

July 2019



Vicroads Association Newsletter No.209



Membership of the Association is available to all who have been members of VicRoads or forerunner organisations or the spouse of deceased members and bestows on them all the rights of the Rules of Association. Current cost of membership is a once only fee of \$30 plus a joining fee of \$5. Enquiries about membership or receipt of the Newsletter by e-mail should be directed to the Secretary at 60 Denmark Street Kew 3101 or by phone or e-mail as shown in the footer below.

Dear Members,

I think the Australian public is pretty blasé about roads today. We accept as a right a high standard of road infrastructure and expect governments to maintain the highest of standards. If we hark back to the time of the formation of the CRB, our roads then were of a third world standard. We should be grateful for the wisdom and foresight of our early road pioneers in creating the road infrastructure we enjoy today.

I met and worked with many wonderful people in the Country Roads Board, the Road Construction Authority and VicRoads. I am proud of the public service in which I worked and the dedication of the people in those organisations to serve the people of Victoria to the best of their ability. Public service is key to a fair and prosperous community. It is easy for people to be critical of public servants but the responsibilities they assume are not always accepted by their private sector equivalents. These include a higher level of public scrutiny, a longer-term view of planning and development, a greater dedication to quality and safety, provision of an historical legacy of records, and building corporate knowledge for the benefit of future generations.

For many years public authorities like the CRB trained its engineers and tradesmen through its corporate knowledge and management systems for the eventual benefit of the private sector. It is somewhat disappointing to me to see how this knowledge is being lost due to continual erosion of the public service by successive governments. The CRB was first established by the government of the day to be free of political interference and influence.

Until recently, it was Treasury that dictated how much money VicRoads could spend on road maintenance despite VicRoad's pleas and evidence that it was far too little. Governments have a penchant for building new roads in preference to the less glamorous task of maintaining their current assets – even though the maintenance task increases because the new roads also have to be maintained.

There has never been a greater need to have a well-resourced public service – preferably one that is independent of political influence.

If I were Jeff Kennett, after getting this off my chest, I would sign off by saying, "Have a nice day!".

David Jellie
President and Editor

Dates for your diary

Our program for the remainder of 2019 is as follows. We will provide further details of visits in later newsletters and remind members of upcoming events via email notices. If you are not on our email list, and you have email, please let us know our address. If you do not have email and you would like to come along, please contact the Secretary.

2019			
July	Monday 29	TBA	Visit to West Gate Tunnel Project
August	Monday 12	12 noon	Occasional Lunch, Shoppingtown Hotel
September	Monday 2	9.45 am	Melbourne Suburban Rail Loop
	11 and 12	Visit to Ballarat Regional Office	
October	Monday 7	12 noon	Occasional Lunch, Shoppingtown Hotel
	Thursday 10	6 pm	Drinks and dinner at Waverley RSL
	Monday 28	9.45 am	Visit to North East Link Project
November	Monday 25	12 noon	Occasional Lunch, Shoppingtown Hotel
December	TBA	12 noon	Christmas luncheon
2020			
February	Monday 10	12 noon	Occasional Lunch, Shoppingtown Hotel
April	Friday 3	12 noon	Golf Day

Please note that there are two changes in this program since the last newsletter. The first one is the inclusion of the visit to the Melbourne Suburban Rail Loop on 2 September and the second is the date of the 2020 Golf Day which will now be held on 3 April. We will provide further details of arrangements either in future newsletters or by email circulation.

What's coming up

Occasional Lunches – Shoppingtown Hotel – Monday 12 August and Monday 7 October 2019

Bookings are not essential, but it would help with arrangements if you can let Kelvin York know on 9438 1028 if you can attend. We hope to see you there.

Visit to the West Gate Tunnel Project – Monday 29 July

Assembly is underway on the first of the two massive tunnel boring machines (TBMs) that will build the West Gate Tunnel. It is being built at the project's northern portal site in Yarraville. It will take around 75,000 working hours to assemble the TBM – named Bella – with up to 30 people per shift working around the clock.

The 15.6 metre diameter cutter head, one of the last pieces to be assembled, will be moved into place by a 500-tonne gantry crane, one of the largest of its kind in Australia.

To reduce disruption to local business traffic as works ramp up, a footbridge for workers is now in place over Somerville Road between the project's two major Whitehall Road construction sites.

With major tunnelling works set to start this year, legislation has been introduced into Parliament to provide the framework for the management of the road when it opens in 2022. The legislation enables the Government to finally deal with the issue of trucks on roads in the inner west by enshrining enforceable truck bans in law, removing 9000 trucks from these roads for good. Fines collected from truck ban offenders will be reinvested in local transport projects and programs that benefit local communities via the Better Freight Fund, with a focus on those who may be impacted by changes in the truck numbers.

We will send out a notice in July providing all the details of this visit. In the meantime, put the date in your diary.



This photograph shows the scale of the TBMs.

Visit to Ballarat Regional Office – 11 and 12 September

Our regional visit this year will be to Ballarat. Jim Webber and I visited Ballarat to commence the planning of the visit. We are fortunate in having the local knowledge of Geoff Lawrence to assist us with our program.

The program has not been finalized yet but will be the same mix of technical discussions and cultural visits. We are considering a guided walking tour of historic sites in the city, a visit to Her Majesty's Theatre which is undergoing restoration, and a visit to the state-of-the-art Livestock Exchange.

These trips are always informative and fun and provide an opportunity to catch up with our regional members. If you are interested in joining in please contact Jim Webber. We will send out an email notice in due course, providing a detailed program. The Eisteddfod will be in full swing at this time so we may have to make accommodation bookings earlier than usual.

Put the dates in your diary and we will provide full details in due course.



Nigel Powers (Rural Roads Victoria), Geoff Lawrence (VRA member), Mel Kersting (Regional Manager), David Jellie and Jim Webber (VRA dogsbodies) meeting to plan the trip.

New members

I have been very remiss in not keeping you up to date with our new membership. Since last year's AGM we have gained 23 new members – Ian Grant, Don Jordon, Valerie Dripps, Jill Earnshaw, Andrew Ricketson, David Capon, Paul Tucker, Ian Thiele, Greg Beeton, Greg Kemp, Brian Negus, Mike Hodgson, Philip Davies, Eve Grimm, Kevin Tehan, John Fitz, James Trajcevski, Bruce Hamilton, Thuan Nguyen, Robert Carr, John Harding, David Tilley, and Gary Veith. We have also welcomed another three members since the AGM – Lance Midgley, Geoff Rayner and Robert Parr.

This means that we now have over 300 members but our newsletter extends beyond this because many surviving partners of deceased members still choose to receive the newsletter to keep up with the latest news.

I extend a warm welcome to all of our new members and it is pleasing to see many of them attending our functions.

From the archives



No.4 course for supervising engineers, 6 August 1962.

What's been happening

2019 Annual General Meeting – March 18

Some of the highlights from the Annual Report and meeting include:

- This was the 40th Annual Report
- Our membership is now over 300 members. We recruited 23 new members during the year.
- We had six excursions to VicRoads projects or other infrastructure projects, six luncheons at Doncaster Hotel and two dinners at Glen Waverley RSL.
- Jim Webber and Ken Mathers are our joint golf champions.
- 60 people attended the Christmas lunch at Head Office.
- Six newsletters were issued.
- Doug Thompson was re-elected as our auditor.
- Our fees remain unaltered for the coming year.

Frank Brown did not stand for re-election this year and I would like to extend our appreciation to him for his loyal service to the Association. Thank you Frank on behalf of all of us.

I also expressed our appreciation to VicRoads for their generosity and support – especially in the production and delivery of our newsletters.

Visit to Australian Road Research Board and Office of Projects Victoria – March 25

47 members attended this visit. It was interesting to see the state-of-the-art offices and laboratories of the ARRB as well as gaining an insight into the future of transportation as described by Michael Caltabiano, Chief Executive Officer of the Group.

The Australian Road Research Board (ARRB) is the National Transport Research Organisation. It provides independent expert transport knowledge and advises key decision makers on Australian road transport challenges. It has earned a reputation for scientific integrity and is the leading provider of value-added applied research and technical services in the road industry.

ARRB's mission is firmly focused on creating knowledge for tomorrow's transport challenges and solutions for today. It works with road agencies, all levels of government, academia, and companies in the private sector. It has capabilities in asset management, heavy vehicles, pavements and materials, transport safety, Human factors in transportation, road user behaviour, road design and traffic engineering, network operations, intelligent transport systems, autonomous vehicles, transport policy, sustainable transport planning and transport economics.

News from our members

Stan Hodgson

When I assisted Pat Russell in clearing out Tom's home office, I came across a document written by Stan Hodgson at the time when he was the Regional Manager in Dandenong Region. I found it very interesting and I sought Stan's permission to publish it here.

We spoke at length. Stan is 88 and in excellent spirits and his memory is first class. He told me that Lois has had a bit of a tough time. She had a stroke and was hospitalized for over 100 days. She lost her ability to speak. But she has made a remarkable recovery. She has regained her speech and she now walks with the aid of a walking frame. Stan said that they are eligible for a Government-funded Home Care Package which would be a great help to them – but would you believe there is a 12-month waiting list before they are eligible. Stan and Lois have been married for 64 years.

Stan is one of the nicest blokes you would ever meet and I think his decency peeps through in his story. He has been a bit coy about his football career – he was a regular player in the Geelong Reserves before Paddy O'Donnell ordered him to Kiewa. If he hadn't gone, he could have been a champion – but it would have been a great loss to the CRB! He has given his permission for me to publish his words, composed over 30 years ago – and with some slight editing, this is what Stan wrote.

"I completed my Diploma of Civil Engineering at the Gordon Institute of Technology in Geelong where I lived. I then decided to try and get a job and I applied to the Country Roads Board. Unfortunately, I couldn't get a job in Geelong but I was successful in getting a job at Head Office, in the Exhibition Buildings in February 1949. It was quite interesting at the time as it was a toss up between myself and another engineer as to who went to Geelong and who went to Melbourne. Because I had finished my diploma, I got the Melbourne job and the other bloke got the Geelong job as he still had a few subjects to complete. Geelong Region is one region where I have never really worked in all my career at CRB/RCA, but my family is still in Geelong and I still regard it as my home town.

I started as a Junior Draftsman (Design) in the Bridge Division as it was known then. The office was quite interesting; there was a row of drafting tables, one behind the other in a very narrow part of the building with a passageway between the drafting tables. It was quite a thoroughfare because everyone used it to go to the canteen in the Motor Registration Branch next door.

My first boss was Jerry Masterton who was a well-recognized bridge design engineer. He pioneered welded bridge construction among other things. Other people in the office at that time were the senior design engineers Norm Haylock, Bruce Watson and David Hewson and senior draftsmen Andy Guthrie and Ray Jardine. The Bridge Engineer was I. J. O'Donnell. One of my first impressions when I went to the big bad city of Melbourne as a young country lad from Geelong was that somebody knew my name and that was Bill Neville, who was the Secretary of the CRB at the time – a nice man. He would greet me each morning with "Hello Stan."

Another impression was that everyone had to be early because there was a red line drawn across the book at 8.45 am and everyone who came after the red line was drawn had to have a pretty good excuse. A man I remember well was Keth Pullin, who used to hide behind the little window and put the red line in the book. The Personnel Officer, Mr Bob Bell, also known as 'Ding Dong Bell' and John Robinson, who was the Superannuation Officer for many years, were also in that section.

The Chairman at the time was Mr Donald V Darwin and Mr Caleb Roberts was Chief Engineer. Another distinguished officer was Mr John Matheson – the Deputy Chief Engineer. One of the early impressions of the Exhibition Building days was the cricket played out the back at lunch times. Most of the staff joined in and even the senior officers would stand by and watch. The staff numbers were fewer in those days so everyone got to know each other in the office. Another impression was a man called Harry Stein who was the caretaker/cleaner: he used to bring hand towels around every Wednesday and everyone was issued with their personal towel with Country Roads Board written on it. Whether you wanted one or not, you got one. I still have one that is at least 30 years old and still going strong!

The other thing I can recall about the Exhibition later in my career was that I used to sit in a small enclosed verandah between the main Exhibition Building and the portion that the CRB occupied. There was a very nice little, hidden garden there with an orange tree, a cumquat tree, a lemon tree and quite a few camellias. It was a little oasis in the desert. This was my office when I was the Personal Assistant to the Chief Engineer and it was very pleasant.

When the CRB eventually vacated the Exhibition Building, I had the task of going down into what was called 'the dungeon' underneath the building, to retrieve some typical specifications of road and bridge works done during the period from 1913 to about 1958-59. We couldn't keep everything when we shifted.



One of my first jobs as a junior draftsman was to learn how to fold plans and specifications for about 24 copies of bridge drawing and specification. That was my apprenticeship. I wasn't there long when I was given the task of designing some formwork for mass production of precast members for bridges, like piles and beams. We were just entering the era of precast concrete. Because of my knowledge of the formwork I was told one Friday that I had to be on a train on Monday morning to go to a camp at Kiewa on the Kiewa Valley Highway. I was told that I would get a rail voucher and that someone would meet me at Benalla on Monday morning. "Pack your bags Stan. You're off to Kiewa on Monday morning."

When I got there I was met at the station by an old identity of Benalla Division, Allan Thompson. It was very early in the morning. Off I went to the Kiewa Valley Highway where I lived in a tent on the side of the highway at one of the first pre-casting depots. My tent and living quarters was my office with a bed, a straw palliase, a table and stool and a built-in fireplace. I lived on the site with the other blokes for two years. That was a great character building exercise because I was very young at the time (19 years old) and living and eating with the men – and working with them – was really very good experience and something that a lot of the younger generation don't really experience today, as we no longer have Direct Labour camps now. The Overseer, Tom Mintern, and his wife and children all lived in the camp in a caravan and annexe and the children went to the local school on the school bus.

Because I didn't drink, I was the first bloke that they asked to find out if I was going to the barn dance or functions like that – because I was the only sober one to drive them home. I did have some interesting experiences there because I played in the local football team and you became a local hero. They talked football from one week to the next and I got to know quite a lot of people through football and cricket. Some of the other men in the camp also played in the football team.

I had been playing in the Geelong Under 19s and had a few games in the reserves and when I was sent to Kiewa I had to get a transfer to Kiewa as distinct from Mount Beauty who were the team to beat as they had all the Hydro Electric workers up there and they had a great number to choose from. We were playing in a team that had about 13 Coulsons in the team – all families in the district. I only played for half a season but I won the Best and Fairest trophy which I am very proud of. We were playing in a final at Yackandandah and during the course of the game I heard a tremendous noise coming down the valley. It was a terrifying hailstorm and the ground was covered in about three inches of hailstones (like ball bearings), almost the size of golf balls. The teams had to leave the field. A lot of windscreens were shattered and the umpire got hit behind the ear with a big hailstone and had

to have stitches at the local hospital and the emergency umpire took over. When the match resumed it was like playing on a skating rink. We didn't win; the scores were something like 2 goals 10 points to 1 goal 13 points. You couldn't pick the ball up. All you could do was kick it along the ground.

Because of my engineering background, the Kiewa Cricket Club asked me to set out the local ground in an elliptical shape. It had the Kiewa River running down one side on the wing and of course when the river came up all the area went under water. They made me a life member for the work just for setting out the boundary.

After that, I was encouraged by Tom Russell and Keith Moody to go back to Melbourne University to do a Bachelor of Civil Engineering. Tom was my supervising engineer at Kiewa and when he went to Traralgon to become the first Assistant Divisional Engineer, Keith Moody followed him. I was lucky enough to get a scholarship which was £150 per year. I was living and boarding in Melbourne so it didn't really leave much to spare. Mr O'Donnell invited me out to Head Office and he said I had to go to see the Chief Engineer. They decided that they would make up my total pay to match my salary of £250 per year on the basis that I would be bonded to go back to the CRB for at least two years. I virtually had leave of absence for 6 months of each year. This was the start of the cadet program in the CRB.

I am still here 40 years later so I think I have paid off my debt. One of my lecturers at university was Caleb Roberts, the Chief Engineer. He lectured in 'Roads and Streets'. This is really how I got to know him so well. When I had finished my study, I was hardly back in the office when I got another of these "Will you please be at East Sale Aerodrome on Monday morning?" No previous notice: pack your bags and we will see you on the train on Monday.

Going back to my Kiewa days, I said to Mr O'Donnell when he asked me to go up there, "What do I do for transport?" He said, "The Board pays a penny a mile bicycle hire." We had something like eight bridges spread out over 28 miles and in the end I used to hitch hike up and down the road with the milk tanker to get to the various sites. I got to know one of the drivers through the football club. I said to Mr O'Donnell, "Do you have any advice for me as a young bloke?" He said, "You will be a bit green Stan, but learn from your mistakes." I guess I have been doing that ever since."

I think this is a wonderful story. Stan told me that the licensee of the local pub provided him with free lemon squashes so that he could drive the drinkers home. This is the first recorded incidence of the 'designated driver' scheme I have heard. Stan wished to be remembered to everyone and I am sure I speak for everyone in extending our best wishes to Stan and Lois.

John Wright's Odyssey (Continued)

Life in Port Moresby

Weather

We probably came to Port Moresby at the worst possible time – in the middle of the wet season when the humidity is at its worst and tropical downpours frequently happen with great suddenness. With high humidity comes mould, which causes leather goods such as shoes, bags and camera cases turn blue and smell like mushrooms. Smart folk kept a low wattage globe burning in their wardrobes to keep the mould at bay.

During the dry season, which lasts for about 9 months of the year, it rarely rains in Port Moresby. Most of the vegetation that stays alive is either long established, such as large trees and coconut palms, or banana and pawpaw plants that cling to life thanks to effluent seepage from septic tanks. Almost everything else dies and goes brown. The humidity is tolerable, but the onshore wind is not. It blows ceaselessly, night and day and can send you crazy.

Late in 1965 we were invited to attend a polo match at the Koitaki country club near Sogeri, courtesy of Bob and Faye who were members there. In between events, it started to rain, and James stared at the drops appearing on his hand with wonder. He could not remember rain and asked us what was happening.

During the wet seasons, sudden storms could dump amazing amounts of water. One afternoon, shortly after we got the Peugeot, we were driving out to Boroko to do our shopping when a huge downpour began. Water splashed up and shorted out the ignition and we coasted to a stop just outside the Hubert Murray Military Barracks. The rain continued at a high intensity and by the time it stopped, the water was nearly up to the bottoms of the car doors. To our amazement, somebody rapped on the car window and asked us if we needed help, and before long we were on our way.

On another day, we were on our way out to Browns River for a drive when we had a tyre puncture. Looking in the boot I quickly discovered that we did not have our car jack or wheel wrench. Something Kriewaldt Motors had neglected to put in the car. While we were wondering what to do, a truckload of native workmen came along. Stopping just ahead of us they produced a wheel wrench, and while about 4 of their colleagues patiently held up the back of the car, removed the wheel and fitted the spare. They were just finishing this when we heard a sound like a train approaching. We had stopped outside a mature teak plantation and the noise we could hear were raindrops striking the very large leaves of the teak trees as the downpour from the storm raced towards us.

The most terrifying weather phenomenon we experienced was a guba – literally, a wind out of nowhere. We had heard tales from the New Guinea Highlands about these mysterious wind storms that came into life near the mountaintops and were then often funnelled down a single valley, gathering force as they progressed downhill and often snapping off huge trees near the base. One evening, when the littlies were asleep, we were sitting in our lounge room reading. It was very humid and quiet when we heard a faint sound like distant surf. For a brief moment I thought we were hearing some very large waves breaking on the outer reef, miles away to the south. As the sound volume started to increase, we realised that it was coming from the mountain above us – not the sea. It quickly became louder and we were seriously concerned that the front of the house would be blown off the hillside, so we bolted into the safer, rear part of the house, which was cut into the hill. We felt the impact of the wind hitting the house and looking down the passage we expected to see our lounge room disappear. However, the house resisted the blow and we saw the heavy lounge curtains flatten themselves against the ceiling. Then, just as quickly as it had come, the wind died, and it was still again.


Beasties

Our unit had a resident population of geckoes, who would emerge after dark and wait near the ceiling lights in hope of catching a mosquito or a moth. Their fat little bodies were almost transparent.

One evening, we were sitting reading when we heard a faint noise from the door to the original unit. We found a reasonable sized crab, very much alive, and had no idea how it got there.

On another evening, I was in the bathroom before retiring when I saw some movement below me. Looking down at my feet I was amazed to see a fair-sized scorpion dancing around near my bare big toe. I was fortunate it did not sting me, as we had heard that their sting could be very bad indeed. Relieved at my narrow escape, I popped him into a glass jar and added one of the many cockroaches that were inhabiting our flat, figuring that some summary justice was about to be delivered to the cockroach. When I checked on the pair the next morning, the scorpion was dead, and the cockroach was still very much alive.

The extended unit had a concrete landing just outside the entrance door, which was located at the top of a long flight of concrete steps and about 10 feet above the ground. Right next to the landing was the top of a luxuriant paw-paw tree. One evening we were returning from a trip to the drive-in and had just reached the top of the stairs when a huge flying fox that had obviously feasting on the paw-paws took sudden fright at our approach and flapped away right in front of us. We were equally startled and came close to falling down the steps.



Something far worse happened to us on that landing. We were returning from a shopping trip with James and Tania. James was walking quite well by this time and had made his way right up to the landing. Our big dog Abbie, who was visibly pleased to see us, had emerged from under the unit and was wagging his tail and his whole body in delight. To our horror, Abbie wagged little James right off the balcony. I knew that there was the jagged stump of an old tree below the balcony, but through some act of providence, James had just missed it and had fallen onto soft leaf mould and was unharmed.

Shopping

We did most of our grocery shopping at Burns Phillip's (BP) supermarket in Boroko and I never ceased to be fascinated by the amazing variety of imported foods from all over the world that could be found there. It was possible to buy tinned chickens from Germany, tinned Beaujolais from France and all sorts of exotic, highly spiced stuff from Asia and the Middle East.

Most of the fresh vegetables and fruit on sale at BP and Steamships Trading Company's (W R Carpenter's or WRC) supermarkets came from Australia, were of very poor quality and were also very expensive. I discovered that both BP and WRC tendered for the purchase of both fruit and vegetables in the mainland that were almost unsalable in Australian markets because of blemishes, poor size or shape and a host of other shortcomings. At the same time, both companies ruthlessly suppressed efforts by indigenous Papuans to supply fresh locally grown produce, through intimidation and other unfair measures, including the use of their very good friends in the Island Administration and the Police.

BP and WRC had enjoyed their monopoly and dodgy trading practices for many years. A lot of their wealth came from extending very generous terms of trade to newly arrived rubber plantation owners and then foreclosing and taking possession when trading conditions became difficult for the owners. They also extended consumer credit to expatriates living in the islands (including us – everything we bought from BP's went on their credit account). Back in the days when the only way available to leave PNG was on a BP passenger steamer, expatriates quickly discovered that they were barred from boarding if their account had not been settled. Errol Flynn wrote about this practice in his book "My wicked, wicked ways" about his time in Papua.

This most unsatisfactory situation with fresh produce was brought home to me early in 1966 after we returned from a holiday in Melbourne. On one of our outings to the South Melbourne Market with Sylvia's brother David, I noticed quite large, fresh cabbages were being sold for \$0.25. On return to Port Moresby, I saw cabbages half this size on sale at BP's for \$2.00 each. Because of this, we mainly ate frozen vegetables and rarely ate fruit.

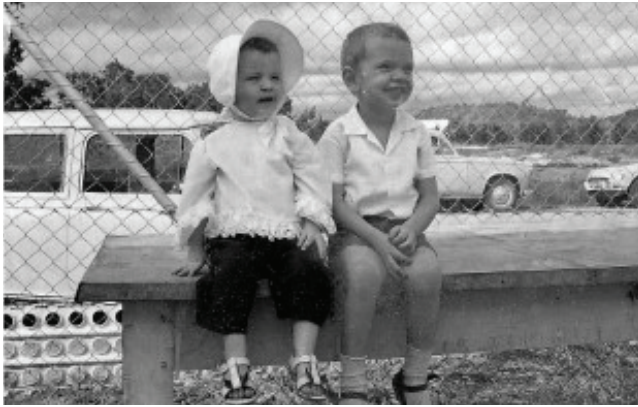
I heard a wonderful story about how BP and WRC became seriously unstuck when they tried to stymie an independent buyers group which was threatening to bypass their cosy little monopoly. For some reason, the Government in Canberra, reacting to long-standing complaints about the BP and WRC shipping and trade monopoly in the islands, approved a scheme whereby the Dutch Bank Line would be permitted to compete with them by shipping fresh produce from New Zealand to Papua New Guinea. In response to this new agreement, the long-suffering public service in Port Moresby set up a buyers' club to facilitate cheaper bulk purchases of everything from meat to fresh fruit from the Bank Line, effectively breaking the BP and WRC monopoly.

The two big traders decided that they would nip this new plan in the bud, once and for all. Using their control of the Port Moresby waterfront, they had their stevedores move all the perishable cargo from the first Bank Line ship to the very back of port customs storage area and walled it in with tonnes of their own, non-urgent produce. Their plan was that the public servants' food would rot before it could be taken off the wharf, due to 'unforeseen logistical complications' and that the buyer's club would quickly learn its lesson.

However, the Big Two quickly discovered that they had taken on the wrong people. Suddenly, a host of unforeseen paperwork irregularities concerning BP and WRC's own perishable goods were discovered by Customs authorities and they were unable to have them released from Customs until these issues had been resolved.

Urgent phone calls to their local government toadies got nowhere, because these people were also members of the buyers' club. Similarly, urgent calls to their pet politicians in Canberra to pull rank over the local department heads and clear the paperwork also proved fruitless. The two companies quickly realised they had no option but to unblock the Bank Line goods in the warehouses before their own perishable goods went bad as well. They never tried again.

There was no such thing as fresh meat in Port Moresby. We regularly visited the Steamships meat emporium in the main township area, where all meat was frozen solid and was cut up in front of you with a bandsaw when you ordered it. One of our favourite meat orders was Minute Steaks, which were thinly sliced Australian beef, which was wonderful. We had never seen meat of such consistently high quality in Australia. Like everything else, these steaks only came in frozen, rock hard packets and it took ages for them to thaw out.



James and Tania at the Car Club

Fresh milk for home use was simply unobtainable. Alan Marsh had warned us that the local milk (not that we ever saw any) was a risky proposition because of frequent positive readings for TB and Brucellosis. I enjoyed fresh Australian milk in milkshakes from a milk bar in the town centre. However, more often than not, the supply, which came from the mainland in large, rectangular stainless-steel tins, had run out and they were waiting for another plane load. Sylvia purchased powdered milk in large tins with foil seals and would regularly make up milk for the children. I didn't like the taste, and only used it in my tea and coffee. This was probably why most of my teeth were falling out by the time we left PNG in 1967.

Both Sylvia and I smoked, and we would buy Players Gold Leaf filter cigarettes. None of the Big 2 stores offered discounts, but we did eventually find a small local business run by a Greek guy who offered a good discount for cartons (Unfortunately, our supply ended when he was subsequently arrested for being part of a gang that was stealing cigarettes and booze from the Government Bond Store). We drank very little in the way of wine because it was too dear.

I did keep South Pacific lager long neck bottles for occasional visitors. It wasn't bad, although the locals called it Waigani Swamp Water. Waigani was where the town's sewage was processed. Too much SP Lager gave you the trots. We became quite partial to Drambuie.

We also spent quite a bit of our spare time looking at the various Chinese Trade Stores, which were mainly located in Badili and Boroko. They were wonderful places, full of large, aromatic carved camphorwood chests and beautiful inlaid boxes, silver and gold jewellery, exotic dress material and all sorts of useful household items. I recall that the store in Badilli was called Luk Poi Woi's. Everybody knew it as "Luke Warm Pies". Before we arrived in Port Moresby it was to be the scene of The Riot Squad's first serious outing. More about this later.

To be continued ...

Jim Jarvis

It was good to catch up with Jim Jarvis at our recent visit to the ARRB's new centre in Port Melbourne and to learn of his intention to join the Association. Jim, who a number of you will remember from his 21 years at ARRB, has also been team leader of a number of overseas projects for Vicroads. More recently, Jim has been involved in the development of a knowledge sharing platform called Sage.fm, which he believes could be of interest to members of the Vicroads Association. Sage.fm has provided the following information on their platform, which I include for your information.

Sage.fm is a new, video-based consultancy platform that allows you to work when you want, from anywhere in the world. All you need is an internet connection.

If you're an expert in your field, you can apply to set up a profile on Sage.fm. Simply set your own consultancy fee, share your profile with your networks and begin having paid video consultations when it's convenient for you. Clients consult for as long as they need, paying on a pro-rata, minute-by-minute basis.

This new platform, developed in Australia, is proving very successful in a number of domains and there is now an opportunity for engineers to join the growing band of experts. Jim points out three major attributes of Sage.fm as follows:

1. Join an exclusive group of domain experts

Initially you will service your own clients, but as the engineering domain grows you will be able to benefit from the networks of other domain experts as clients search for expertise in adjacent fields. Additional clients will be sourced by Sage.fm and Business Group leaders, who are now being introduced in the engineering domain.

2. Flexible work life balance

Online consultations allow you to work when you want to – from anywhere in the world. You control your level of involvement.

3. No administration

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News from VicRoads

World's Longest B-triple

An enormous B-triple combination has just been approved with even more payload than last year's world-first B-quad! The 42m B-triple owned by Direct Freight Express was recently revealed in Portland, Victoria.



The new B-triple

With a gross combination mass of 82.5 tonnes, this vehicle can accommodate 60 pallets, or 120 pallets with mezzanine decks.

VicRoads history on display

A past staff member whose family had an association with VicRoads' predecessor, the Country Roads Board (CRB), has been acknowledged for his sacrifice during World War I in a ceremony held at Kew a few weeks after Anzac Day.

Tom Couve who worked for the CRB, and his brother Alan, who studied at the College of Pharmacy (now part of Monash university) were both killed at Gallipoli two weeks apart. The event was organised by VicRoads' staff and attended by Monash University's Andrew McIntosh and other special guests.

Following a presentation of posthumous degrees to relatives of five WWI soldiers – including Alan – who never returned from battle to complete their stories, Monash University wished to also acknowledge Alan's brother Tom.

Andrew contacted VicRoads' Heritage Officer Eddie Schubert, and the two cooperated to bring all participants together at VicRoads, on 8 May, the anniversary of Tom's death, to acknowledge a part of our significant history. Eddie greeted Andrew, renowned artist Christine Johnson, and a relative of the brothers, Marna Couve-de Murville, at the event.

Andrew presented a poppy mat – part of the 5000 Poppies Project commemorating the Centenary of WWI – for temporary display at Kew. He also presented an art print of a cornflower by Christine (cornflowers were blooming at the place where the soldiers died).

Kew staff might already be familiar with Tom's name, which is among those on a plaque in the Kew foyer commemorating WWI soldiers who worked for CRB. However, they might not be aware that Tom and Alan's sister, Eileen, also worked at CRB. Eileen wrote the poem Christine recited at the event. She was also heavily involved in botany, which helped inspire Christine's work, including the print presented, as well as illustrations for a book commemorating the soldiers researched for the WWI Monash project.

The poppy mats, previously exhibited at Monash University and in Federal Parliament Canberra, and Christine Johnson's art print were on display on the ground floor of the Kew office foyer near the CRB WWI I honour roll.



The poppy mat – part of the 5000 Poppies project commemorating the Centenary of WWI – on temporary display at Kew

Paul Younis confirmed as Transport Secretary

Paul Younis was appointed Transport Secretary on March 26. An engineer by profession, Paul was deputy head of Transport for Victoria, where he steered the planning and coordination of key transport projects. Younis also spent three years as CEO of Brimbank City Council in Melbourne's west and was CEO of Corangamite Shire in Western Victoria.

The Department of Transport created amid a shakeup following the State election last year, brings together Victoria's various transport experts and agencies including:

- Transport for Victoria
- Public Transport Victoria
- VicRoads
- V/Line
- Commercial Passenger Vehicles Victoria
- Victorian Ports Corporation
- Victorian Regional Channels Authority
- Port of Hastings Development Authority
- Victorian Fisheries Authority
- Gippsland Ports
- VicTrack
- Transport Safety Victoria
- Transport Accident Commission
- Office of Chief Investigator, Transport Safety
- Melbourne Port Lessor

Paul sent the following message out to VicRoads staff

Since the new year I have had the great pleasure of acting as Secretary of the Department of Transport. I've been hugely impressed by the achievements of the teams that deliver transport, day in day out, helping to make Victoria a better place to live and work.

Today it's my great honour to have been appointed as the ongoing Secretary of the Department of Transport. Transport is so fundamental in shaping people's lives and the fortunes of the State. More than any other area of public policy, transport has the power to transform – how and where we live, our access to jobs and education, and in supporting economic drivers, supporting jobs and prosperity.

As we grow to a city of six million people and a state of nine million over the next 30 years, the work we do in transport will be front and centre in ensuring that we keep Victoria prosperous, liveable and fair.

That's our collective challenge, to support simpler and more connected journeys within an increasingly complex global State.

The sheer scale and pace of the modernisation demands we work collectively.

We are no longer the Victoria of the 1980s – when you could expect to get a car park out the front of the MCG, or where regional Victorians would come to our larger cities once or twice a year. The Victoria of 2019 is a global player and a destination of choice for students, visitors and industry.

By 2050, we will need to handle 13 million more trips a day in Melbourne alone – that's on top of the 17.4 million trips undertaken today. And not just on our roads and public transport networks, but also on our footpaths and bike paths which are expected to carry 75 per cent more cyclists and pedestrians by then.

Regional Victoria is also growing strongly, with 50 per cent increase in trips across our regional road and rail expected over the same period.

This is a tremendous challenge that we all share – and we will need everyone's commitment, experience, innovation and passion. This is something we have in spades.

I'm delighted to be part of the continuation of the great work we've been doing. Let's get on with it together.



Paul Younis
Secretary of the Department of Transport.

Trivia and didactic whimsies

A Year After Opening Sky Rail

Early in May, The Age ran an article on the local communities' views on Sky Rail now that it has been operating for a year. I have paraphrased main points of the article as follows.

More than a year after the first train ran along elevated rail lines in Melbourne's south-eastern corridor, residents say "sky rail" has increased quality of life and added to the vibrancy of local communities, and realtors say fears of a property price plunge have been assuaged.

Stretches of rail bridges between Caulfield and Dandenong and Cranbourne and Pakenham were part of a program to remove 50 level crossings by the Government. But the plan was fiercely opposed by many residents. Some feared commuters would peer into their homes from above, while others had objections to what was described as a visual monstrosity.

But 15 months after the first carriage rolled through, even some of those most strongly opposed have come around. One resident moved out of her old Carnegie home, in the shadows of sky rail, to the neighbouring suburb of Ormond because she feared anti-social behaviour would flourish in the area underneath the bridge, making it unsafe for her kids. But she admits she's changed her tune, and regularly uses the walking path and playground with her family. She was quite active in attending anti-sky rail meetings and protesting. She thought it had the potential to bring homeless people and crime to the area under the bridge and make the place unsafe. But now she concedes walking through the area, it feels safer and it's brought people together and become a place for people to socialise.

Glen Eira mayor Jamie Hyams, agrees sky rail has been a "positive experience for the wider community". "It's certainly improved traffic flow. The area underneath sky rail is relatively new but it definitely shows signs of being a very worthwhile public asset." He said some residents were angered by graffiti on some sections of the bridge, but the annoyance largely exists at the margins.

Elevated tracks tower over the backyard of another resident in Carnegie, about 15 kilometres south-east of Melbourne. But she is all positive, saying sky rail had drastically reduced noise from passing trains. She says that she no longer mutes the TV when the freight trains go past and the vases and cups don't rattle in her cupboards anymore. She says the open spaces – including playgrounds, bike paths and grassy areas – have been embraced by families, creating a "meeting place with a really nice atmosphere".

"The kids play basketball and ping pong in the new playground underneath it. It's really busy, there's always lots of kids down there ... and I've seen no trouble at all in those areas," she said.

This view is echoed by another local mother who lives on the other side of train line. She thought everyone was quite scared of the aesthetics of the environment and that it would attract negative, undesirable sort of people. But this hasn't eventuated with a lot of students and families use the areas underneath. Both women say the previously "atrocious" traffic has eased dramatically.

A store owner a minute's walk from Noble Park station said that before [sky rail] there were a lot of homeless people and drug dealers and young people drinking were attracted to the area because the train station was dark and had lots of enclosed spaces. Now it's very open and spacious – it's become much cleaner.

Sky rail may have helped lift property prices, according to a local realtor who owns six offices in the sky rail suburbs. He certainly thinks it's had a positive effect on the perception of the suburbs. He said that there are some really positive leisure areas underneath sky rail.



A playground underneath 'sky rail' in Carnegie.

An amazing two letter English word

One word in the English language can be a noun, verb, adjective, adverb and preposition.

'UP'

This two-letter word in English has more meanings than any other two-letter word. It is listed in the dictionary as an [adv.], [prep.], [adj.], [n], [v].

It's easy to understand 'up', meaning toward the sky or at the top of the list, but when we awaken in the morning, why do we wake up? At a meeting, why does a topic come up? Why do we speak up, and why are the officers up for election and why is it up to the secretary to write up a report? We call up our friends, brighten up a room, polish up the silver, warm up the leftovers and clean up the kitchen. We lock up the house and fix up the old car.

At other times, this little word has real special meaning. People stir up trouble, line up for tickets, work up an appetite, and think up excuses. To be dressed is one thing but to be dressed up is special.

And this up is confusing: A drain must be opened up because it is stopped up.

We open up a store in the morning, but we close it up at night. We seem to be pretty mixed up about 'up'!

To be knowledgeable about the proper uses of 'up', look up the word 'up' in the dictionary. In a desk-sized dictionary, it takes up almost 1/4 of the page and can add up to about thirty definitions.

If you are up to it, you might try building up a list of the many ways 'up' is used. It will take up a lot of your time, but if you don't give up, you may wind up with a hundred or more.

When it threatens to rain, we say it is clouding up.
When the sun comes out, we say it is clearing up.
When it rains, the earth soaks it up. When it does not rain for a while, things dry up. One could go on and on, but I'll wrap it up, for now . . .
my time is up!

Oh . . . one more thing: What is the first thing you do in the morning and the last thing you do at night?

UP!

Did that crack you up? Don't screw up. Send this on to everyone you look up in your address book . . . or not . . . it's up to you.

Now I'll shut up!

Lexophile

All this business about words indicates that I am a lexophile. Anyone who writes a pun is a lexophile. Writers of newspaper headlines are lexophiles. Lexophile describes those that have a love for words such as "You can tune a piano but you can't tuna fish" or "To write with a broken pencil is pointless." A lexophile also loves anagrams, palindromes and word games. I've showered these over you for many seasons.

According to an Age site on the web, an annual competition is held by the New York Times to see who can create the most original play on words. Here are a few:

No matter how hard you push the envelope it will still be stationery.

When you've seen a shopping centre you've seen a mall.

The man who fell into the upholstery machine is now fully recovered.

A bicycle can't stand alone. It is just two tired.

He had a photographic memory but it was not fully developed.

With her marriage, she got a new name and a dress.

A will is a dead giveaway.

When the dentist married the manicurist they fought tooth and nail.

The thief who stole the calendar got twelve months.

The winning entry was "If you jump off a bridge in Paris you're in Seine."



Generosity

Several men were in the locker room of a golf club. A mobile phone on a bench rang and one of the men engaged the hands-free speaker function and began to talk. Everyone else in the room stopped to listen.

"Hello."

"Hi Honey, it's me. Are you at the club?"

"Yes."

"I'm at the shops now and found this beautiful leather coat. It's only \$2,000; is it OK if I buy it?"

"Sure, go ahead if you like it that much."

"I also stopped by the Lexus dealership and saw the new models. I saw one I really liked."

"How much?"

"\$90,000."

"OK, but for that price I want it with all the options."

"Great! Oh, and one more thing ... I was just talking to Jane and found out that the house I wanted last year is back on the market. They're asking \$980,000 for it."

"Well, then go ahead and make an offer of \$900,000. They'll probably take it. If not, we can go the extra eighty-thousand if it's what you really want."

"OK. I'll see you later! I love you so much!"

"Bye! I love you, too."

The man hung up. The other men in the locker room stared at him in astonishment, mouths wide open.

He turned and asked, "Anyone know whose phone this is?"

Did VicRoads contribute to this?

In about 2000, VicRoads personnel were involved in an Asian Development Bank project which developed a National Code for road design in China. The Overseas Projects Corporation of Victoria brought to Australia five road design engineers from the National Highways Institute in Beijing, and working with counterparts in VicRoads, we produced the first unified road design code in China.

Before that, Chinese engineers had been using bits and pieces of other international codes from America, Germany and the UK. They soon came to realise that this approach didn't work and so we assisted them in developing a unified code that matched the types of vehicles being driven in China as well as taking into account, Chinese driving behaviour.

China was still coming to terms about delivering projects using contracting and I assisted Mr Feng in Xi'an in translating the General Conditions of Contract into Mandarin. But as you can see from these photographs they kept the learning curve pretty short. There are now 150,000 km of freeways in China and they build them at a rate of 6,000 kms per annum.

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