Dear Sir/Madam

I would like to make a submission to the Inquiry into the management of rural roads by VicRoads. I have lived in rural Victoria all my life and the changes that have most contributed to the decline in the condition of our rural roads is the lack of funding for capital works as well as the outsourcing of maintenance, which was previously managed by local councils. Since the introduction of this outsourcing there has been a huge decline in preventative maintenance. Rarely is there any in my area and often only after a complaint to VicRoads. On one occasion I phoned VicRoads regarding a maintenance issue, after some time I phoned back to find out the progress of my complaint as nothing had been done. I was advised they had contacted the provider and the works had been done recently and did not require further. I almost laughed and my son in the background heard my response that it was at least 10 years since it had been done and it was his immediate response also. After this it was attended. I was never contacted prior to my second phone call with a quality assurance to confirm if it was satisfactory.

Do these contractors have to submit to VicRoads an inventory of maintenance completed annually. Do they have mandatory preventative maintenance that must annually be completed and do we as consumers have access to what this is.

There is no "regular preventative" maintenance on the road I travel each day to work. The dirt and grass has grown up on the sides of the roads preventing rain runoff into the drains, the water just runs down the road often covering it completely making it extremely dangerous and then the drains are never cleaned so it again has nowhere to go. The trees have grown between the road and the table drains so the contractors can’t clean these drains now without major maintenance. If the sides of the roads had been regularly graded as in the past this would have been prevented. Pot holes occur much quicker when water sits on the road. The repair of pot holes is spasmodic and not done very well with large "bumps" left on the road. Trees on the sides of the road have been let grow and overhang and after rain, even in a car you sometimes need to dodge branches let alone following a truck which has caused sometimes quite large branches to break off and land on your car. In recent years I have had to make numerous phone calls to VicRoads to advise of trees either partially or completely covering the road. This has occurred much more frequently in the past few years and recently I rounded a corner and had to "drive" over a small tree with luckily no damage. I have had other lucky escapes with one large tree covering the road at night, I managed to get around the leaves end but I was extremely concerned a branch might come through the windscreen and hit me. I was unable to stop in time.

There has been very little "capital" maintenance on VicRoads controlled roads in my area, and virtually none on council managed roads. Adequate funding to councils is imperative as the cost will only increase the longer they are left in a state of neglect.

A huge amount of money seems to be being spent on making travel times quicker in Melbourne.
by removing level crossings but what about "safer" roads in rural areas. This in a basic necessity, the state of our roads obviously contribute to the number of injuries/fatalities that occur in rural areas as well as incidents causing vehicle damage which is an untold cost. The installation of Barriers on our main rural freeways/highways may be of benefit but should not be the main focus of rural spending. Most accidents do not occur on these roads. They may prevent more serious injuries and possibly even deaths, but if the roads were in better condition it would also help. Are these barriers just to show city people that money is being spent in rural areas because most rural people do not regularly drive on these roads?

We need money spent on our main regional roads which are Vicroads maintained as well as sufficient funding to our local governments to allow them to maintain our roads to an acceptable standard. If the people of Melbourne had to drive on our roads they would be appalled and doing it on a daily basis is unacceptable.

The Lease of the Port of Melbourne, which we as rural producers will in the long term pay for by way of increased fees to export our produce, should have a much larger share of the revenue to be spent on our roads.

I would like to show, by way of an example how concerned one young person (year eleven) was regarding our rural roads. In a class they were asked to write what the main concern they had in the world was. This person wrote "the state of the Colac-Timboon road".

Noreen Jennings