4 December 2017

Mr Geoff Howard MP
Chair
Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee
Parliament House
Spring Street
Melbourne VIC 3002

by email: lrrsc@parliament.vic.gov.au

Dear Mr Howard

Inquiry into VicRoads Management of Country Roads

Thank you for your letter of 23 November 2017 inviting a submission to the Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee’s inquiry into VicRoads management of country roads.

I note your terms of reference which you have requested my input on, and refer you to the following report that I consider relevant to the inquiry:

- Maintaining State-Controlled Roadways (June 2017)

This report concluded that the increasing proportion of the state road network in very poor condition presents a growing risk to public safety and increases road user costs. Not enough funding is allocated to road maintenance to sustain the road network, but VicRoads also cannot demonstrate clearly that it is making the best use of its existing maintenance funds. Its approach to road pavement maintenance is reactive, with maintenance generally being carried out only when it becomes critical.

The audit also found that targeted early intervention to prevent roads from needing more costly and extensive maintenance has been limited. This approach has not kept up with the rate of deterioration of road pavements across the network. As the complexity and cost of maintenance increases, less can be done using the available levels of funding, resulting in an increasing maintenance backlog and lower levels of service for road users.

VicRoads is aware that it needs a more strategic approach and is working towards improving its road pavement asset maintenance practices. It recognises that it needs greater clarity in its classification of roads and is examining how its procurement framework and performance reporting can be improved.

Without a strategic approach to road pavement maintenance, road conditions will continue to deteriorate and VicRoads will find it increasingly harder to maintain the entire network in a functional condition.

The committee may wish to enquire about progress that has been made by VicRoads to address audit recommendations.
We have contacted your Committee’s Executive Officer, Ms Yuki Simmonds, and have agreed to follow up in the new year when your Committee’s work on the Drug Law Reform inquiry has eased.

My Office is available to assist the Committee in relation to this inquiry. If we can be of further assistance, please contact Susanna Young.

Yours sincerely

ANDREW GREAVES
Auditor-General