To the Committee-

Anecdotal evidence that I have become aware of suggests that many country roads are in poor condition. I believe that is the direct result of excessive use of these roads by very large trucks. Changes to legislation that have allowed the use of "b double" and even "b triple" trucks has seen road transport capture a larger share of freight at the expense of rail. Obviously this had increased the wear and tear on the roads.

When transport policy is considered, it must be recognised that any money saved on railway maintenance and operation by introducing very large trucks into Victoria will simply be eaten up by an increase in required road maintenance. I think that committee should consider data pertaining to costs of country road maintenance (including pending costs) in the years since the introduction of larger trucks into Victoria.

I strongly suggest that committee examines restricting the use of very trucks in Victoria with a view to increasing the utilisation of rail in the haulage of bulk commodities such as cement, oil and grain, plus intermodal containers, where possible. Traditionally Victoria has had a more balanced freight haulage regime and returning to such a set up could only reduce the damage to country roads, improve road safety (through reduced road traffic) and be a positive outcome for the environment.

Yours Sincerely,
Colin Stephens.