Submission to Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee

Inquiry into VicRoads' Management of Country Roads

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1. I feel that VicRoads has been ineffective in managing Country Roads over the past decade or so. Once Victorian roads were the envy of other states, with potholes appearing on crossing the borders into South Australia & New South Wales. The opposite is now true. All of this has been exacerbated by the number, size & weight of trucks using country roads that were not built for them. I believe that heavy trucks need a permit to travel down narrow roads, but feel no one polices this.

2. The existing funding model is such that country roads are breaking down only to be patched when the potholes are huge, only to begin breaking down within days or weeks of the repair. It appears funding must not be available to correct dangerous roads, or the engineers & contractors don’t know how to build roads or repair them satisfactorily. Many roads in our south western district are repaired time & time again, only to break down. The road in front of our property was badly potholed & has been resheeted three times in the past year. Last week the road was resurfaced again, even though there were no potholes in the area. However a few metres from the end of the new section are some potholes that surely some of the 20 or so workmen must have seen. Adequate funding for all country roads is needed, not just enough to cheaply repair some roads.

3. One road that concerns me greatly is the Casterton Apsley Road. The road is narrow with numerous bends & potholes & has been the site of many near misses, truck & car as well as truck/truck accidents. The many trucks using this road drive over the centre of the road & force motorists to drive off the road & may well be the site of fatalities soon. Members of my family drive this road daily & the poor state of the road worries me greatly. Naturally the State is concerned about the road toll & the poor state of country roads contributes to this. Cars are now far safer than they have ever been & yet accidents due to poor state of roads. There seems to be little or no consultation with regional communities. Only an election or photo opportunity seems to bring those in authority into the region.

4. Adequate funding is necessary for our country roads. Currently VicRoads seems to be very Melbourne centric. Funding would need to be per Km rather than small amounts for patch up jobs. Currently our roads are supervised from Geelong South – a four hour drive from many of the terrible roads in our area. A separate specific Country Roads organisation will not fix the roads unless properly funded & the funds are not soaked up by a new level of bureaucracy. One body with appropriate funding, evenly distributed for the whole of Victoria, would be the better option.

For the safety of all Victorians please consider the way Country Roads are funded & managed. There is no time to debate this at length. Action is needed now.
Yours Faithfully

Geoff Coggins