



Australian Flexible Pavement Association media release

Setting the framework to achieve net zero emissions in road building

Wednesday 9th March 2022

Amongst the endless debates at the 2021 United Nations Climate Change Conference or COP26, there is one crucial fact; major Western economies, as well as China and India, are all on a path to net zero.

This means every organisation – private and public – and every level of government in those countries must also be on a path to net zero.

Our industry is no different and we are on the frontline. Now is the time for all sectors to adapt proactively and respond reactively to regulation – or disappear.

Sustainability has been a priority for the Australian Flexible Pavement Association (AfPA) and its members for a long time, but it has never been more urgent.

A path is being paved that we can follow to ensure our industry is part of the climate solution rather than a problem.

AfPA has been working with members on a Sustainability Framework for Asphalt (SF4A) to guide industry and government on what road-building net zero looks like and how we can get there.

The first step is for companies to assess where they are now and measure their carbon footprint across their operations. With an understanding of a total carbon footprint, organisations can look at ways to reduce it, starting with the low hanging fruit.

Analysis by AfPA estimates that 35-45% of CO₂ emissions for asphalt mix and paving operations come from production using raw materials. That offers an opportunity to achieve substantial reductions by using recycled materials in roads. The digitisation of asphalt plants means we now have access to constant data to inform decision making and optimise plant performance at lower temperatures, helping to reduce energy inputs and cutting emissions.

This isn't however only a supplier driven solution, action is also needed from informed buyers, particularly government, to achieve net zero. We need progressive policies that encourage and set targets for the use of recycled materials.

In European markets have already gone much further down this road and are awarding tenders based on financial and carbon cost. Companies responding to a tender must provide a calculation of the carbon footprint of their proposed project, as well as the usual dollar budget.

With the strategies in place to reduce emissions, organisations should then regularly measure and report against their activity, demonstrating progress.

While organisations are all at different stages in the path to net zero, what's clear is we are now all now on that path. At AfPA we have developed Sustainability Framework for Asphalt (SF4A) that can immediately be utilised in client tenders, has independent verification and will help drive continual improvement once endorsed. We are kicking the rollout in South East Queensland, starting with Gold Coast City Council.