Dear Ms Simmonds

RE: INQUIRY INTO VICROADS MANAGEMENT OF COUNTRY ROADS

Thank you for the opportunity for the City of Ballarat to make a submission for the Parliament of Victoria's Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee's Inquiry into VicRoads management of Country Roads.

The City of Ballarat is particularly interested in this enquiry as the Council has a considerable length of state declared roads managed by VicRoads within the municipality and provide the following comments on each separate item in the Terms of Reference for the inquiry:

**The Effectiveness of VicRoads in Managing Country Roads**

The City of Ballarat has an extensive network of VicRoads declared roads including Freeways, State Highways and Arterial Roads. The approximate total length of these roads is 190 kilometres and they are managed by the locally based VicRoads Western Regional Office. Although a majority of the road network is in a satisfactory condition, it is noted that a large proportion of the network is in poor condition. Council would like to see the introduction of a road maintenance strategy supported by a sound asset maintenance system coupled with appropriate funding for maintenance that would result in an improved road network.

Council notes that VicRoads has recently released the Country Roads – Your Insights, Our Actions document which was the result of an extensive consultation and engagement program – published as Country Roads Engagement Feedback Analysis Report. Council understands the difficulty VicRoads has had in recent years with extensive growth in vehicular traffic and the size and volume of freight traffic on their roads. However as stated in their publication “Country Roads - Your Insights, Our Actions” document, VicRoads is endeavouring to improve their management of country roads with numerous strategies which will improve the safety and condition of the road network.

Of particular relevance is the commitment by VicRoads to undertake extensive consultation with stakeholders to discuss future road and maintenance programs. Their commitment to meet regularly with Regional Cities Victoria and councils and other stakeholders to align their work with regional priorities is welcomed.
The Existing Funding Model and its Lack of Effectiveness for Country Victoria

Council supports the current regionally-based road maintenance prioritisation in favour of a state-wide process. Council would prefer to see the process operated from the locally based Western Regional Office who have the local knowledge of the road network who best know the condition and pavement characteristics of the local VicRoads network. Council can also have direct communication with the Regional Office to provide and discuss a list of projects that are Council's main priorities which may include works such as major intersection upgrades, road duplications and inner-city road redevelopments.

The Lack of Consultation with Regional Communities and their Subsequent Lack of Input into Prioritising Which Roads are in Dire Need of Repair

Council has had numerous consultation sessions with VicRoads over the last few years to discuss Council's priorities for road upgrades on the VicRoads network and would like to see this process continue into the future. Council can discuss these issues with local VicRoads officers from the Regional Office and explain the need for these works to be considered for prioritisation. Council has had numerous high-level meetings as well as discussions at officer level on local maintenance programs. Council regularly receives requests from VicRoads for Council to have input on road maintenance and road upgrade programs.

The Option of Dismantling VicRoads and Creating a Specific Country Roads Organisation and Separate Metropolitan Roads Body

Council does not want to see the dismantling of VicRoads into separate Country Roads and Metropolitan Roads bodies. Council supports the current structure of a Head Office and Regional Offices located throughout the metropolitan area and regional areas. The more important issue in this matter is to ensure that VicRoads is provided with a significant increase in funding for overall asset improvement and extra funding for road maintenance programs.

If you would like to discuss these matters further, please contact Council's Acting Executive Manager Infrastructure and Assets, Peter Bate, on.

Yours sincerely

Natalie Robertson
Acting Director Infrastructure and Environment