction related settings of the oscillation directions, thick layers are more effectively compacted over the entire construction height. But also thin layers and special surfaces can be compacted more effectively with automatic settings in a more gently process.

The VARIOMATIC system offers advantages such as:

- Variable manual setting possible
- Automatic setting to construction needs
- Reversing of vibration direction
- Improved surface quality
- Optimized density results
- Minimized vibration loads to the environment
- Automatic prevention of jumping and bouncing
- Technically most advances
- Independent quality achievements
- Compaction optimisation

Acknowledgement: The above information on the Variomatic Roller has been referenced from BOMAG: The Book of Compaction by Otto Veberbach, Second Edition 2000.

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Construction Materials Testers Expo – Warwick: February 2001

Soil testers left gravel-voiced after two-day expo

Soil testing staff from Main Roads, local government and private industry dug deep, covered plenty of ground and were left gravel-voiced at their two-day expo held in Warwick recently.

More than 50 people attended the expo, which was organised by Main Roads in Southern Queensland Region. The continued close ties between Main Roads and the newly established RoadTek division was symbolised by the fact that District Director (Border) Tony Platz opened the expo and RoadTek director Allan Churchward closed it. This was one of Allan's first official duties in that role.

The event featured presentations on topics including soil density testing techniques, changes to Main Roads specifications, inclusion of soil testing competencies in the construction workers' competency library, the accuracy of GPS navigation systems, soil erodability testing and the use of soil classification maps.

Companies also travelled from Sydney, Melbourne and Brisbane to set up symposium-style trade displays showcasing products and services associated with the soil testing industry.

Chris Brincat, RoadTek's Laboratory Manager in Warwick, said the expo was primarily designed to keep Main Roads staff up to date on the latest happenings in the soil testing arena.

This has been the third expo and the organisers

decided to open up the event to people from outside the region this year

"Soil testing is a pretty specialised activity and there are many common issues that we face, so it makes sense to open up the forum to people from outside the Department also," Chris said.

The result was the attendance of soil testing staff from Beaudesert, Boonah, Kingaroy, Booringa, and Murweh Shire Councils, Ipswich City Council, and private firms including South Queensland Soils and Wagners Quarries, as well as Main Roads staff from Bundaberg, Toowoomba, Warwick, Roma, Beenleigh and Brisbane.

As well as short presentations from 20 people, the expo featured an open forum on the final day, allowing people to share their bright ideas, inventions and innovations.

"People have lots of great ideas but often they don't go any further than one organisation or even one particular office. We believe that if an idea or device is labour saving, injury saving, or time saving, then it's an advantage for everybody to know about it".

Delegates also made the most of the expo dinner at the Horse and Jockey Motel in Warwick on the first night, coming perilously close to draining dry the restaurant's red wine collection.

Andrew Fox

Main Roads soil testers gathered in Warwick recently for an expo, along with counterparts from local government and private industry. Checking the operation of a "Bundy muncher" soil preparation machine are (from left) Chris Brincat, Jon Knowles and Fred Osborne.

Geotechnical Testing Ensures a Solid Foundation - or Does It? ECLA Discussion Topic

Testing of construction and engineering materials is vital to the success of all building projects. After all, if the material does not perform as the designer intended, then, in the ultimate, failures of structures could occur. However, in the age of quality assurance, the need to put numbers in boxes seems, at times, to outweigh the need for high quality truly representative testing.

AS 3978, 'Guidelines on Earthworks for Commercial and Residential Developments' makes provision for three levels of testing of earthworks, with level 1 requiring that the geotechnical testing authority sets the test program, and issues a statement on compliance. Level 3, on the other hand, requires testing at the discretion of the constructor, with no statement as to compliance.

There has been a trend towards more level 3 testing in Sydney, which means that all independence is removed from the testing process, and the testing becomes little more than a paperwork formality. The members of ECLA are concerned that much of the earthworks testing will not necessarily represent the work carried out on a given project.

NATA has stated that a test report must not make reference to the level of testing that was required for the project. Whilst there is nothing to stop the geotechnical testing authority from issuing a statement as to the level of testing on a separate form, this is a somewhat pointless exercise, as the test report can be separated

from this, and handed over to the designer without any indication as to the level of testing employed.

The future of construction laboratories depends on the perceived relevance of construction materials testing. If it is felt by constructors and designers that testing is merely a formality, the relevance of testing will diminish.

It appears the majority of laboratories in Sydney make reference to a level of testing so the Report makes a clear statement on the quality and value of the test program.

ECLA is currently discussing this and the broader issue of the validity of level 3 testing altogether in terms of professional and legal responsibilities to laboratories. The legal eagles say level 3 testing is a very dubious area as the end user has a right to reasonable expectation that a test result is a meaningful reflection of the area.

The ACEA has also expressed interest in this discussion and there are sections of the industry that feel level 3 testing should be removed from the Australian Standard.

We would be happy for any input from our associates in AGTA.

Editors Note: Many Thanks to Peter Weir of Engineering and Construction Laboratories Association Inc. NSW for the above article.

People in Profile

In celebration of third millennium's arrival, this edition of "People in Profile" has entered new territory through focusing on a lady within our industry; introducing Amanda Macfarlane.

Amanda Macfarlane was born in Adelaide, South Australia during the mid sixties. When Amanda was approximately 5 years old, her father obtained a design drafting position in Brisbane and relocated with his family to the Mt Gravatt area.

Young Miss Mcfarlane commenced her Queensland education at Mt Gravatt South State School and continued on to Mt Gravatt State High, where she remained until the completion of her senior year in 1981.

In 1982 Amanda began her tertiary education at the University of Queensland, studying for her Bachelor of Science degree. In order to 'make ends meet' during her early University days, Amanda was employed part time as a waitress in Chinese restaurants. After completing her Science degree (majoring in chemistry) in 1987, Amanda obtained a supervising chemist position within the private sector. Amanda remained within the private sector until 1990 at which time she accepted a similar position with the Government Chemical Laboratory.

In 1993 Amanda decided a vocational change was needed in her life and thus began her association with N.A.T.A. (National Association of Testing Authorities); an association which remains to this day. During her formative years with N.A.T.A., Amanda held the position of Scientific Officer. Subsequently as a result of her hard work and dedication, Amanda has risen to her current position of Regional Co-ordinator of Construction Material Testing in Queensland.

In the early 90's Amanda also became involved in the Construction Materials Focus Group. This group involves the meeting of prominent members of the geotechnical testing community (co-ordinated by N.A.T.A.) and focuses upon the advancement of the construction material tester's cause within the construction industry. In 1997 the focus group was instrumental in the birth of AGTA, with Amanda at the very 'coal face' of this charge. Upon the creation of AGTA, Amanda became the association's inaugural secretary, a position which she still holds today. The formative years of any association or institution are often difficult and require a lot of time and commitment for the endeavour to be successful. In the case of AGTA, any success and recognition that comes along can be credited to the hard work of a select few, and most assuredly Amanda Macfarlane is one of those select few.

As my interview was drawing to a close I asked Amanda if she had any comments on our industry. Her immediate reply was "I love my job and thoroughly enjoy working amongst the construction materials testing industry". Nothing wrong with that.

Terry Ferguson

Amanda Macfarlane (left) with Peter Simson

What Happens When You Dial Before Your Dig?

You don't know how lucky your are!

If you wanted to excavate a hole in any one of forty eight of the American states, even in your own back yard, you'd be prohibited from doing so until you'd contacted the local "Dial Before You Dig" organisation.

There might be as many as half a dozen of them in any given state, and you'd first have to figure out which.

Within 48 hours, blokes from each utility – and there are 1,035 of them in New York – would come out and draw coloured lines on the site.

You'd then – not beforehand – be permitted to ask each of those utilities for detailed plans of their underground assets, and could wait up to three weeks to receive them.

Then you could dig.

Needless to say, the Americans are very envious of the fine service we get in Australia from the national Dial Before You Dig organisation.

In this country, DBYD is an umbrella organisation covering one operation in each state whose services are paid for by its members.

Membership is voluntary, meaning that not all owners of underground assets are involved.

In Queensland the big players – Telstra, Energex, Optus, AAPT, Santos, Agility (formerly AGL), Duke Energy, Brisbane City – twenty-one in all, are members who consider that the cost to them of running the service more than amply repays them by reducing accidental damage to their underground assets.

Why Should You Dial?

If you drive up the back of someone's car, you are negligent and you have to pay for the damage. The fact that insurance may pay for it is not really the issue.

The principle involved is civil liability for damages, a principle as old as our legal system.

Similarly, if you dig up a Telstra cable and they can prove you were negligent, a court will certainly determine that you have to pay. And it may not simply be for the physical damage to the cable, but you probably include losses incurred by the utility for interruption of their service.

After all, since the communications industry was deregulated, Telstra have been carrying an every-increasing amount of traffic for AAPT, Ue Comm, and any number of the fifty-five carriers registered so far. They carry this traffic based upon service agreements that may, for instance, penalise Telstra if service is interrupted for more than say, two hours.

So you bust their cable, and these blokes happily line up to claim on Telstra. Telstra in turn can't afford to be lenient with you. They have a duty to their shareholders to recover whatever costs they can, meaning theirs and everyone else's.

You Need to Prove You Acted Responsibly

So, the vital issue for contractors is to be able to prove the legal defence that if an asset is damaged, they weren't negligent.

One pretty foolproof way of doing this is to Dial Before You Dig. Apart from being promptly acted upon, your call goes on file for seven years and is sitting there as proof that you tried to do the responsible thing.

Of course, you still have to dig in a professional manner and take reasonable care.

But if you do so, and have dialled beforehand, it would be extremely hard for a utility to prove negligence. That in itself will probably result in no claim being made on you.

So What? I'm Insured.

Sorry – insurance doesn't negate your legal liability for damages.

Naturally enough, insurance underwriters are not interested in coughing up when a contractor acts irresponsibly on the happy assumption that he is covered.

So most of them, if not all, have let-out clauses that protect them from claims in the event that they maintain you acted negligently, and you are unable to prove otherwise. This could well operate to leave you unprotected by insurance. Check your policy.

So it still comes back to DBYD, to be able to prove to the insurance company that you were not negligent.

Duty of Care

Finally, there is another very important consideration.

In Queensland, contractors are well aware that The Workplace Health and Safety Act 1995 imposes upon everyone in the construction field, right down the line, a duty of care.

A machine operator may dig up a high voltage cable and get fried. Bystanders may be fried. The potential damages may be colossal. And you will be held accountable if you didn't exercise your duty of care.

The Act is very specific and repetitive on this subject of duty of care.

Once again, dialling before you dig leaves a permanent record on file, showing that you endeavoured to meet your obligations.

So What Happens When You Dial

Well firstly, ninety eight percent of all calls, currently running at about 200 per day, are answered within 60 seconds. They are pretty proud of that.

You give the operator in Coronation Drive the details of the location you want to check.

What Happens When You Dial Before You Dig? cont.

Incidentally, you need to be very precise about that. The enquiry goes on file, so if it is too vague as to the location, then you have proved nothing about avoiding negligence. You preferably need to quote a real property description – Plan and RP number of the property, or the closest property – so try to get that information before you call, especially if you are in the country.

Otherwise the correct address under the Rural Addressing System will nail the location. Or, in the city, the precise distance from the nearest road intersection.

Your cheerful operator, after taking these details, has a very natty screen on her computer.

Using your description, she clicks on a map and it brings up a grid on her screen – the whole of Queensland is divided into squares by this grid.

Then she clicks on your square. Every member of DBYDQ has entered into the system the fact that they either do or do not have underground assets in that particular square – and the service gets calls from as far afield as Birdsville and Torres Strait.

So up comes a list of those utilities who have assets in your area. Your operator doesn't know exactly what they are – simply whether they are present or not.

This triggers an instant electronic notification to each of the utilities concerned. It says that you have enquired, and they are to send you a detailed description of their assets.

Depending upon the contact details you've given, the utility will despatch the information within 48 hours by fax or mail. Meantime, you will have received an acknowledgement of your call that tells you who you'll hear from.

More Contractors Should Use this Service

About 30-40% of enquiries are currently originating from contractors. But Brian Zeller, General Manager of DBYD (Queensland) believes that a lot of people are not using the service who should be.

"Naturally we have no records of what contractors *don't* do", says Brian.

"But talking to people all over the state, I get the feeling that we are probably only running at 50% of potential".

"It really makes no sense that the industry doesn't use this service more fully. After all, it's free, and the advantages of being on record with an enquiry are just too obvious to ignore".

Should More Councils be Members of DBYD?

So far, only a handful of Councils are members, Brisbane City and Logan being the most prominent. Clearly, other councils have important underground assets.

Let's not mention specific places, but say a contractor rips up a water main in your area. How might a council prove negligence, and protect their ratepayers' investment?

"Well, I think Doug the Digger may have called up about that. Harry, did he speak to you?".

"Can you recall exactly what you told him about that water main? Didn't make a note, eh". Pity. I don't think vague recollections would stand up in court".

The DBYD service would have a permanent record of Doug's call.

If he dug a trench across the road and didn't compact it too well, he'd be paying for your crew to go out six months later and fix it when the residents complain, not you.

Clearly, being a member involves a council in overheads to respond to enquiries from DBYD.

But it also effects savings, by reduction of accidental damage, and recovery of costs from operators who don't bother to call. Try to tell Energex, Telstra or Brisbane City that this doesn't pay off in the long run.

But I'm sure Brian Zeller has already pointed all this out.

Acknowledge: Many thanks to Peter Kerville of Thorn Media for reproduction of the above article. Previously published in the November/December 2000 issue of "The Bulletin".

Coming Event

AGTA General Meeting:

TOPIC: The role of the Geotechnical Testing Authority in Urban development

FORMAT:

- Pre meeting drinks
- Introduction by AGTA Chairman
- 1st Guest Speaker – Representing Civil Contractors
- 2nd Guest Speaker – Representing Superintendents
- 3rd Guest Speaker – Representing Local Authority
- 4th Guest Speaker – Representing the Quarry Industry
- Discussion/Question Period
- Drinks

VENUE: Institution of Engineers
Hawken Auditorium
447 Upper Edward Street
BRISBANE QLD 4004

DATE: 1st May 2001

TIME 6pm for 6.30pm start

If you are involved in urban development of any type in any capacity, this meeting will be enlightening and thought provoking.

NOT TO BE MISSED