BUILDING A MORE RESILIENT AND RELIABLE COUNTRY ROAD NETWORK

The Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources and its agencies, Transport for Victoria and VicRoads, welcome the Parliament’s inquiry into the management of country roads, to continue the significant effort underway to make journeys safer and support regional Victoria’s prosperity.

There are very real challenges with the maintenance of 19,000 kilometres of rural arterial roads and 4,000 bridges, many of which were built more than 70 years ago.

Two years ago, VicRoads began a major reform program to transform the way it plans and delivers road maintenance and made a public commitment to engage communities to help design transport solutions together. A generational uplift of the regional road network is now well underway. More than 850 kilometres of deteriorating regional roads are being rebuilt this financial year alone, while 23 major country roads are being upgraded, including the Calder, Bass, Sunraysia and Princes Highways. $40.8 million has been committed for upgrades to 17 bridges across the state to better cater for high productivity freight vehicles and transport to market more efficiently. Significant future investment in the network is being planned in partnership with communities, with $25 million of business case development for regional projects underway.

The 2017-18 Victorian Budget provided $556 million to double road maintenance investment, upgrade more bridges and construct new bypasses. An unprecedented investment of $800 million is making regional roads safer.

The improvements are not limited to financial investment. The establishment of Transport for Victoria, in April 2017, has brought together the planning, management and coordination of Victoria’s transport system and agencies to ensure a strategic, joined-up approach.

The way VicRoads engages with communities is changing for the better, with the release of a five-year vision in 2016 (see Engage VicRoads attached), which focuses on increasing community participation in important decisions. This was demonstrated in 2017 when VicRoads’ senior leadership team engaged with 11,000 Victorians and 700 stakeholders face-to-face across every region in the State.

The community driven Country Roads: Your insights, our actions plan, released by the Minister for Roads and Road Safety in December 2017 (see attached), includes further commitments to public transparency, and is informing the development of Transport for Victoria’s integrated regional roads strategy.

VicRoads is transforming the way it measures performance, taking a whole-of-life approach to prioritising road upgrades and considering economic benefits and regional priorities. A ‘digital
dashboard' on the VicRoads website is sharing operational knowledge of the state of the network with the community.

Your inquiry will provide further timely advice on how we can continue to build a stronger, safer and more reliable rural road network. Please find our submission and three recent reports attached for your consideration.

Yours sincerely

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A/Secretary, Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources

Mr Peter Todd
Acting Chief Executive, VicRoads

Date: 26/01/2018

Attachments:
1. Department of Economic Development, Jobs, Transport and Resources, Submission to the Country Roads Parliamentary Inquiry
2. VicRoads, Country Roads: Your insights, our actions
4. VicRoads, Engage VicRoads: Our 5 year engagement strategy