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Driven to succeed

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From an early age, Andrew Thwaites was drawn toward a career in engineering of some kind. The appeal of working outdoors and being at the forefront of technical innovation were key motivations for forging a career in engineering.



His father fostered that interest, having walked a similar path to his son.

"During high school I found that maths and science were a couple of my strong points, and it was really my father who helped guide me towards engineering. He worked in the construction equipment business for a long time, and worked with a lot of pavement engineers in that role," explains Mr. Thwaites.

His father suggested he might be well suited to engineering, and after finishing high school, Mr Thwaites sought an appropriate discipline within the field through his studies at [Swinburne University of Technology](#) in Melbourne.

Mr. Thwaites enrolled in a Bachelor of Civil Engineering and Bachelor of Business at Swinburne, commencing his studies in 2007.

"I achieved some of my best marks in road engineering subjects, partly because I found it really interesting. It was the industry my father was involved in and the industry I was probably going to end up building a career in," he says.



Andrew Thwaites.

Mr. Thwaites' drive and commitment to create a career in engineering has come to fruition, with the 28-year-old not only working as a pavement engineer for [Hiway Stabilizers](#), but also having been named AustStab's 2017 Young Stabiliser of the Year.

The coveted award, which commends his extensive efforts within the Australian pavement stabilisation sector, was awarded to Mr. Thwaites at this year's [AustStab Awards of Excellence](#) in July.

The title is bestowed upon a professional aged 35 years and younger, who has made significant achievements in the pavement stabilising sector. Not only this, but the individual has demonstrated an understanding of the role of stabilisation and shown proficiency in the use of communication skills in such projects.

Mr. Thwaites' success is a testament to his work through stabilisation firms, such as Hiway Stabilizers, and his dedication to progressing stabilisation concepts and practice in the Australian industry – an interest of his that has flourished since the early days of his career.

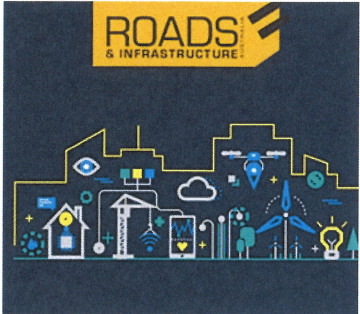
During university, Mr. Thwaites took a year off in 2010 to commence his industry-based learning – an initiative strongly encouraged by Swinburne University. This enabled him to work for and gain valuable front line experience from Quality Roads Construction (Gippsland) – the same firm he would work for after graduating.

His time at Quality Roads gave him experience across a range of areas in road construction, including as a site engineer on a number of rehabilitation projects as part of the bushfire recovery works following Victoria's Black Saturday.

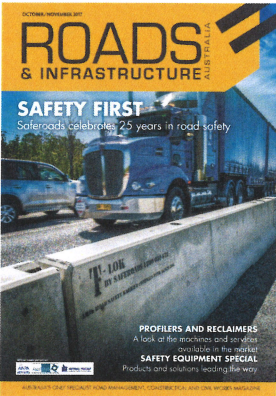
In 2014, Mr. Thwaites commenced work with Hiway Stabilizers, spending time with the company's Group Technical Manager Allen Browne in New Zealand, who helped him develop his understanding of pavement design principles and increase his technical knowledge. This has in turn, helped grow his interest and understanding of stabilisation concepts.

"Once I started a career in the pavement stabilisation field, I just saw that was where my career path was going," he says.

"The innovation side of things, the future applications, the creative solutions and environmental benefits – all those attributes of stabilisation are what attracted me to that side of pavement engineering.



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"In a way, it's engineering in its purest form. It requires innovative solutions to fix an issue, and it's about making the most of what you've got and the material already there. You're at the forefront of the technology in this space."

Stabilisation is now a core component of Mr. Thwaites' role at Hiway Stabilizers, which has also required him to be a 'Jack of all trades' on site, from project management to quality assurance.

"A big focus area of my role is foamed bitumen stabilisation (FBS), which is more common for industry in the likes of Queensland. In Victoria, it's quickly developing in terms of road authorities including it in pavement designs," explains Mr. Thwaites. "It's developing as a solution for them. Because we offer it as a solution, it puts us in a really interesting position as it becomes more common around the state, and we can demonstrate its benefits."

Since working at Hiway Stabilizers, he has managed FBS projects from initial investigation through to completion, including mix design, pavement design and construction.

Projects include the RAAF Point Cook Airbase and the Princes Highway in Colac in Victoria, as well as the Flinders Island Airport in Tasmania. Mr. Thwaites has also provided assistance in the delivery of FBS trial pavements for the Australian Road Research Board, undertaken as a joint project with AustStab members.

While Mr. Thwaites' drive and interest in pavement engineering have been constants throughout his career, he says more emphasis could be placed on the environmental and sustainability factors of the industry to try and attract the next generation of engineers.

"Pavement engineering isn't necessarily something that's highly marketable. Students at university can find themselves attracted to other engineering fields, but the environmental and innovation side of stabilisation can be a big appeal for the younger generation."

He agrees that not everything about pavement engineering can be taught in a classroom, and that a real passion for the job can be gained by working in the field.

Mr. Thwaites says universities such as Swinburne encourage incentives such as industry-based learning, and emphasise getting students to work in an industry before graduating, which paid dividends for him.

"Roads are always a big focus when it comes to infrastructure funding. I think it will be good to create more of a focus on their significance for students, because they play such an important role in meeting society's needs."

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