

The safety benefits realised from maintenance and renewal investment are often understated. Routine maintenance is the front line safety defense for management of road networks. Renewal investment restores service potential to the intended levels when the assets were constructed.

If there is insufficient levels of maintenance investment, service levels drop with a consequent increase in safety risk. Maintenance funding levels in Victoria have been inadequate for decades. Current routine maintenance funding is heavily skewed towards hazard mitigation as a first priority, with insufficient remaining for mitigating the growing backlog of defects. The growing backlog of defects should be major cause for concern. The growing number of 'temporary' black on yellow signs, warning of dangerous road conditions, demonstrates that the issue is worsening over time.

Similarly, renewal funding levels in Victoria have been well below sustainable levels for decades (despite increases in recent years). The lack of renewal funding is a false economy as it results in accelerated network deterioration, which again results in lower levels of service and increased safety risk.

The solution to arresting the increasing road toll is a complex and multi-faceted. Yes there is a need for traditional safety solutions such as increased safety program funding, speed and substance enforcement and public education campaigns. However, the often overlooked solution is the one that will likely have the greatest impact - we need to provide more sustainable levels of maintenance and renewal funding.

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