To whom it may concern,

I would like to approach the lack of funding for the upkeep of rural roads (Vic Roads arterial category 1,2&3) from a different perspective as in driver stress and fatigue which is increased by the lack of funding to provide road shoulder maintenance and reconstruction works.

Avoiding dips hollows and shoulder drop off leads to continual monitoring of road surfaces. Rural residents are accustomed to seeing heavy vehicles and school buses straddling the center line trying to find some relief from the undulating road surface. Owing to the lack of funding for road shoulder maintenance and the continual erosion and under mining of the bitumen surface due to wind turbulence from passing traffic and water erosion, many category 2 arterial road surfaces have been reduced to 6 meters of bitumen with 100mm of shoulder drop off. The width of the truck is 2.360 metres plus a further 300mm mirror width for a total 2.660metres x by 2 for the total width of two passing trucks and you have 680mm between trucks as they pass. To add to the equation B double and truck and trailer combinations with two articulation points plus radial steer tires that tend to track contours of the road surface, add in 100mm shoulder drop off, wet weather, no substantial material to provide a stable surface provides for a ‘cheek clenching experience’.

It may be safe for trains to pass with 680mm between them as being on rail lines as for trucks with so many more variables coming into play, 680mm leaves no room for error and adds to the stress levels of the day behind the wheel.

I fall to fathom how Vic Roads inspectors can isolate one square meter of road surface; one could be under the illusion that Vic Roads adjust maintenance specifications downward as there road surfaces deteriorate. If you were to survey heavy vehicle drivers, apart from harassment by authority over minor infringements there main gripe would be the state of road conditions. A trucks response to adverse road conditions is magnified 80% compared to Vic Roads inspector’s vehicle.

Metro funding seems to have a bottomless pit where funding is concerned, as for regional Victoria 360 million announcement some months back sounds like a big amount for a few regional roads but after 25 years neglect it may repair 20km of arterial road in each council in Victoria.

When will Vic Roads ever become accountable as in the chain of responsibility for providing a safe working environment, providing and maintaining roads to a reasonable standard so as to help reduce fatigue on drivers, these substandard roads also cause undue fatigue on vehicles and cause expensive repairs on major components. Maybe it is time for Vic Roads to reestablish there road construction gangs in regional areas. In the right environment, this works well as the department is not looking to make a profit.

In closing my submission, I would like to invite any member of your panel to accompany me for a day on the highway so as they can do their own assessment on the state of rural roads.

Regards

Colin McKenzie