This inquiry is well overdue: the state of our Nelson (from the SA/Vic State border) to Portland Road has been in a deplorable condition for far too many years; it is urgent that finance be found to avert further deterioration and accidents — which have been constant over the years.

1. Note that the Mt-Gambier to Portland side of the road has suffered the greatest deterioration because of the heavy trucks laden with pine logs and other timber products heading for Portland Harbour for export, either as logs or chips.

2. Feeble attempts to patch eroded or deteriorating areas have not overcome the problem of constant erosion of both older and new materials employed. It appears that the methodology used to patch crumbling surfaces is not effective in the application of bitumen used, nor is there any attempt to ensure the sub-levels are firmed sufficiently to have the thin layer of bitumen attach.

3. Rain events are commonly seen to wash out, even extend, potholes, remove surface bitumen layers immediately after new bitumen being laid. Despite recent squared patches being applied these same problems are occurring, at their edges and even in the centres of the newly applied patches, indicating that the methodology for a proper, permanent sealed bitumen surface is not being applied.

4. As long-term residents, Nelson drivers are generally alert to miss new or existing bad patches, but these avoidance tactics also contain the risk of collisions, especially around the curved sections between Nelson and the border.
5. Trucks often turn over at one particular curve – how many is hard to gauge, but would be in the vicinity of at least a half-dozen in the past decade. There have been instances of injuries sustained from accidents in this same area.

6. Decades ago, the then Portland Shire surveyed these curved areas with the intention to cut them out entirely by appropriating the southern alongside property. Whatever the reasons for not following this through is speculative, but the lapsing of this sensible piece of correcting a dangerous section of road carrying constant heavy traffic and as an important tourist route should now be revisited.

7. The South Australian and Victorian border is the entrance to Victoria, with its unique landscapes and tourist attractions. It’s long overdue that replacing the whole road structure from the SA border to close to Portland should be a priority. Either that or have the road closed to truck traffic permanently.

8. The present Shire has endeavoured to keep the road shoulders clear of vigorously growing Coast Wattle, but it only takes 12 months for this rapidly growing woody weed (a Potential Threatening Process under the FFG Act) to regrow to former extensions across sections of roads which can obscure hidden potholes and crumbling road-edges.

The only sensible and responsible conclusion is to prioritise re-forming the whole road section between the SA border and Portland with a properly prepared bedding and heavy bitumen application.

Trucks will need to be diverted via the Dartmoor section of the Princes Highway until such time and funding is made available to create a road capable of withstanding heavy traffic.

No further casualties from overturned trucks, deaths and injuries can any longer be tolerated. We are not a third-world country and its time we showed the capacity to indicate we can manage and maintain our road infrastructure.

Yours sincerely,

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