Mr. Geoff Howard
Committee Chair

Roads are the Lifeblood of country people. We have no alternatives.

This inquiry is long overdue. The roads, particularly in the west of the State, are a disgrace to the Government. When we leave our home travelling north, south, east or west the major roads we travel on are all in a state of serious disrepair.

The Glenelg Highway. There are areas on this highway that are constantly being repaired but never resulting in a completed job, as far too soon, the very same areas are being repaired again & often again. Obviously the art of roadmaking has been forgotten.

The Hamilton Port Fairy Road. This road carries a lot of traffic, cars, trucks, bikes & School buses, as do all the roads mentioned in this submission. With lack of regular maintenance it is no longer a safe road.

The Henty Highway. This road is extremely dangerous. We see pictures of wheels damaged beyond repair. This is the route to the Port of Portland & of course the number of trucks on this road are contributing to its demise. Why hasn’t forward planning been incorporated into road maintenance?

The Glen Thompson Ararat Road. Another extremely dangerous road. As regular uses of these mentioned roads we have some warning of the dangers. What happens to the people who travel unknowingly on these roads?

The Western Highway. How could Vic Roads fail to do the necessary paperwork for the permit to continue highway redevelopment to Stawell? Does it just show how easily forgotten our regional roads are? There are areas of this highway that are already requiring maintenance. How can this be?

I believe that headquarters for our roads being in Geelong South is the first of many problems.

After writing to the Minister the Honourable Luke Donnellan I received a reply from an Advisor, Jonathon Schomburgk. He was able to inform me of the current $40 million upgrade to roads in the South West. This is occurring but I am afraid it is too little, too late & too slow. Fancy being proud to declare that Vic Roads are planning to widen narrow sections of the Casterton Apsley Road in 2018/2019. This road is a death trap for all its users now. The increased volume of timber trucks using this road must be investigated immediately. Once again there is no forward planning.

The advisor writes “when roads such as the Casterton Apsley Road were constructed, many decades ago, local materials were used. The material was of marginal quality and is now failing under the
heavier loads being transported on it. In February 2017, Vic Roads completed 5.3 kilometres of resurfacing works on various sections of this road. Further pavement patching is proposed for February 2018.

The next paragraph informs me that “Vic Roads is required to adhere to strict inspection & response standards outlined in Vic Roads Management Plan. If sections deteriorate Vic Roads will manage these with short term safety repairs or signage.” This is totally outdated. Trucks should not be permitted to travel on this road in the state it is presently in. I believe the truck drivers are afraid of driving on this road. And I know local community members no longer have a safe road to commute on.

Last Tuesday morning January 9, a 22 year young man was travelling along the above mentioned road, on his way to work. He has spent his life in Casterton. The Warrock Road vicinity became an horrendous experience for him & his life will never be the same again. He was airlifted to the Royal Melbourne Hospital. He has plates & screws in right ankle, knee tendon repair & deep wounds, left upper limb 7 wounds & elbow wounds. Hands lots of wounds & will need hand splits for a while. Left side rib fractures & spinal fractures. MRI tomorrow for ligament damage to knee & he no longer has a spleen.

There are going to be many more accidents with even worse outcomes. Members of our family live on Warrock road & use the Casterton road to travel from home regularly. Our 3 year old & 9 month old Grandsons are part of this family. My daughter & son in law frequently tell stories of trucks across the centre line, & a fence that is always being repaired on the Nangeela Bend.

I was advised by Mr. Schomburgk to phone Mr. Matt Podvinsek, Vic Roads South West Alliance communications Manager if I wished. After this accident I did just that. He was able to explain that there was to be some patching in February 2018, widening (no given time frame), & the speed limit is to be reviewed. He discussed my concerns, but has he been to this problem area & experienced the serious problems confronting community members who have a right to safe passage on our roads?

Inquiry into Vic Roads Management of Country Roads.

1. The Effectiveness of Vic Roads in managing country roads.
   From my above concerns the answer would be that Vic Roads has failed to be effective, with dire consequences ensuing. The Police report on road deaths for last year show the majority of deaths occurred on country roads. Why hasn’t this fact alone prompted more action in investigating the condition of country roads?

2. The existing funding model & its lack of effectiveness for Country Victoria.
   This model has not worked.

3. The lack of consultation with regional communities & their subsequent lack of input into prioritising which roads are in dire need of repair.
   We have lived in this region for over 22 years & to the best of my knowledge I don’t believe I have ever had the opportunity to go to a public meeting called by Vic roads to discuss road issues. I consider myself to be an active community member.

   Would the headquarters actually be in rural Victoria? By that I mean more than 300 kms from Melbourne?
   Would there be a fair distribution of funds to rural roads & how would this be decided?
   Is it really just creating more bureaucratic positions of authority that will cost the Government more money; money that I would rather see spent on the roads?
Yours faithfully
Mrs. Leigh Coggins
Dunroe