

Subject: Submission to the Road Toll Enquiry
Hello,

Let me state my vehement objection to Wire Rope Barriers.

Specifically, I have two issues with them:

1. Effectiveness - the testing shows that WRBs are effective in Sweden, for vehicles up to 1500kg and up to a height of 170cm. The Swedes haven't acquired the same big-car fetish that afflicts Australian drivers. Most medium-sized SUVs are liable to flip when colliding with the WRBs, as evidenced by countless examples here and in the USA. Trucks plow straight through them.
2. Cost - While the WRBs are initially cheaper, over the long term their repairs take their overall cost way above that of alternative concrete and steel barriers. The state budget committee grilled and chastised VicRoads late last year for raiding the road-repair budget for the cost blow-out due to repairs of the WRBs.

As a motorcyclist I shudder when I see the WRBs - not only because of the cables, but the cheap, pressed-metal posts look razor sharp too. There are supposed to be end caps on top of them, but I rarely see them.

And I find it even more galling as I bounce around on decrepit rural roads when I remember that the paltry sum in the budget for rural road repair has been further diminished by a scandalous diversion of funds.

The only rural roads that get proper attention are the ones used by Melburnians to travel to holiday destinations, like the Surf Coast or the ski fields.

On another matter, I recommend you look at the issue of driver training and testing. Some years ago motorcycle training and testing was dramatically re-vamped and fatalities have been halved. (Note; on trend, the fatality statistics are somewhat static. But given that the number of motorcycle licence-holders has more than doubled in the seven years since the testing re-vamp, on a per capita basis fatalities are roughly half what they were before the revamp.)

I therefore recommend a root-and-branch restructuring of driver licence training and testing. Maybe we'll achieve a similar result.

As a motorcyclist of thirty years experience in many countries, mostly Australia, I have noticed a marked deterioration in driver attentiveness and competency in the last half decade or so. With increased congestion driving a car has become mind-numbingly boring, and thus distractions become too tempting.

Driving is not a human right, nor does anyone have any right to risk the lives of others. Time to get serious and only allow attentive and competent drivers to get behind the wheel.

I also recommend re-testing licence holders of all types every ten years. Every profession is required to undertake annual professional development. Yet we allow drivers to qualify only once for the privilege of using a vehicle for half a century or more. Madness.

Lastly, I will add that it is not possible to automate policing. Speed, sorry, 'safety' cameras certainly have a place, but there's no substitute for boots on the ground. I recommend a greater Highway Patrol presence on Victoria's roads. Of the hundreds of instances where a driver's incompetence and/or inattention has endangered my life, not once has the driver been charged with an infringement.

I better leave it there before I rant any further. It's a subject close to my heart, my life is at stake, after all. When I choose to use my motorcycle instead of my car (oh yes, I and every motorcyclist I know also owns a car) I am actively reducing congestion. If every motorcyclist in Victoria quit motorcycling and only used a car, we'd have gridlock - an extra two hundred thousand cars. There was a study in Europe last October that found that if just ten percent of drivers switched to motorcycles, congestion would drop by **forty** percent.

I'm not asking VicRoads or the TAC to actively encourage motorcycling. That would be a (unrepaired) bridge too far. But being forgotten and ignored as legitimate road users does get wearisome.

To sum up, I recommend:

Write-off the WRB debacle as a bad joke, and switch to steel and/or concrete.

Repair rural roads effectively.

Re-vamp driver training and testing.

Re-test every ten years.

Greater police presence on our roads.

Acknowledge the role of motorcyclists in easing congestion and consider us when making decisions about our road network.

Sincerely,

Matthew Waite

[REDACTED]

[REDACTED]