



**VICTORIAN
MOTORCYCLE
COUNCIL**

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The Executive Officer

Law, Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee

Inquiry Into VicRoads' Management of Country Roads.

Victorian Motorcycle Council Submission
January 2018

About this submission:

The Victorian Motorcycle Council (VMC) welcomes the opportunity to present a submission to the Victorian Parliamentary Inquiry into VicRoads' management of country roads.

The Victorian Motorcycle Council was created to represent the interests of all motorcyclists, motorcycling organisations and relevant stakeholders in Victoria. The Victorian Motorcycle Council is represented on the Australian Motorcycle Council, the peak motorcycle body in Australia.

This submission is focussed on motorcycle related input with respect to the inquiry's terms of reference and while primarily authored by Rob Salvatore B.Eng RoSPA(Dip) and current Chair of the VMC, it takes into account a wide range of motorcyclist views on the matters in question.

The information included in this submission is for all intents and purposes, factual, correct, accurate and relevant.

The VMC and/or its associates are available to expand on any of the points contained within this submission, or available to consult further on related matters not covered in this submission.

Definitions:

Motorcycle	=	Any single track powered two/three ¹ wheeler vehicle
MSL	=	Motorcycle Safety Levy
RR	=	Road Rule
TOR	=	Terms of Reference
VMC	=	Victorian Motorcycle Council
WRB	=	Wire Rope Safety Barrier

¹ Scooters such as the Piaggio MP4 have three wheels but are considered to be "narrow track" vehicles that behave like single track vehicles. There are also larger narrow track motorcycles that fit into this category. Motorcycles such as the Can-Am Spyder and other "trikes" don't meet this definition and will be specifically mentioned where relevant.

Terms of Reference

This submission will be broken down into sections following the Terms of Reference (TOR) as laid down at: <https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/lrrcsc/inquiries/article/3220>, covering four areas of consideration:

1. the effectiveness of VicRoads in managing country roads;
2. the existing funding model and its lack of effectiveness for country Victoria;
3. the lack of consultation with regional communities and their subsequent lack of input into prioritising which roads are in dire need of repair; and
4. the option of dismantling VicRoads and creating a specific Country Roads organisation and separate Metropolitan Roads body.

The nature and tenor of the TOR's indicate little doubt that there are areas for improvement in VicRoads' management of country roads. This submission therefore acknowledges that starting point and will focus on providing constructive information and input on motorcycle matters related to these TOR's.

Concluding Comments:

The great majority of Victorian motorcycle license holders are based in the major population centres of Victoria. A very large proportion of them would utilise country roads as part of recreational travel, primarily on weekends. Each time they ride, they bring with them a "cold eyes review" of sorts and any deterioration of the road network stands out from one ride to the next. They routinely report such things as broken pavement and increasing numbers of potholes as well as other hazards including the proliferation of Wire Rope Barriers. These issues stand out since they have an intrinsic connection to rider safety and it's via this mechanism that riders assess the effectiveness of the management of Victoria's Country Roads.

This submission is primarily focussed on the first two terms of reference which reflects the greatest degree of obtained input. It makes recommendations regarding road repair and management, use of Wire Rope Barrier systems and funding models that include the removal of the motorcycle safety levy.

The VMC is available to discuss or expand on any point raised in this submission at a mutually convenient time.

Rider road safety is intrinsically linked to the condition of the roads. Anything that improves the management of country roads will improve the safety of motorcyclists on those roads.

1/The Effectiveness of VicRoads in Managing Country Roads.

There is ample evidence in the media and other public channels to show that the number of unrepaired and poorly maintained country roads has been increasing over the last decade. This



has largely been correlated in multiple reports and media articles to the year upon year decrease in the funding received by VicRoads. However, this funding decline has been somewhat reversed in the last year or two and VicRoads and the entire departmental road transport structure has undergone significant change in part to address these kinds of issues^{2/3}. These changes are welcomed by motorcyclists that utilise country roads for transport and recreation since road engineering and pavement surface issues are one of the most significant factors impacting

motorcycle safety, as stated in VicRoad's own "Making roads motorcycle friendly guide."⁴

With that said, anecdotal reports from motorcyclists abound in respect of:

- potholes on country roads,
- broken or damaged pavement at critical positions in bends and curves,
- loose and unswept stones littering the road after poorly made road repairs,
- rocks, sand and detritus littering the roads from unsealed shoulders and driveways, and
- a proliferating network of Wire Road Barriers, often reported to be placed in locations that are inconsistent with motorcycle safety.

Even though funding has improved, this suggests that there remains a backlog of work to be caught up on. One way to make VicRoads' limited resources more effective from the point of view of riders, is if VicRoads and its contractors applied VicRoads' own "Making road motorcycle friendly guide"⁴ fully and consistently. This would go a long way to improving the state of roads for motorcyclists, and in fact for all road users, as a road that is safer for motorcycling is safer for all road users.



Another aspect of managing Victoria's country roads is managing safety on Victoria's country roads. Beyond road design and defect issues discussed above, effective management of road safety has been driven by the Towards Zero program which has a strong focus on the use of barriers, in particular Wire Rope Barriers.

If all levels of government and its agencies gave greater credence to motorcycling concerns regarding the use, location and placement of WRB's, particularly on popular rider trafficked roads,

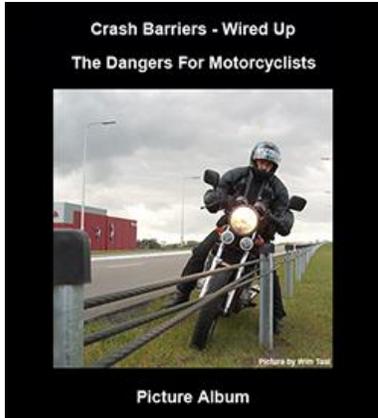
² www.heraldsun.com.au/news/victoria/andrews-government-announces-online-portal-to-provide-realtime-information-on-country-roads/news-story/ef4368c9b663e9ee0448c3625ad4b670

³ www.premier.vic.gov.au/a-simpler-more-coordinated-transport-system-for-victoria/

⁴ www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/~media/files/technical-documents-new/miscellaneous-guidelines/making-roads-motorcycle-friendly.pdf

Victorian Motorcyclists would perceive a significantly improved and safer country road network / system. There are alternative barrier systems that could be employed.

The government's Towards Zero website tries to debunk rider concerns about WRB's⁵. It argues that the evidence shows that both rider and non-rider road injury stats are reduced on WRB treated roads and on balance that makes WRB's acceptable. In the case of riders however, this improved metric is more likely to be due to riders changing the way that they ride on such roads utilising hyper vigilance and greater conservativeness, than from any direct benefit provided by WRB's. Some in government and road safety might argue that achieving improved motorcycle safety outcomes via an unintended path is still a positive outcome. In that case, every motor vehicle should have a sharp spike fitted to its steering wheel. The analogy is not as incongruous as the carcentric would like to think. The hazard represented by the spike should bring about changes in driving behaviour, just as the hazard represented by WRB's does in riders.



There is evidence that in the event of a barrier collision, WRB roads are more likely to result in trauma for motorcyclists than for other road users.^{6/7/8/9/10/11}

It is a vexed issue since road safety barriers do improve road safety by restraining the path of wayward vehicles, however even barrier manufacturers recognise that riders face a higher hazard and have a greater risk of injury from their products. As a result, they offer "motorcycle friendly" additions including additions to WRB barrier systems¹². (Figure: stack cushion for a WRB post). To that end, we have noted the use of the stack cushion on some WRB treatments, but despite their intent, their effectiveness is unproven. Motorcycle crash testing data confirming improved outcomes from most such additions is virtually non-existent.



A possible alternative barrier treatment is known as ezy-guard¹³. With a similar foot print to WRB, utilising similar flexible restraining principles and more readily able to provide a sliding surface, it has potential to address the real and perceptual concerns raised by WRB's.

Riders will always consider roads treated with WRB's as more hazardous and given the evidence, so should all road users, agencies and levels of government. The effective management of country roads includes the management of

⁵ <https://www.towardszero.vic.gov.au/news/articles/flexible-barriers-how-they-work-and-the-cheese-cutter-myth>

⁶ http://www.eurorap.org/library/pdfs/20081202_Bikers.PDF

⁷ <http://epubl.ltu.se/1402-1617/2005/233/LTU-EX-05233-SE.pdf>

⁸ <http://www.monash.edu.au/muarc/reports/atsb201.pdf>

⁹

<http://members.ii.net/~munch/Documents/PSB/MOTORCYCLE%20IMPACTS%20TO%20-%20WORLD%20ACCIDENT%20STUDIES,%20CRASH%20TESTS%20AND%20SIMULATIONS%20CARRIED%20OUT%20IN%20GERMANY%20AND%20AUSTRALIA.PDF>

¹⁰ <http://www.worldhighways.com/categories/road-markings-barriers-workzone-protection/features/improving-barrier-safety-for-motorcyclists/>

¹¹ <http://www.mccofnsw.org.au/a/137.html>

¹² <http://www.ingalcivil.com.au/products/road-safety-barriers/motorcyclist-barriers>

¹³ <http://www.ingalcivil.com.au/products/road-safety-barriers/guardrail/ezy-guard-smart>

road safety, which should be effectively managed for all road users, not just for some groups at the expense of another.

Better use of improving funding levels and better safety outcomes for riders can be achieved through application of the “Making Roads Motorcycle Friendly Guide”. Utilising alternatives to WRB’s better manages rider road safety on country roads.

2/The Existing Funding Model and its Lack of Effectiveness for Country Victoria.

As discussed above, the growing number of roads with defects appears correlated with ongoing reductions in road funding. The declining funding appears to have been reversed in recent times, but there is obviously a lot of latency in the system. Increase in wear and tear is also correlated to other factors such as weather, age and traffic volumes. These factors and their impact are largely trackable and predictable, which raises an important point for any successful funding model. Any model for funding road maintenance and upkeep should have a strong predictive and proactive element to it. Anecdotally, it appears that VicRoads has utilised a greater proportion of reactive maintenance than predictive maintenance in the country road space.

As evidence of how funding models need to shift, one need only look at the application of the Motorcycle Safety Levy (MSL). The MSL is an annual fee applied to registered owners of motorcycles which provides a hypothecated source of funds that can be utilised for approved MSL safety projects. (Refer to the 2011/12 Victorian Road Safety Committee Parliamentary



Inquiry into Motorcycle Safety report for an extensive investigation of the MSL program). Where MSL funding was used to treat motorcycle “black spots” and “black runs” by way of road engineering improvements and repairs, research has shown an improvement in road safety outcomes for both riders, and importantly, non-riding road users.¹⁴

One of the learnings from the MSL is that the existing protocols and road safety metrics for such roads were insufficient to attract general revenue funding for such successful treatments. The availability of the hypothecated funds allowed these works and their priority to be assessed via a different set of criteria. Given that all road users benefitted, arguably then, the works should have been funded by all road users, aka general revenue, and that the works should have attracted funding because they were sensible works to conduct. This alone suggests that a funding model rethink is needed.

Other organisations such as the RACV¹⁵ and the Victorian Auditor General¹⁶, have done work and analysis on the management and funding of country roads. The VMC does not wish to offer further analysis in this area, except to say that the funding models clearly need revising, as does the underlying assessment criteria.

¹⁴www.vicroads.vic.gov.au/~media/files/documents/safety-and-road-rules/evaluation-of-the-motorcycle-blackspot-program.pdf

¹⁵ <https://www.racv.com.au/membership/member-benefits/royalauto/motoring/information-and-advice/is-enough-being-done-to-maintain-regional-roads.html>

¹⁶ <https://www.audit.vic.gov.au/report/maintaining-state-controlled-roadways>

A new funding model that properly took all road users into account would not require an MSL. Note: removing the MSL was one of the recommendations from the above mentioned 2011/12 Inquiry. A broad and wide reaching rethink of funding models, prioritising methodology and triggering criteria appears warranted and the lessons from the MSL should be included and applied in any such review.

The Motorcycle Safety Levy serves as an example of how the existing system of road funding is flawed and is in need of overhaul. A road funding approach with a greater predictive, proactive and holistic focus appears warranted.

3/ Regional Community Consultation and Input into Road Funding Priorities.

Any wide reaching review under TOR #2, should determine how community engagement and input should be taken into account in assessing funding needs and setting funding priorities. VicRoads has made great strides in community consultation in recent times, setting up community engagement hubs and travelling road shows to share and gather information. It would appear that these efforts need to be further fostered and developed into corporate funding processes going forward.

4/ Dismantling VicRoads and Creation of Two Bodies.

While there may seem to be some intuitive sense in splitting VicRoads into Country and Metropolitan road authorities, Victoria already largely operated in this manner up until some 35 years ago¹⁷. If it is recommended to go down this pathway again, the setting up of the two bodies would need to be done very carefully to avoid MFB vs CFA type boundary issues and organisational priority overlaps. There's also the potential for spreading limited resources too thinly across the two organisation and thus exacerbating resourcing issues. In addition, duplication of resources would somewhat ironically, reduce the size of the available funding for effectively managing country roads.

Clearly, any such creation of two bodies would need to be carefully considered.



¹⁷ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Country_Roads_Board