Inquiry Name: Inquiry into VicRoads' Management of Country Roads

Mr Bryce Letcher

SUBMISSION CONTENT:

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See attachment

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File1: 5a5be57689e34-Vicroads submission.docx

File2:

File3:
Inquiry into VicRoads' Management of Country Roads

Dear Readers,

Let me start by saying that some of my comments will be more general than specific to country roads but they will apply to country roads too.

Maintenance.
Maintaining country roads (or any road) is inevitably cheaper if little issues are addressed quickly before they become bigger issues and then require much bigger and more expensive repairs. I realise that patrolling the roads to look for problems is costly so I suggest in these times of social media some public involvement would assist. Setup a webpage (and advertise it) where the public can submit a road problem. Ask for a GPS or map reference, a photo and brief description. Given the prevalence of smart phones there should be no issues in obtaining the information Vicroads needs to locate the issue and identify the urgency of action required.

Cyclists.
The number of cyclist on our roads is increasing. This is presenting issues which are better resolved now rather than later. On country roads the three big issues are visibility at a distance, common sense riding, and identification for authorities.

1/ Many riders do not understand the need to be seen at a significant distance when travelling at 80 or 100kmh, particularly by drivers of large vehicles, trucks, caravans and the like who cannot brake or manoeuvre quickly to avoid the slow moving cyclist. As one truck driver told me, this is his workplace and like any other hazardous workplace people should be required to wear Hi-Vis clothing. This would greatly assist in seeing the cyclist on the road ahead in time to plan for passing them. Much better than the seemingly popular black lycra. In many cases this would be a significant safety factor on city roads as well.

2/ Common sense in riding and courtesy go a long way to toward being safe on the roads. While it is legal to ride 2 abreast many roads are not suitable, and in fact many roads do not provide a way to safely pass a single rider. Riders making way for other traffic to pass would be greatly appreciated by the large majority of road users. Currently many cyclists seem to think they can block traffic because they are legally allowed to ride on the road and I suggest an advertising program could perhaps encourage better sharing of the roads.

3/ In my experience many cyclists fail to obey road rules, like stopping at stop signs, traffic lights and even crossing double lines. I believe many behave like this because they think they are immune to prosecution because they cannot be identified by authorities. They are not required to have a licence and the bike is not registered. As it is, there is no requirement for a cyclist to even know the road rules. I recommend that cyclists over the age of 16 are required to pass a rules test like motorcycle riders, and that they are then issued a “licence number” which is worn on the back of their Hi-Vis clothing (as suggested above). This allows authorities to easily identify the individual in much the same way as a car is identified by it’s registration. With the ever increasing use of traffic cameras, dash cams etc. this idea would greatly increase the likelihood of proper road rule observance by cyclists.

Traffic Barriers
I have observed a rapid increase in the 3 wire type “safety” barriers on country roads. In many cases there appear to be installed for no particular reason. One example is on the Calder Freeway in the region of the Keilor valley. There is a very wide median strip in this location and on need for a barrier, however they are currently being installed on both sides of the median when if it was really required, one barrier in the middle of the media would clearly do the job. Aside from the cost of these barriers, the 3 wire type appear to be particularly dangerous to motorbike riders should they have an accident.

In another example they have been installed along Riddell Rd, for much of the distance between Sunbury and Riddells Creek. I don’t know the cost of these but in my view the money would have been much better spent in smoothing the bumps, ripples and undulations on the road. Besides providing an uncomfortable ride these inhibit braking distance as vehicles bounce over them, gaining then loosing grip. This is a road hazard that has not been addressed at all but has existed for many years.

Narrow Roads
While I accept that there will always be narrow country roads the safety on these roads can be increase by having a consistent width. Often the available width of bitumen varies almost meter to meter along a road as the edge of the bitumen has not been maintained and it has broken away into pot holes. This makes it hard to maintain a steady cruise as an oncoming vehicle gets closer, resulting in a much greater chance of an accident.