15 January 2018

To Whom It May Concern

**Parliamentary Inquiry into VicRoads’ Management of Country Roads**

I am writing to express my concern over the management, or lack there of, of our Victorian roads.

I live near Hamilton in Western Victoria. Our roads have significantly deteriorated over the past five years. The roads are scarred by pot holes of varying degrees of dangerousness: rim-bending holes, significant depressions and uplifted bitumen, disintegrating road edges and in general, roads that are not safe to drive on.

The actions taken by VicRoads have included putting signs up saying ‘Road works ahead’ ‘rough surface’ and by lowering the speed limit, but then not repairing the road for months and months. Simply placing signage up to cover themselves is not good enough and does not make our roads any safer.

1) The effectiveness of Vic Roads to manage Country Roads

The current management of the roads in Western Victoria by Vic Roads is unsatisfactory. It is unclear whether this is due to budgetary constraints that they must work within, or the actual management of the projects. Either way, the outcome is not satisfactory.

Most roads in our Shire, the Shire of Southern Grampians and the surrounding Shires are signed at some point for a road hazard, rough surface or to reduce speed.

Of the roads we drive on regularly, we find the following roads very dangerous, especially as these are major truck routes:

* Henty Hwy between Hamilton and Portland
* Glenelg Hwy between Glenthomson and Streatham

It is impossible to swerve around every pothole or uplifted bitumen to prevent your car bottoming out or being damaged. When you are forced to hit a pot hole because of
oncoming traffic it is not good for your tyres, wheels or rims, but it can also be a terrifying experience due to the severity of many of the holes. These routes are also used heavily by the many School buses that bring students into Hamilton and return them home each day. It is not fair to put their lives at unnecessary risk due to the dangerous state of the roads.

2) Existing funding model and its lack of effectiveness for Country Victoria

The state of the roads is no doubt directly proportion to the amount of money available to maintain the roads. The roads are in a terrible state of disrepair and there is clearly not enough money being spent on Country roads. It appears quite unjust in comparison to the Urban road network.

3) Lack of consultation with regional communities and lack of input into prioritisation of road repairs

There should be a very clear process for Shires to identify roads of concern and then for Vic Roads to allocate resources, this could be further prioritised depending on whether they are A, B or C roads.

I could list most of the roads in our Shire and neighbouring Shires as needing attention, but instead feel that the truck routes are the roads of most significant need and must be fixed as a matter of urgency. Their disrepair is endangering the lives of all who drive on them.

4) The option of dismantling Vic Roads and creating a specific Country Roads organisation

I don’t believe that Vic roads should be dismantled, as that would require the duplication of many positions across both departments. Vic Roads should be able to manage both Urban and County Road and their repairs and maintenance. There needs to be a higher level of importance placed on country roads and we need the Government to show us that our roads are as valued as those used by urban commuters, by ensuring country roads get a greater share of the budget.

The Government needs to be fiscally responsible in the management of the budget for all Victorians and consider repairs and maintenance of country roads as a high priority for 2018.
In closing, I hope that you will consider my submission to help improve the safety of all Victorian motorists who drive in the country, but especially those of us who live here and commute daily on these very dangerous roads, without any option of public transport and often for many hundreds of kilometres.

Yours faithfully

David Fenton