12 January 2018

Executive Officer
Law Reform, Road and Community
Safety Committee
Parliament House
Spring Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3002

Forwarded via email: lrrsc@parliament.vic.gov.au

Dear Sir/Madam

Re: Inquiry into VicRoads’ Management of Country Roads

Macedon Ranges Shire Council (MRSC) welcomes the opportunity to provide input to the Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee’s Inquiry into VicRoads’ Management of Country Roads (the Inquiry).

The key issues and examples which MRSC would like to bring to the attention of the inquiry are as follows:

- VicRoads target funding specifically around road safety based on crash data and usage which is important. This does not however account for other important aspects which the community values e.g. Preventative works, amenity, signage and general maintenance;
- There is very minimal consultation with Council on planned maintenance or capital improvement works carried out within MRSC LGA. This includes road maintenance works carried out on various locations within Council’s LGA without any notification to Council or residents;
- Minimalist approach to maintenance of roadside drainage and associated infrastructure so as to provide amenity and flood protection to abutting property owners. An example of this is lack of drainage maintenance on Mount Macedon Road, Macedon. Lack of drainage maintenance can impact road pavement stability;
- Reduced roadside fire prevention slashing in rural communities. An example of this is the reduction of roadside slashing on Melbourne Lancefield Road over recent years;
- Approach to roadside slashing varies between VicRoads’ regions, creating a perception of uneven service delivery;
- Under-investment in treatment of noxious weeds on rural roadsides. Opportunity exists to achieve broader landscape scale outcomes by coordinating treatment works on VicRoads roadsides and Council managed roadsides and reserves. An example
includes Edgecombe Road in Kyneton which has high infestations of Gorse and Straws Lane in Newham which is infested with Blackberry. In both instances Council has invested in treatment on the surrounding roads which can be undermined by the lack of treatment on VicRoads’ roads.

• High levels of tree removal for road safety works. In recent years this has been a concern to the community.

• Little or no renewal and maintenance works to town entries so as to provide amenity and pride for township communities. An example of this is the poor presentation of the roundabout located at the intersection of Black Forest Drive and Mount Macedon Road (Entry point to both Mount Macedon and Macedon).

• Lack of communication and feedback with Council and the community has been noted on a number of occasions on issues that have been raised by Council involving maintenance and improvement works on VicRoads assets within Council area. VicRoads is perceived to avoid long term issues with no acceptable justifications provided. Some of the conversations with VicRoads engineers and officers have reflected lack of importance or priority given to issues in regional LGA’s. Recent advice from a VicRoads Senior Maintenance Engineer was “if no-one is going to be killed by a damaged asset, we won’t fix it”

• Response time to enquiries made by Council to VicRoads is generally over 2 months. This also requires chasing updates during the process which causes a diversion of Council’s operational resources. This has been experienced for a long time and as a result has caused lack of trust across the community.

• Lack of community based approach. VicRoads does not appear to prioritise issues of importance to the local community affected by the poor conditions of VicRoads assets.

• A review of the speed limit guidelines to consider possibility for a reduction in the default speed limits on unsealed gravel roads.

• Investigation of measures to address traffic volumes through townships so as to mitigate the need for road upgrades including duplication e.g. construction of off road foot cycle paths and designation of alternative heavy vehicle routes. In line with this Council moved a motion on 22 February 2017 which is reproduced below:

"That Council:

1. Notes the details of the consultation undertaken in relation to the Gisborne Movement Network Study and endorses the revised document for use by Council as a reference document for future infrastructure planning investigations relating to traffic and transport within the Gisborne Township;

2. Withdraws its in principle support given at the Council Meeting dated 18 December 2013, for the Station Road, Gisborne duplication concept design, and requests that further consultation be undertaken by VicRoads with the community, for the development of alternative options to this proposal; and

3. Commences discussions with VicRoads Regional Officers, The Minister for Roads and Road Safety, The Hon Luke Donnellan and Local Member for Macedon, Mary-Anne Thomas MP to develop
options for an alternate truck route to reduce the heavy vehicle traffic that currently uses Robertson Street and Station Road Gisborne and impacts on the amenity and adds to traffic congestion in and around the town centre of Gisborne.”

VicRoads often cite one of the key factors prohibiting VicRoads from addressing many of the issues above is a lack of funding. However issues with consultation and inclusion of local communities in prioritisation of renewal and maintenance works should be addressed as being fundamental, regardless of the amount of funding committed to VicRoads from the State.

MRSC appreciates the opportunity to make a submission into the Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee’s Inquiry into VicRoads' Management of Country Roads (the Inquiry).

Yours sincerely

Dale Thornton
Director Assets and Operations