

## **Feedback from international conferences fosters knowledge sharing**

Three feedback seminars were organised by the Society of Asphalt Technology (SAT) during July and August 2008, covering the conferences held in Europe and Australia, which focused on bitumen, asphalt, spray seals and HSE. These seminars were held country wide and were well attended by more than 220 delegates. This exercise was a good example of how knowledge on new product developments can be transferred, how local technology can be benchmarked and future trends in bituminous materials technology identified.

The SAT seminars provided feedback on the following events:

- 4<sup>th</sup> Eurasphalt & Eurobitume Congress, Copenhagen, Denmark, 21 – 23 May 2008;
- HiMA study tour of France and the UK;
- 1<sup>st</sup> International spray seals conference, Adelaide, Australia, 27 – 29 July 2008;
- Spray seals workshop in Melbourne.

The main trends emanating from Europe on advances in binder technology were the modification of bitumen using polyphosphoric acid (PPA) to improve the performance of asphalt, and the fluxing of binders with vegetable oil to replace petroleum solvents. Both these developments are still in their infancy and have potential application in South Africa. The use of PPA allows the ‘bumping’ of a softer grade to a harder grade at the refinery, e.g. 80/100 to 60/70 and the cutting back of hot binders with vegetable oil allows the safe application of hot binders at lower road surface temperatures.

On the asphalt side there is a growing trend towards increasing the usage of reclaimed asphalt (RA) in new mixes, design of perpetual pavements, and the reduction of mixing temperatures. These developments all address the question of how to make our pavements more sustainable and are dealt with in more detail in other articles in the Asphalt News (Volume 22, Issue 3, 2008). The conference also provided an ideal opportunity to undertake a study tour of some key research facilities in France and the UK to find out more about the design and use of high modulus asphalt.

### ***South African technology***

The spray seals conference organised by the Australian Road Research Board (ARRB) showcased South African technology as being one of the leaders in this field. While this conference assessed the current status of spray seal technology, some shortfalls were also identified for further development. A special one day workshop was hosted after the conference at the ARRB’s offices and was attended by spray seal experts from South Africa and Australia. The purpose of the workshop was to exchange information on spray seal practices and to identify opportunities for future cooperation in overcoming common challenges. The intention is to host the next international spray seal conference in two years time and hopefully we will be in a position to report back on progress made in resolving common issues.

Attending conferences such as those mentioned above, highlights the value of keeping abreast of the latest developments in global bituminous product technology. Just as important is that this knowledge be shared with our colleagues through forums such as SAT. Copies of the presentations on the feedback from these conferences and study tours can be downloaded from [www.socsat.co.za](http://www.socsat.co.za).