5th January, 2018

The Executive Officer
Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee
Parliament House
Spring Street
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

Dear Sir/Madam,

Inquiry into VicRoads’ Management of Country Roads

I have lost count of the number of letters I have written to local and state politicians of both political persuasions (Labour and Liberal) on this topic over the past 10 years. Always the letters are referred to VicRoads (buck passing) who then respond with the usual ‘we are doing the best we can’ nonsense. The politicians also send back to me their record of funding country roads which as expected contains a lot of repeat announcements and ‘spin’. They always invariably also blame previous governments. There is no bipartisan approach to a satisfactory outcome. Unfortunately for both VicRoads and the politicians I am old enough to see through all this. The weather is always blamed, which is nonsense, as other states and countries overseas with the same or worse conditions, have roads in near perfect condition.

Our country roads here in Western Victoria are a disgrace. They are not much better than 3rd world standard! The vast majority of major and minor VicRoads managed highways and roads have at least the following problems:

- Extensive pot-holing (and I mean extensive)
- Crumbling road surfaces in almost all stretches of road
- Edges that are non-existent or in very dangerous condition
- ‘Repaired or resurfaced’ road surfaces collapsing into the prior state of disrepair within 6 months. No-one seems held to account for poor repair work
- Numerous signs warning of poor quality road surfaces
- Permanent ‘temporary’ signs of lowered road speeds

These are both very frustrating and not to mention extremely dangerous for country road users. We have to travel relatively long distances over dangerous road conditions at a speed which must be reasonable (100 km/h) to enable us to get to our destination in a reasonable timeframe. Travelling at 80 km/h or 60 km/h over distances of 100, 200 or 300 km is not an option, and is patently unreasonable.

Road funding seems to be spent in Melbourne, and ‘country’ funding within 100 km of Melbourne.

No-one in Melbourne in VicRoads, or the politicians, seem at all interested in our plight out here in Western Victoria. Or at least unwilling, or unable, to do anything about it. Prior to the takeover of the major road management by VicRoads, local councils used to maintain
the roads. My memory suggests that, with adequate funding, this would be a far more effective way to keep country roads in excellent condition. There would also be the benefit of no buck passing, as one authority is responsible for all road surfaces in the district. HOWEVER the councils must be funded adequately!!

My strong suggestion is that:

- Local councils be given the right to manage local roads within their shires/cities across all road types from highways to local streets;
- Increased adequate funding be given these councils to enable them to build and maintain these highways and roads

My sincere hope is that this your inquiry is not a wasted effort and that our highways and roads will be returned to their former state of 15 years ago.

Yours sincerely,

Mr Chris Jansen