JANUARY 12, 2018.

THE EXECUTIVE OFFICER
THE LAW REFORM, ROAD and COMMUNITY SAFETY COMMITTEE
PARLIAMENT HOUSE
SPRING STREET, EAST MELBOURNE, VIC. 3002.

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By Damien Codognotto OAM for the Independent Riders Group

MAINTAINING STATE CONTROLLED ROADWAYS

INTRODUCTION

A. The Independent Riders Group (IRG) began when the Motorcycle Riders Association (MRA) closed in Victoria. The IRG retains much of the experience and expertise of the MRA in a less formal format.

B. THE Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee invited written submissions from individuals and organisations on the effectiveness of VicRoads in maintaining/managing country roads in Victoria.

C. It seems obvious to most rural road users that VicRoads is failing in its’ duty of care to people outside Melbourne. That said, replacing VicRoads with local councils in road maintenance duties presents a dilemma.
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**VICROADS OR COUNCILS?**

D. The current situation is that VicRoads is too centralised with no real oversight. Country problems/complaints get referred to VicRoads HQ in Melbourne too often causing long delays, inappropriate responses and sometimes no responses at all.

E. VicRoads’ phones and online services are geared to corporate image and to discourage complaints and people seeking relevant information, not consumer service. Simple numbers that used to be on VicRoads website or in their library are no longer available to people or organisations with a legitimate interest.

F. The choice is to decentralise VicRoads’ road maintenance duties and introduce real oversight and accountability in its’ rural regions or to make councils responsible for road maintenance.

G. A difficult choice.

H. Do we keep VicRoads as is? Do we hope the elected government of the day will be strong enough to introduce the recommended checks/balances/changes and the transparency/accountability systems or do we start a whole new system making municipalities responsible for roads?

I. Victorian Governments’ have a poor record implementing recommendation by Parliamentary Inquiries on road safety. Inquiry recommendations are subject to scrutiny then a “whole-of-government-response”. The whole-of-government-response is mostly written by the departments resisting change. The conflict of interest is obvious.

J. The 2012 Parliamentary Inquiry into Motorcycle Safety (PIMS) Recommendation 1, to establish an independent crash data authority, was made because the crash data available had to be improved and verified. There was/is no complete picture. Bits of different information were/are held by different agencies. The latest spreadsheet does not even provide basic information on the make and model of a crashed vehicle, engine size or even if it is a ute or luxury sedan, a motorcycle or scooter. Basic information is missing. This data would be easy to include but repeated requests to include it have been denied.

K. This situation has been created by VicRoads/VicPol/TAC/Health/Justice. It is a systemic failure that directly affects road safety, rural road building, maintenance and repair.

L. The whole-of-government-response to PIMS recommendation 1 was: "the functions identified in the recommendation do not require the creation of a new office. The road safety partner agencies will continue to share and gather data and information and will collaborate with the Department of Health and Ambulance Victoria. Agencies will also work to close gaps in current data collection, such as off-road motorcycle crash data. Centralised data management processes will be investigated, and will include health, insurance, injury, road, registration and licensing data. It is expected that there will be substantial costs associated with establishing centralised processes, but these would be minor compared with the costs associated with the establishing and operating a new office"

M. Six years later there has been no real improvement in data sharing or availability of crash data and Paramedics and “front line” police are still not allowed to discuss what they see at work with an independent agency let alone the public.
N. VicRoads/VicPol/TAC do not want an independent authority to obtain, collate, interpret and most of all, distribute road crash data. They want to control it. Because of this selfish desire to control information, the full picture of road trauma on rural roads may never be revealed.

O. Do we start again by making country road maintenance the responsibility of local government?

P. There seems little faith among IRG members or country road users that all councils will manage country roads effectively. And, there is the major problem of effective oversight of so many Councils across the state.

Q. VicRoads has no effective oversight. There is no real system to hold it accountable for vehicle/property damage, injury or death in the case of VicRoads failure to maintain roads to a safe standard, not use obsolete road furniture and/or to effect timely repairs. The Victorian Ombudsman can deal with minor issues but slow and frustrating. The Coroner should be effective but is advised/assisted by VicPol and is often ignored. The current system must change if we are to lower the country road toll.

R. As country roads are deteriorating, country road injuries and deaths are increasing.

**CRASH DATA AND CONFLICTS OF INTEREST**

S. All-party committees of Members of Parliament hold inquiries and make recommendations to improve the road safety effectiveness of VicRoads/VicPol/TAC. Then VicRoads/VicPol/TAC write the whole-of-government response. A dangerous conflict of interest. See APENDIX A.

T. Of 64 recommendations from the 2012 Inquiry perhaps 60 will never be seriously considered because they are not in VicRoads/VicPol/TAC’s interest. Recommendation 1 begins:

“That an independent office of road safety data be created, which will be responsible for collecting, collating, interpreting and publishing all data relevant to road safety ……”

U. Recommendation 1 is critical to improving VicRoads planning/management/maintenance of rural roads. But, VicRoads and VicPol work too closely together in their departments’ interests for crash data to be adequate or reliable or for them to agree to an independent authority.

V. Reliable crash data is a critical part of understanding country roads and where improved planning/management/maintenance needs to be targeted. You cannot effectively plan for infrastructure projects, road maintenance programs or crash countermeasures without adequate, reliable crash data.

W. VicPol investigates crashes on country roads. The investigations are not always carried out by scientifically trained crash investigators. See APENDIX B. Data presented to the Coroner in court is not always complete.

X. In the 2015 quadruple fatal crash at Pyalong there was at least one eyewitness but the statement from that witness was not part of VicPol’s evidence to the Coroner. And, VicPol did not find the drugs, a victim’s wallet and the driver’s mobile phone. These were found by victims’ mothers and a tow truck operator. The crashed car was not kept in a secure facility but lay for months, open to the weather, in a commercial wrecker’s yard in Heathcote.
Y. The fact that VicRoads knew the barrier involved in the Pyalong crash was obsolete and dangerously placed did not feature in the Coroner’s finding.

Z. The Victorian Coroner has a team of supposedly independent experts to advise him/her. Some of these are serving VicPol officers. Another conflict of interest.

AA. The Pyalong crash killed four young men. It seemed all VicPol cared about was getting the anti drug driving message on TV. A good message but the investigation was not adequate.

BB. The further from Melbourne the crash is, the less likely a quality, comprehensive crash investigation is. In some areas it takes hours for an untrained, often inexperienced, officer to get to a crash site. Often the site has been cleaned up and evidence lost.

**ANIMAL STRIKES**

CC. VicRoads tell us that their data does not show that crashes involving vehicles hitting animals are a serious problem. Animal strikes have not featured large in their data because often animal strikes are not immediately obvious or are not looked for. Crash reports say things like “lost control of the vehicle” or “the driver had drugs in his/her system”.

DD. Vehicle insurers keep figures on claims caused by animal strikes. In the whole-of-government-response to the 2012 inquiry they promised to include insurance data in closing the gaps in crash data. They know the gaps exist. Five years later VicRoads denied it was a major issue. No research even after Cindy McLeish MP asked questions. A newspaper article named Bendigo road kill capital of Australia based on insurance claims.

EE. Claims figures show animal strikes are a major cause of crashes and a huge cost to country people in terms of vehicle damage, business/tourism damage and quality of life damage. VicRoads has ignored insurers’ figures and repeated calls from the IRG to do something about animal strikes in country Victoria.

FF. It is said that animals strikes are increasing. Luke O’Sullivan MP believes it. Is it true? Or are there more VicPol reports that crashes are indeed caused by wombats, kangaroos and other animals being caught on our roads because of recent publicity. And, what role do roadside barriers play in “corralling” wildlife in traffic lanes? There is no reliable data.

GG. It seems VicRoads are not investigating/researching this longstanding, serious problem. The RSPCA knows of no research programs. **See APENDIX C.** The only research IRG knows of into road kill is being done by Bruce Englefield on Tasmanian Devils for his PhD with the University of Sydney.

**ROADSIDE BARRIERS**

HH. According to the Macedon local paper, VicRoads will “roll out” around 1700 kms of wire rope barrier (WRB) in 2018. WRB is often duplicated unnecessarily fencing both sides of carriageways right next to the traffic lanes. Richard Riordan MP believes this practice is a death trap on country roads. IRG agrees.

II. Between 2015 and 2020 VicRoads say they will spend $4 billion on WRB in country Victoria while country roads deteriorate and country casualty crashes increase.
JJ. Do the new kilometres of roadside barriers affect the number of crashes caused by wildlife on our roads? We have been told that animals on roads fenced on both sides, when startled, will bolt for the open space. That is, up or down the road rather than off it. At 100 kph this could demand lightning reflexes to avoid a hit.

KK. In November 2015 an experienced rider was on part of the Calder Highway with new wire rope barrier (WRB) close to the road on his left and right. It is divided road. Conditions and visibility were good. He was experienced, wearing appropriate clothing and the bike was in good condition. He was a family man, a member of a Christian club and well liked in the Bendigo community.

LL. VicPol media reports said he hit a dead kangaroo, crashed and died. There was no mention of the WRB. VicPol did not suggest speed, drugs or alcohol were factors. Whether or not VicPol should be answering questions better left to a court in the media is another question.

MM. A motorcyclist came on the crash in a minute or so. He stopped to help. The man was dead with an obvious broken leg. He was against/in the WRB. The kangaroo, a small grey was dead on the road. The rider stayed with the victim until the paramedics arrived. VicPol did not take a statement from this witness, just from car drivers who reportedly did not see the crash or get close to the victim.

NN. To experienced riders the media story does not ring true. Why did the rider hit the kangaroo? It was dry with good visibility. If it was dead, why didn’t the rider ride around the animal? Why did the rider end up with a broken leg in the WRB?

OO. VicPol might recommend an inquest that *may* answer these questions in a couple of years time. A serious problem is, most loved ones of road crash victims have few resources to get good legal advice and they are often too shattered to go through a court case even years after their loss.

PP. Another question that must be asked is. How does the massive spending on WRB affect the country roads maintenance/repair budget?

**Fraud**

QQ. There are three obvious ways that funds for maintaining country roads can be wasted or go astray.

1. Inefficiency.
2. Money is diverted for other purposes like the WRB roll out.
3. Fraud.

RR. **Inefficiency** is a major problem with VicRoads and its’ sub-contractors. There is no real oversight.

SS. Damaged roads and road furniture often take months to repair. During that time the damaged area is a hazard to locals, working drivers and visitors to the area. Bad for road safety, bad for business and bad for quality of life. The whole of Victoria suffers from bad roads because VicRoads is not efficient. Many country road users feel this may not be apparent to bosses in VicRoads HQ in Melbourne.
TT. On March 7, 2015, a middle-aged couple went for a ride on one of our famous tourist roads. They had the experience and equipment for a safe trip on the Great Alpine Road. They weren’t speeding or on drugs or drunk. Conditions were good. They died.

UU. Two days before the fatal crash VicRoads conducted a hazard check. They found a dangerous pot hole but did NOT report it.

VV. One day before the fatal crash, another rider had a serious injury crash in the same spot.

WW. Alarm bells should have been ringing. If they were, they were ignored. Motorcyclists are deemed to put themselves at risk. They are considered expendable.

XX. VicRoads/VicPol prepared reports for the Coroner. As far as we know, no one was ever held to account for this double fatal. It did not need to happen. Efficient reporting and timely repairs would have meant this couple would have returned safely to their family. Their family did not receive any support or compensation we know of. See APENDIX D.

YY. The pot hole took another three weeks to fix properly. By any yardstick this was inefficient road maintenance and it cost lives. This is just a crash IRG found out about through the media.

ZZ. Diverting funds to suit agendas is known to happen but VicRoads do not like to talk about it. A forensic audit by a recognised, independent company is required.

AAA. Fraud is fairly common in large government departments.

“DEFENCE investigators have managed to reclaim less than a third of losses swindled from our armed forces through fraud and corruption. Just $1.1 million of $3.9 million stolen from the ADF in the past five years through credit card fraud, entitlement abuse and dishonesty has been clawed back. ....”

“WELFARE cheats have pocketed millions of taxpayer dollars after the Department of Human Services overpaid $2.84 billion through fraud or error last year.” See APENDIX D.

BBB. The Victorian Auditor General’s report said that VicRoads had no effective way of measuring its’ performance maintaining rural roads. See APENDIX F. Vic Roads performance maintaining rural roads is dismal, measuring bit is impossible under the current system.

CCC. A lot of our money is being spent but the taxpayer is not kept informed. With tens of billions of dollars going into roads, infrastructure and road furniture, the temptation to misuse our funds is real. The way our road funding is used effects our safety, economy and quality of life. There should be a forensic audit of VicRoads’ road funding looking closely at road maintenance and road barriers over time.

DDD. WRB has a much shorter working life than other barriers. It is more easily damaged so repair costs are much higher. There are several hidden costs with WRB. VicRoads promotion of WRB seems almost religious. Their zeal in installing WRB is extreme to the extent that VicRoads/VicPol will not even consider some facts at crash sites.

EEE. The crash investigators blind spot was apparent in the case of the Pyalong quadruple fatal crash.
FFF. Tim Bull MP for Gippsland has asked Minister Donnellan many times for information on WRB in Gippsland and for real consultation.

GGG. VicRoads does not consult with road users and their organisations. It calls public meetings then send representatives to tell people some of what they have planned. Awkward questions are taken away for consideration then usually consigned to oblivion.

HHH. VicRoads’ failure to properly consult with the Country Fire Authority (CFA)and the State Emergency Service (SES) in December 2017 resulted in a confrontation in the media provoked by VicRoads. After telling all and sundry how right they were about WRB on country highways, VicRoads now admits they got it wrong on the Calder and will retrofit the barriers so emergency vehicles can get to fires and crashes and so on in safe, timely fashion. How much money will be diverted from country road repairs to cover this blunder?

III. The Calder retrofit will cost hundreds of millions of dollars and injuries and deaths because VicRoads did not research adequately or consult properly. MP for Northern Victoria Luke O’Sullivan went to the Bendigo Advertiser with his concerns about animal strikes and emergency service access in November 2017.

JJJ. VicRoads Director Bryan Sherritt responded claiming the WRB reduced head-on and run-off-road crashes by 85%! Based on what? Figures independent experts are not allowed to see and crash data that three Victorian Parliamentary Inquiries have said is inadequate.

KKK. The acting Minister for Roads Philip Dalidakis MP was on ABC radio telling the public, presumably on VicRoads advice, that there were breaks in highway WRB every 500 to 700 metres which is not true. He said. “If there’s anything we need to learn, we’ll do that.” It’s a bit late now acting Minister Dalidakis, VicRoads has been installing WRB for twenty years.

LLL. **FIX OUR RURAL ROADS COMMUNITY WEBSITE**

https://www.facebook.com/ruralroads/posts/929453180536631?comment_id=942779325870683&notif_id=1515825020552963&notif_t=feed_comment_reply

MMM. **RECOMMENDATIONS**

1. That VicRoads spending on rural road maintenance and repairs be subject to a forensic audit by a recognised independent company. The audit should include comparing the cost of the various road barriers, including installation, working life, maintenance and repairs over at least twenty years.
2. That VicRoads “regions” be given more autonomy from VicRoads headquarters in Melbourne but with much greater scrutiny and oversight by an organisation independent of VicRoads administrators.
3. That Councils have an oversight/reporting role in their municipalities as part of the general increase in checks and balances ensuring VicRoads performance comes up to an acceptable standard.
4. That VicRoads administration be made transparent in planning, finances and crash data.
5. That wire rope barrier installation stop immediately and that obsolete and dangerous anchor points in Victoria be removed.
6. That VicRoads consults road users and their organisations according to the dictionary definition of consultation.
7. That MEAP secrecy be lifted and membership opened to representatives elected/appointed by their organisations then approved by the Minister of the day not VicRoads.
9.

APENDIX A.

DATA COLLECTION

Victorian Parliamentary Inquiries are regularly held by Road Safety Committees that include elected representatives from all political parties.

The lack of reliable road crash data has been identified as a serious problem by various Parliamentary Inquiries. The problem is systemic. Without reliable data on road furniture, traffic flows, crash sites, road maintenance & repairs and more, the real cost of roads and road trauma cannot be accurately calculated. Road safety initiatives and infrastructure planning can't be done effectively.

2005. CRASHES INVOLVING ROADSIDE OBJECTS

"EXECUTIVE SUMMARY. Crashes involving roadside objects are a major road safety problem in Victoria, accounting for almost one-fifth of all crashes resulting in an injury or fatality. ... The Committee noted a number of areas where crash information was missing or could be more detailed. The difficulty obtaining adequate data, in particular travel exposure information to better assess crash risk and target safety treatments, is a continuing issue in Victoria, coming up time and time again in Committee inquiries. Governments agree to improve crash information, yet crash and crash risk information continues to be an impediment to the improvement of roadside safety in Victoria. Crash information recording and publications need to be greatly improved. ... The Committee observed that there was no systemic approach or strategic plan to comprehensively address the problem of crashes involving roadside objects."

2006. DRIVER DISTRACTION INQUIRY

"CHAIR'S FOREWORD. ... One of the problems faced by the Committee during the Inquiry was the lack of clear definition and information systems which measure distraction and it's role in crashes. The Committee calls on Victorian Road Safety Authorities to develop clear definitions, categories and suitable crash data reporting in order to understand the extent of the problems and to develop appropriate countermeasures. ..."

"EXECUTIVE SUMMARY. ... In view of the lack of suitable definitions, categorisations and suitable data, Victoria and most other Australian jurisdictions are not well placed to accurately assess the role of driver distraction in crashes. Recent studies in the United States, together with an ongoing study by the New Zealand Ministry of Transport, provide some insights into driver distraction impacts. Development of comprehensive crash data is a vital first step in guiding future Victorian road safety initiatives relating to driver distractions."

2012. INQUIRY INTO MOTORCYCLE SAFETY

"EXECUTIVE SUMMARY. ... The first, and arguably the most important theme was the lack of accurate and robust data, both for crashes and trauma. Many arguments, proposals and observations made in submissions and witness statements were based or justified on crash and trauma data. However, the significant data issues identified by the Committee meant much of the evidence presented to the Committee was difficult to verify. ... Addressing data issues is the single most critical aspect of our future response to motorcycle safety."

"RECOMMENDATION 1. That an independent office of road safety data be created that will be responsible for collecting, collating, interpreting and publishing all data relevant to road safety."

NB Under the current system most of the whole of government response to road safety inquiries is written mostly by the departments that need to change. Most recommendations are not acted on in Victoria.
05 August 2016

Mr Damian Codognotto OAM


Dear Damian,

I acknowledge receipt of your letter dated 22 July 2016 where you reference comments made by Assistant Commissioner Fryer in the media on 16 May 2016. You further ask if trained crash investigation experts attended and studied each of the fatal crash sites (Motorcycle) and how police calculated this precise statistic.

I refer to an email sent to you on 18 May 2016 in which we previously responded to you on this question. (Copy attached).

In closing our Highway Patrol operatives are highly trained specialists who are committed to policing, investigating and preventing the causes of road trauma in our community.

Thank you for demonstrated commitment to road safety.

Yours Sincerely,

John Comack
A/Inspector- Staff Officer
Road Policing Command
Dear Mr Codognotto,

Thank you for your letter dated 18 November. I am very sorry to read of the recent motorcycle accident and send my best wishes to his family and loved ones.

We are also unaware of any evidence regarding whether wire rope barriers deter wildlife from accessing the roadway. We would support further research into the effectiveness of barriers or other measures to reduce traffic accidents that involve wildlife.

If you do become aware of any research or data on this issue we would appreciate you sharing this information with us.

Yours sincerely,

Dr Liz Walker
Chief Executive Officer
RSPCA Victoria
1. Home
2. News
3. Local News

November 16 2017 - 3:30PM

MP fears new railings for Calder Highway from Bendigo to Melbourne could increase collisions

• Adam Holmes

Local News

The barriers are already in place in a number of parts of Victoria.

A VICTORIAN Nationals MP fears road safety barriers being installed on the Calder Highway between Bendigo and Melbourne could cause an increase in vehicle collisions with kangaroos.

VicRoads has been rolling out the wire safety rails, which are 76-centimetres tall and include four horizontal wires, on some of the state’s most dangerous roads in an attempt to reduce road trauma.

But member for Northern Victoria Luke O’Sullivan believes kangaroos were becoming stuck in the barriers or tripping and falling, causing them to become an increased hazard.

He told parliament he almost collided with a kangaroo near Nagambie, and then counted 33 dead kangaroos and five dead foxes on a 59-kilometre drive from Seymour to Wallan where the barriers have already been installed.

Mr O’Sullivan was concerned that the continued rollout of the railings closer to Bendigo could cause more collisions.
The wire safety railings are being rolled out on Victoria's 20 most high-risk roads, including the Calder between Bendigo and Melbourne. Picture: DARREN HOWE

"I just wonder whether they are getting onto the road and getting stuck in between those wire barriers that we see have been erected," he said.

"They are on the way up to Bendigo, they are on the way up to Ballarat, they are up the Hume Freeway as well and I know they are on the way down to Gippsland.

"I have had plenty of comments from constituents verifying the number of kangaroos up there. I think in the last couple of years after a couple of wet seasons the kangaroo numbers have really built up and they are becoming a bit of a pest."

VicRoads is standing by the safety rails, which they claim are high enough for kangaroos to jump over and do not impede the movement of native animals.

Safe system road infrastructure program director Bryan Sherritt said regular breaks between the barriers gave improved access to road maintenance and emergency services.

"Flexible safety barriers reduce head-on and run-off-road crashes by as much as 85 per cent. Quite simply, they save lives," he said.

VicRoads did not have data for collisions with animals since the barriers had been installed, because the rollout was not yet complete. They are being installed on the state's 20 highest risk roads.

Mr O'Sullivan requested the collision data during his speech to parliament this week.

Between 2012 and 2016, more than 1000 people have been involved in crashes on the Calder between Bendigo and Melbourne.

Of those, 172 were serious injuries and 13 were fatalities.

There are concerns new safety barriers being installed on the Calder between Bendigo and Melbourne could cause kangaroos to become stuck, increasing the potential for vehicle collisions.

Fears highway safety railings could increase kangaroo collisions

MP claims safety railings on Calder between Bendigo and Melbourne could increase kangaroo crashes.

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Write a comment...

Gaurav Grewal John Currin Dean Merks Damien Colognotto Tom McCarthy

Like • Reply • 2:13 hrs

John Currin Gaurav Grewal if we can get the non riders interested we should use Roo, wombat, possum you name it.

Like • Reply • 2:13 hrs

Gaurav Grewal I don't think people realise how dangerous these barriers are. A waste of public money and death traps for motorists. Last week saw a rider elde as he got hit by a roo and hit the barriers.

Like • Reply • 4:13 hrs

View more replies

Write a reply...

Gaurav Grewal Wire rope barriers in the current design have no safety implication rather they are death traps. Only last week a 60 year old male died after hitting a roo and then veering towards the wire ropes. If it weren't for those ropes he might have escaped with minor injuries.

Angry • Reply • 14:13 hrs

Helena Shuffell Yes it's very sad

https://www.facebook.com/bendigoadvertiser/posts/10154856871982077?comment_id=10154857043562027&reply_comment_id=10154857049242027
Mick Rider: Anyone who ventures onto the rural highways, check the fine print of your insurance. A lesson I learnt the hard way. My excess was doubled, because of a roo strike. Yeh double that of if I had an accident being my fault with another vehicle. Was not as if I ran into it, it literally smashed into the side of my car just in front of the passenger's side door. 15 big ones of damage.

It is also worthy to note that VicRoads refuses to accept that animal strikes are a problem, it would rather just bundle them into single vehicle accidents, which technically, it is. However it then makes all those drivers look like idiots who either lost control, were not concentrating, fatigued or were distracted.

As the 2013 PMS recommendation quite clearly recommended, an independent crash investigation team be set up, to compile accurate crash data. VicRoads and VicRoads wouldn't have a bar of it. Wonder why? Maybe because it would make a total mockery of the statistic's they provide.

Food for thought.

Wayne Proudfoot: These things are a killer for motorcyclists and yet we're worried about Kangaroos? This world is nuts.

Lynne Francis: I have a friend who rides a motorbike and I do appreciate how dangerous these fences are for riders.

Carl Turps: No worse than smashing into a solid barrier at 100km/hr. Then coming to a dead stop.

Scott Jones: Or a tree.

Carl Turps: Absolutely. Hubby rides a motorbike and calls these barriers a cheese grater. Horrible for motorbikes.

Helena Shuffett: Absolutely. Hubby rides a motorbike and calls these barriers a cheese grater. Horrible for motorbikes.

Damien Costi: Carl Turps: Hitting WRB is much worse than hitting a smooth barrier at any speed.

Deb Watson: What I would be more worried about is a motorbike rider that may loose control or near miss with a roo that poor rider would be cut in two halves.
16.
Murray McPhee: And they are only just realising this? The scary thing is, these people are on huge salaries, and can change laws to back their half-baked theories, and blind Freddy could see that these things are death traps. For motorcyclists and wildlife.

Angry · Reply · 10 · 13 hrs

Vikki Smith: I agree Murray. So many times there are works carried out at a huge expense & then there is the realisation that it may be harmful or inept in whatever reason, it is inexcusable particularly when the design engineers are receiving monstrous salaries.

Like · Reply · 2 · 13 hrs

Gaurav Grewal: completely agree, the extent of injury and risk of the fatality is so much more likely.

Like · Reply · 12 hrs

Damien Codognott: They are not only just realising it. They've known WSB was a killer for years but careers are on the line. VicRoads bosses are not prepared to admit they made a huge mistake. They would have to explain where the 45 billion they will spend on WSB between 2015 and 2020 went.

Like · Reply · 6 mins

Jan Bogart: There are a number of these roads around the country. Yet to see a road stuck in one. Not saying it doesn't happen.

Like · Reply · 2 · 13 hrs

Marie Claire: Meaning, it traps them on the road, so they stay in the road rather than crossing it and getting out the way.

Like · Reply · 1 · 12 hrs

Jan Bogart: Don't kangaroos jump hop over fences. Have seen a number of them scale higher fences than those barriers.

Like · Reply · 1 · 12 hrs

Wayne McKeenste: have you ever seen the large fences to keep kangaroos out of the army training ground at pukem...and some get over them so the safety cable along the highway concern them at all, but as David pascoe stated well that true,you hit one on a bike your dog meet, when they block the access to side of the road where a accident or fire could be,not good little fires turns into a big ones...and in accident it keeps the car on the road so someone else can run into them.I must say the person that come up with this idea was brain dead at the time.

Angry · Reply · 1 · 7 hrs

Damien Codognott: Wayne Mckenste it only keeps a car on the road. If the car hit at the correct angle on a hard flat surface at the right speed. In too many cases cars go straight over the WSB or is slung back into traffic. I was riding behind a car and saw this happen. WSB can also 'vomit' cars into the air as in the Flyong quadrant fatal. Kangaroos on a road with WSB may bolt for open ground, the roadway, it started...They can't jump sideways.

Like · Reply · Just now

Suzanne Camm: My concern are bush fires, a couple of years ago, we came across a bushfire on the Calder police had all the cars doing U turns across the median strip, can't do that now.

Like · Reply · 11 · 13 hrs

Nathan Castle: There are regular cross over points for emergency vehicles on rural freeways.

Like · Reply · 1 · 13 hrs

Suzanne Camm: Nathan Castle there's not that many on the Calder and it would depend where the fire is, wouldn't it? The fire we came across actually started on the freeway.

Like · Reply · 4 · 12 hrs

Chat (146)
Doug Brooks: Roos are by FAR the biggest hazard on our local roads. Hardly a drive outside built up areas where you don’t see them.
Like · Reply · 1·12 hrs

Phil Scott: These things are deadly to motorcyclists, cost squillions to install and really as much to maintain every time some doozy car driver drills off the road.
Like · Reply · 9·13 hrs

Meryl Bartling: The first time my hubby and I saw these terrible barriers we said they’d be really bad for mb riders. We’ve also seen so many more roos stuck on the roadside because of the fencing. A couple of years ago the police closed a section of Calder Hwy to hunt roos off the road through an opening in the wire fence. Great idea maybe (5 yrs) but terrible design in both cases. Driveside safe everyone.
Like · Reply · 2·11 hrs

Mo Aziz: Absolute death trap for riders and worse for vehicles that get thrown back into oncoming traffic. Lift your game Vic roads, how many millions of tax paying dollars went into these death traps that obviously were not biased nor thought through! Very disappointing.
Like · Reply · 6·12 hrs

Rex Hunter: I don’t understand how anyone with half a brain would think these could trap a roo! Ever consider how high they can jump you idiot? Worst case scenario for a roo would be tripping as they jump it, which would be so unlikely it’s not even worth considering... See More
Like · Reply · 2·10 hrs

Marie Claire: Fucking cheese-graters, bad for everyone except whoever was doing the maths deal on getting them installed. Why? All they have done is make it more dangerous by removing any ability to run off the road to avoid an accident.
Like · Reply · 6·12 hrs

Andrew Roberts: Its time for a roo cull anyway, they are outta control...
Like · Reply · 10·13 hrs

Brenda Kuscher: One of the biggest waste of money I see. There were two places between 15ks where a car has gone through the barriers. Not long after it was installed. Going to cause more problems I think.
Like · Reply · 3·9 hrs

Lynne Francis: Here we go again...one would hope that if a roo gets caught in one of these railings someone would call Wildlife Rescue to have it removed. These railings are low enough for a roo to jump over if need be but no-one is going to stop kangaroos from coming... See More
Like · Reply · 2·10 hrs

Leigh Watkins: These barriers are death traps to motorcyclists. What a waist of money, why could they not plant low growing natives that would work to catch a vehicle should it head of the carriage way?
Like · Reply · 4·13 hrs

Gary Graham: Are you kidding me...
Like · Reply · 6·12 hrs

Ron Dunn: I’ve seen it happen. A kangaroo enters the freeway from the side, sees one of these barriers, changes direction, and heads back towards the traffic. But what do you expect from VicRoads? They never get anything right, they never make anything better, they should just be shut down.
Like · Reply · 2·12 hrs

Mandy Stablesford: Also makes pulling off the road in a hurry impossible. What if you are having to vomit or had a kid choking up or needing “to go” right now? You can’t pull off the road out of other drivers way.
Like · Reply · 2·11 hrs

https://www.facebook.com/bendigo advertiser/posts/10154856871982027?comment_id=10154857043562027&reply_comment_id=10154857049242027

Chat (148)
19.

The Bendigo Advertiser

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Cover their eyes or use antelope horns when crossing the kangaroo road to decrease the chances of accidents.

Wendy Ricardo Absolutely! All these barriers make it worst! The roads can't get out and that's when they cause tragic accidents!!

Like · Reply · 1 · 7 hrs

David Ursic Another waste of taxpayers' money! Who's making these decisions? Even one barrier down the road would have saved.

Like · Reply · 1 hr

Jen Jackie-Ball Having been smashed twice by roos within 6 months period in this exact area I'd like to add more to the argument.

Like · Reply · 11 hrs

Bec McCabe Do you know that kangaroos can clear 6 foot high fences whilst bouncing away from danger? 

Like · Reply · 6 · 12 hrs

3 Replies · 10 hrs

Jasee Gratt Installing them on both sides of the median strip gets me.

Absolute waste of money

Like · Reply · 4 · 10 hrs

Brian Stone This MP obviously doesn't know what a kangaroo is. They can jump.

Like · Reply · 5 · 13 hrs

7 Replies

Kim English How about spending money on fixing the country roads around Victoria? 

Like · Reply · 3 · 10 hrs

Mark Stuchciarek Bryce Hodges Take our cars off us and give kangaroos a licence at least there protected. Haha.

Like · Reply · 1 · 12 hrs

2 Replies

Chris Coles Rob the problem is that some people open the gates along the highway.

Like · Reply · 1 · 11 hrs

Julie Arnold Yep where do you go in black ice just a waste of money fix the country roads worst in aus

Like · Reply · 2 · 10 hrs

Adrian Cok A waste of money and actually contribute to fatalities of people and wildlife.

Like · Reply · 2 · 9 hrs

Mandy McInnes Since when have kangaroos stopped jumping.

Like · Reply · 2 · 12 hrs

Bill Keeble Yep we pay $50 on top of our motorcycle for that bone smashing fence.

Like · Reply · 1 · 12 hrs

1 Reply

Dan Burton Coming soon increase in rego to pay for it...

Like · Reply · 1 · 11 hrs

Anthony Wilson What's that skippy?....can't you jump anymore?

Like · Reply · 11 hrs

Greg Tiller Cmon. If Roos can't clear those wires they deserve to be moved down.

Like · Reply · 1 · 10 hrs

Tameeka Stevens This is more of an issue for wombats and echidnas

Like · Reply · 2 · 13 hrs

2 Replies

Andrew Armstrong A kangaroo can easily jump over 6 feet high.

Like · Reply · 5 · 13 hrs

1 Reply · 9 hrs

Andrew Penna They are installed to close to the side of the road to safely stop.

Like · Reply · 3 · 10 hrs

Joan Campbell 32 less roos motorists have to worry about!! Natural Cult.

Like · Reply · 13 hrs

Peter Casey They were told years ago and they took no notice.

Like · Reply · 2 · 12 hrs

View more comments

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Heavy rain falls across region | Live nachr
Traffic has come to a standstill on the Northern Highway after a heavy downfall near Heathcote. We are hearing reports of flash flooding and delays will help you decide here.
There was no need for this couple to die. Inefficiency in hazard reporting and timely road repairs cost two lives and caused untold grief to their family and loved ones. How many other similar cases are there that do not make it to the media? VicRoads/VicPol are unlikely to say.
MERCURY clippings on defence and welfare fraud January 8 & 12, 2018. $3.9 and $2.8 billion equals $6.7 billion. VicRoads will spend $4 billion on wire rope barrier in five years.
Public servant jailed for $1.3m in kickbacks

A corrupt Victorian public servant will spend at least six years behind bars after he masterminded a cash-for-contracts scam and pocketed more than $1 million in secret kickbacks.

Barry John Wells, 51, was yesterday sentenced to eight years and nine months in prison after pleading guilty over a sophisticated conspiracy involving multiple companies.

Wells netted at least $1.375m in illegal kickbacks while he was responsible for awarding more than $17m worth of contracts before his fraud was uncovered in 2014, Victorian Supreme Court judge John Dixon said.

The judge has ordered Wells to repay that money.

The former public servant pleaded guilty earlier this year to conspiracy to defraud and three counts of receiving secret commissions while working for the Victorian Transport Department.

Wells's crimes took place while he was working for the Department of Infrastructure, the Department of Transport, and Public Transport Victoria over a seven-year period during which the 251 contracts were awarded.

The senior executive awarded multi million-dollar bus-stop building contracts to businesses in which he had a stake without disclosing his conflict of interest.

Wells had the authority to award contracts that were worth less than $20,000 and oversaw the tender process for government contracts over $100,000.

But he and another public servant, Albert Ooi, rigged the tender process so that only certain business would be awarded the contracts.

"You masterminded a fraudulent scheme," Justice Dixon said.

"Your offending was well-orchestrated, devious and sustained."

It is unknown exactly how much Wells received because it is difficult to quantify the losses caused to the public purse, but prosecutors say forensic analysis has identified at least $1.375m in illegal profits.

"You have been responsible for fraud on a grand scale," the judge said.

"You abused the trust placed in the public service by the community."

Wells's sentence makes him eligible for parole after six years and three months in jail.

Had he not pleaded guilty, he would have been sentenced to a minimum of eight years and six months' imprisonment, Justice Dixon said.

Ooi, 66, was jailed for at least six years in April over his role in the scheme and ordered to repay $2.3m in illegal profits.

AAP
27 July 2016

Mr Damien Codognotto OAM
Spokesman
Independent Riders’ Group

Dear Mr Codognotto,

Maintaining State-Controlled Roadways audit

Thank you for your letters of 22 and 25 July 2016. I write to inform you that VAGO is not planning to undertake an audit specifically focussed on the Motorcycle Safety Levy at this time. My Annual Plan 2016–17, however, includes a proposed audit, Maintaining State-Controlled Roadways, which may include an examination of motorcycle safety issues.

As the planning for this audit is scheduled to commence in the next few weeks, I will pass on your contact details to the relevant audit team to further discuss your concerns. They will be in contact soon.

Yours sincerely,

[Name]
Acting Auditor-General
Bad roads

THREE years ago the infrastructure minister promised that by adopting Victorian specifications for roadworks, standards would be raised.

Now we have line markings that are invisible; wheel path rutting that is so deep vehicles are having difficulty maintaining position; potholes expanding into total pavement failures and seal failures shortly after application.

Is the minister aware of a recent report by the Victorian Auditor-General on the state of Victorian roads which highlighted that “the increasing proportion of the network in very poor condition presents a growing risk to public safety”. So minister, I guess that explains why Tasmanian roads are in such unsafe conditions, we are simply following Victorian standards.

Downwards.

Brian Watson
Lenah Valley
Colin Jordan's Letter to the Editor, "The Age", that morning...

JANUARY 11 2018 - 1:00AM
Traffic snarls: Victoria's road system just isn't good enough

As a former chairman and chief executive of VicRoads, I write with dismay about the state of Victorian roads and the ominous warning signs that abound.

Several recent trips on major roads throughout Victoria showed that heavily potholed roads, reduced speed sections, weed and rubbish-strewn verges have become the norm for an organisation that apparently no longer has sufficient regard for the travelling public. Worse still, there are all too frequent signs of neglected structural failure of pavements. Lengths of wire-rope barriers hang loosely by the roadside unrepaired, clearly no longer capable of contributing to a safe road environment.

I cite two examples of many. The Western Highway has serious pavement failures in sections some of which are but a few years old. On the outer sections of the Monash Freeway commuters have been asked to put up with an astoundingly sub-standard running surface for months. Scratched, pitted and scarred from multiple line markings, how much more of a hazard could you create if you tried, and how easy it would be to provide a reasonable running surface. Failures like these on a statewide basis have safety and economic consequences for all of us.

It would be too easy attribute this serious decline to a lack of funds, this may be part of the issue, however we also need a substantial lift in customer care and the long-term professional capability of the stewards of our infrastructure resources.

Colin Jordan,
Glen Waverley
Repairs need work

IT would appear VicRoads achieves little when it comes to “road repair”.

Time and time again, VicRoads and their representatives have come out to the same sections of roads within my community to “repair” them, only to have those supposed repairs fall apart within days.

The conditions are now so deteriorated that road users are forced to take evasive action to avoid damage to their vehicles, including fully loaded B-double semis.

Road users often have to move to the opposite side of the road over non-existent double white lines, clearly putting themselves and others in harm’s way to avoid the potholes and dangerous conditions. This road is undoubtedly dangerous and has seen many incidents of damage to vehicles, agricultural machinery and livestock over the past 18 months. A fatality is only a matter of time.

I invite politicians to visit my community and see first-hand what is going on in the Casterton/Warrock area and how VicRoads and their representatives appear to be dipping into the taxpayer purse on a whim without actually achieving anything.

E. Timmers, Warrock
Friday, January 5, 2018.

Dr JOHN CROZIER
CHAIRMAN
ROYAL AUSTRALASIAN COLLEGE of SURGEONS
TRAUMA COMMITTEE
250-290 Spring Street,
Melbourne, Vic. 3002.

Dear Sir,

We read the article by Nicole Hasham in Melbourne’s AGE today with interest. “Expert slams ‘complacency’ on road toll”.

We support your view that too much emphasis on fatal crashes and “black spots” draws media attention and funds away from the 44,000 people hospitalised each year and from real preventative measures.

In Victoria road safety funds should be far more efficiently spent. In 2017 the Auditor General’s report said VicRoads had no way to effectively measure its’ performance in country areas. Rural roads are neglected and as they deteriorate, the road toll in country Victoria rises.

Another funding area of concern is the money wasted on wire rope barriers (WRB). The VicRoads CEO told us that they would spend $4 billion on WRB between 2015 and 2020. VicRoads does not follow its’ own safety guidelines with WRB. Sooner or later a journalist or lawyer or insurer is going to take VicRoads to court over WRB and win. That will drain road safety funds even more.

Now the fire and emergency service complain WRB delays their response to fires and crashes because WRB has been installed without due consultation or research. This is a national problem.

Animal strikes are a major road safety problem that no one we know of is seriously studying. Insurance claim figures are huge.

Allowing international tourist to drive here without any real testing or education is another serious road safety concern for us.

Sincerely,

Damien Codognotto OAM
Spokesman

CC JEREMY WOOLEY – Centre for Automotive Safety Research.
University of Adelaide.

PROF BRIAN FILDES – MUARC.
PO Box 4330, Doncaster Heights, Victoria 3109

www.damiencodognottooam.blogspot.com
APENDIX I.

Media Release
RICHARD RIORDAN MP
MEMBER FOR POLWARTH

03 January 2018

Vic Roads Ignore own Regulations on Wire Rope Barriers

As frustration continues to grow with regional road users, about the extravagant Wire Rope Barrier fiasco, and wasteful advertising campaign, Vic Roads own documents advise that many of the installations that have been installed on the Princes Hwy West “should be considered as a last resort option”

“How can a brand new duplicated highway be fitted with what Vic Roads themselves describe as a last resort option?” Richard Riordan MP said today.

This revelation comes on top of Vic Roads admitting they got it wrong on their wasteful advertising campaign, which saw Vic Roads promoting road safety with a car driving on the wrong side of the road.

In publically available documents provided by Vic Roads, Road Design Note, The use of Wire Rope Safety Barrier September 2016; Vic Roads recommend a Desirable offset of 4.0m, which “provides a comfortable width for a vehicle to stop clear of the traffic.”, not the 30cm much of the new Princes Hwy West duplication has.

The feed back from road users across rural Victoria is that Vic Roads is hemming in our highways, and when space is just not an issue, why are these barriers being installed well short of Vic Roads own recommended 4.0m set back?

“Vic Roads needs to immediately stop this extravagant roll out, review its planning and start putting funding back into bread and butter maintenance, that is well behind schedule across Western Victoria.” Mr Riordan said.

Contact Richard on 0429891516

RELEASE ENDS

For further information: 5231 5046
richard.riordan@parliament.vic.gov.au
Media Release

RICHARD RIORDAN MP
MEMBER FOR POLWARTH

Princes Hwy West, has kims of hemmed in road, without the recommended 4.0m set back recommended by Vic Roads specifications. How can a new road be built like this?

RELEASE ENDS
CFA fears over safety barriers

EXCLUSIVE
Timera Inker

Wire rope safety barriers installed along 2000 kilometres of Victoria’s roads are blocking CFA access to crashes and grass fires, triggering warnings that Victoria’s firefighting capacity could be hindered this bushfires season.

Four CFA captains of country brigades in Victoria’s north-west and north-east say a multi-million dollar Andrews government strategy to install flexible wire rope barriers along country roads is forcing firefighters to take life-threatening risks to carry out their duties.

VisaRoads has admitted it will now have to “retrofit” barriers along parts of the Calder Freeway – costing about $7 million to install per kilometre on complex roads – due to a lack of emergency service access.

The barriers, which consist of highly-tensioned wire rope supported by steel posts, are designed to avoid head-on and run-off crashes. They will be installed along 20 high-risk rural roads and median strips by the end of 2020, at a cost of $650 million, as part of a $1 billion road safety package.

Firefighters and emergency service controllers support the need for the barriers, but say a lack of consultation resulted in serious oversights in its design.

For instance, VisaRoads’ Safe System Road Infrastructure Program director Bryan Sherritt said there must be a break in the barriers every 500 metres to one kilometre, to allow for emergency service access.

But Mr Sherritt admitted that in some areas the breaks were less frequent.

This has forced emergency services to travel extra kilometres to reach their destination, significantly increasing response times.

for error’, country fire captains warn

Josh Gamble, captain of the Kyabram brigade, said his crew’s response times to a car entrapment one month ago and a grass fire mid-year were delayed, due to a lack of barrier openings.

Max Cox, a retired CFA volunteer of 65 years, said the wire ropes hindered firefighter access to a grass fire on the Hume Highway.

Experienced traffic engineer and former Planning Panels member Des Dragan warned that wire ropes were being installed too close to carriageways, in a letter sent to VisaRoads and Minister for Roads and Road Safety Luke Donohue one month ago.

But Mr Sherritt said research showed that having the barriers closer to the carriageway stopped vehicles from rolling over.

VisaRoads consulted with the CFA, Mr Sherritt said. “We have worked with stakeholders, you pick up things, you learn things, you change it as you go through.

“This work on the Calder is not lost, but we might need to go back and retrofit a couple of things.”

Acting Minister for Roads and Road Safety Philip Doolan said evidence showed that the safety barriers reduced the risk of head-on and run-off crashes by 85 per cent.

“Dozens of people” hit barriers across Victoria this year, with the barriers “almost certainly preventing death and serious injuries” in many cases, Mr Doolan said.

Since their installation, wire ropes along the Hume Highway have been hit 65 times. Prince Highway barriers have been hit 44 times, while those on the Calder Freeway were struck 20 times.

National MP Steph Ryan said CFA volunteers in her Euroa electorate warned that rope barriers would “make fighting a fast-moving grass fire on the Hume Highway more difficult”.

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In the Burrumbeet fatal crash near Ballarat the WRB did not even slow the car and trailer. It crashed into trees planted some years before ignoring VicRoads own safety guidelines. Revised guidelines have been hung up in VicRoads legal department for years. The WRB did not work. The young people died. The VicRoads regional manager was not aware planting guidelines existed. No one was ever held to account as far as the IRG knows. How many more crashes like this do not find their way into the media?