

MANAGEMENT AND WORKS OFFICERS STREAM

MIND THE GAP

David Andrews, Copmanhurst Shire Council

There is clear evidence that the number and cost of Public Liability claims against NSW Council's is increasing.

The majority of the claims are minor and relate to trips and falls on footpaths and other Council maintained areas. Many of these claims are below Council insurance excess levels and, therefore, must be directly met by the Council's themselves without recourse to the courts.

Meanwhile, as the insurance market is hardening, Local Government is seeking to adopt a risk management systems approach rather than a reactive approach to its public liability claims.

In the past, the doctrine of non-feasance has been successfully used by NSW Local Government as an immunity from prosecution and this doctrine has now been swept aside by the recent decisions in the High Court of Australia.

NSW was one of the few areas where this doctrine had remained intact. The United Kingdom for example has not had this protection since the early 1960's and had to adopt regular inspection measures and safety audits to compensate.

This paper outlines Councils responsibilities in the management of public liability in relation to recent trends and changes, and offers some guidance and examples from the UK, Germany, and Ireland which may assist Councils as they attempt to make their public areas safer for all users.

There is no doubt that the members of our communities are becoming more active in both a physical and litigious sense. The amount being spent on infrastructure maintenance is increasingly under threat from competing community demands.

The gap between the number and magnitude of future public liability claims and Local Government's capacity to manage this area of risk may well widen unless a risk management approach is adopted - Mind the Gap!

RTA SIC DATABASE

Coming to terms with the administration, the paperwork and the reports.

Lei Parker, Asset Management Co-ordinator, Eurobodalla Shire Council

In the beginning the contract didn't seem too daunting. There was only two thin A4 folders accompanied by a simple spreadsheet. Over the hours of reading that followed the enormity of the task was revealed, page by page. There were the forms, reports, inspection schedules, activity guidelines and summaries. All in all a mountain of paperwork.

Fortunately we had used the RTA MMS on our Main Road 51 developing the system further to cover our local roads and reserves.

Though similar in logic the enormity of the SICM's task was beyond the MMS database we had in place. We made contact with a wide range of Councils throughout the state to see how they were coping with the administration of their contracts. Those with a MMS history were coping, those without were finding the going hard. Each had developed their own system of paper flow, from manilla folders and spreadsheets through to simple databases that could perform some of the work.

Systems were being invented of every shape and size. Some worked, some didn't. There seemed little to do but to develop our own

Our intention was simple.

We set out to combine all the components of the contract administration into a single database and make it available over our computer network. This allowed us to develop a central repository and reference area for all contract documentation .

With our system we could monitor works orders, inspections, accomplishment and the array of other data required under the contract automating the processes where possible.

It is our intention to develop a system in conjunction with the RTA, the IPWEA and the other more advanced Councils undertaking the SIC to provide a resource affordable, one-stop, simple database to assist lesser able Councils in achieving the administrative requirements of the contracts.

WORKS OFFICERS STREAM

PARTIAL ENCLOSURE AND HEATING OF INVERELL AND DISTRICT MEMORIAL SWIMMING POOL

PROJECT OBJECTIVES:

The objective was to provide the people of Inverell and district with an all year swimming facility, with a minimal increase in operating and maintenance costs. The alternative was to construct a second smaller pool. This would have resulted in increased maintenance, greater depreciation and higher operating costs particularly during the shoulder periods at either end of the regular swimming season when both pools would have been required to be in operation.

The new system has been designed to provide the smaller 25m heated pool throughout the winter months and a choice of either an Olympic pool or a two-pool configuration during the summer months. This enhances the pool operator's opportunities to manage the use of the pool and to separate swim training from leisure swimmers.

As the project has only just been completed there is no actual evidence that the cost related objectives have been achieved, however there is no reason to believe that those objectives will not be achieved. The objective of provision of the heated pool facility has obviously been achieved.

PROPOSAL:

The project involved the following components:

- partial enclosure of half of the existing Olympic pool;
- installation of a separating boom to create a 25m facility at the shallow end of the pool;
- installation of a heat-pump water heating system;
- installation of an air heating system;
- enclosure and modification of the pool entry area.

It is believed that this project is the first of its type in NSW, if not in the world, where an existing pool has effectively been split into two for the purpose of heating a smaller volume of water utilising an existing water treatment and circulation system.

The objectives were to provide a low cost heated pool facility for Inverell, which would not excessively increase the operation and maintenance costs.

LADY NELSON WHARF, PORT MACQUARIE

Tony Nash, Hastings Council

A new timber wharf has been constructed on the Hastings River at Port Macquarie, immediately adjacent to the Central Business District. The wharf has been constructed in two (2) stages. The timing for the completion of Stage 1 was to facilitate a visit by the HMAS Bark Endeavour to Port Macquarie on 6 April, 2001.

The wharf was a community project undertaken by Council staff and local Sub-Contractors. Funding was provided by the NSW State Government, Hastings Council, cash donations and in-kind assistance from various local organisations and individuals.

The paper will outline the issues involved with the approvals for the wharf, the dredging necessary for navigation of vessels in the Hastings River, the construction of this facility using community involvement and the constraints and difficulties encountered with working with a fixed finish date, involving the arrival of the Bark Endeavour.

STORMWATER QUALITY IMPROVEMENT DEVICES

Geoffrey John Hunter, Engineering Coordinator: Stormwater, Penrith City Council

Stormwater runoff is responsible for transporting many of the pollutants, which are degrading our receiving waters. The control of stormwater pollution is an integral part of the Stormwater Management Plans that Councils in NSW have prepared in response to a Direction issued under Section 12 of the *Protection of the Environment Administration Act, 1991*. Structural stormwater quality controls play an important role in meeting the pollution control objectives established in these plans.

This presentation will examine many of the proprietary stormwater quality improvement devices (SQIDS) available on the market and investigate the issues that should be considered when selecting a particular proprietary device to control stormwater pollution.

Particular attention will be given to issues regarding the location of the devices within the catchment, their operation and maintenance. Three case studies in western Sydney will be used as examples of the real costs associated with stormwater pollution control.

GEOSYNTHETIC REINFORCEMENT PRODUCTS – NOT ROCKET SCIENCE

Martin Smith, Civil Engineer

Geosynthetic products (polymeric products used in a soil or geo environment) are rapidly gaining a much wider acceptance in the civil engineering community.

Over the last 25 years there has been increasing acceptance of geotextiles in applications of filtration and separation works. More recently there has been tremendous growth throughout Australia in the use of geosynthetics for applications of reinforcement (high strength geotextiles, geogrids and composite geotextiles/geogrids).

Typically reinforcement applications include the use of geosynthetics for slope reinforcement, wall reinforcement, basal reinforcement and pavement reinforcement.

The polymer type and the environment in which the geosynthetic is used will have a major effect on the working strength of the product and the efficiency of use of the product.

Whilst there is good overseas guidance in the use of these products in applications of reinforcement, there is little formal Australian guidance both from a design and specification perspective.

The NSW R.T.A have developed design methodologies and construction practices for soil reinforced retaining structures but these are by definition for walls only. (Ref. R.T.A Spec R57 & R58.)

Some other Australian Road Authorities are advancing in the implementation of a similar guidance document. Current Australian development of documentation is limited to a very narrow field of application.

In general the process of design, specification and construction methodology for the use of geosynthetics in reinforcement applications, is being driven by manufacturers.

Experiences of the writer are that in general terms the local engineering community is poorly informed regarding design methodologies and the selection and specification of geosynthetics for a wide range of engineering applications.

Simple guidance is given by the writer to broadly categorise different polymer types and in general terms define their behaviour in terms of strength, creep and strain. Influences of environment (both physical and chemical), design life and application are discussed and explained.

Polymer composition and effect of environment are required to be understood by designers and specifiers of geosynthetically reinforced structures such that the full benefit in the use of these products can be realised.