

A ride to remember



A total of 2370 cyclists of all shapes and sizes took off on the 1999 VicRoads Great Victorian Bike Ride through northwestern Victoria. The youngest participant was a tender six years of age; the most senior was 84 years. Among the first-time riders (and 40 per cent female contingent) was Despina Kollios, who filed this report.

"The ride started at Echuca, and journeyed through numerous towns and cities en route to Melbourne," Despina said. "It was a great way to see places like Rochester, Bendigo, Maryborough, Castlemaine and Trentham, rather than just whizzing through in a car.

"The riders ranged from mad keen cyclists to curious first-timers like me, and the ride is arranged so that you can go out hard, or just pedal along at a leisurely pace (though all those kilometres take a toll on the old legs, no matter how gently you take it!).

"An unseasonable hot spell challenged even the fittest riders. We headed out just after dawn most days to avoid the midday heat, and drank litres of water to prevent the effects of dehydration.

"Among the 2370 participants were 170 volunteers who helped out on the ride. There is an enormous amount of organisation involved by Bicycle Victoria.

"Each day a huge network of volunteers, Victoria Police and ambulance workers perform an almost miraculous logistical operation. This includes relocating the campsite, setting up showers and washrooms, and feeding 2400 tired and hungry riders.

Photos from the 1999 VicRoads Great Victorian Bike Ride, including captain of the corporate team Harry Tew, delivering the road safety message to school children, a ride briefing underway in the VicRoads marquee and a bicycle maintenance session.

"There's plenty of entertainment after riding hours, such as concerts, twilight cinema, talent quests and drinks at Café de Canvas, the licensed campsite watering hole where many a new friendship blossomed!

"Local communities also made a great effort to welcome us."

Selling the message

"VicRoads had a corporate team of 12 who were hard at work promoting the ride's safety message of 'More skills, fewer spills'," Despina continued.

"The team installed and staffed the VicRoads marquee, visited local schools, conducted bicycle maintenance programs and staged bicycle skills competitions. We were constantly on the go.

"We had four celebrity riders — Dean Woods, Crackers Keenan, Brent McCaig and Che Wightwick — who were friendly with everyone on the ride, and assisted the less-experienced riders. The celebs were also the heroes of the younger riders, who copied the good example they set. They attracted plenty of attention from local media, which really helped get the safety message across, and signed autographs everywhere they went.

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The VicRoads corporate team on the 1999 VicRoads Great Victorian Bike Ride. Ride reporter Despina Kollios is pictured front row, third from left.



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If you have any ideas for stories, please contact the editor, Christine Elmer, on 03 9854 2779 or via email: elmerc@vrnotes.roads.vic.gov.au

A great experience

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"The unofficial celebrities on the ride were a troop of school-aged children from Nauru Island. Despite using bikes and gear that weren't exactly state-of-the-art, they finished strongly each day, and followed through with a three-hour game of rugby each afternoon! And this was no friendly tackle, they were fiercely competitive and more than one sustained injuries from their hard-played games.

"Despite the hard slog under the watchful eye of captain Harry Tew, there was a great sense of comradeship, and of satisfaction that this year's ride was again a huge success.

On your bike

It was left to the usual suspects to wave the VicRoads flag on Ride to Work Day in November.

Not even the prospect of a yummy breakfast from the Cafe was enough to lure many of us (*Drive Times* included) out of bed and on our bikes for this annual event promoting cycling as good for our health, wealth and environment.

Bicycle Programs Manager Alistair Cumming made it to the main event, a breakfast hosted by the City of Melbourne at Southgate.

Conscientious research has revealed few enthusiastic riders in our regional offices, while back at Kew, 28 staff cycled to work — just as they do most days according to our spies!

Congratulations to Kim Edmonds for cycling the 36 km from Ferntree Gully, and to his nearest rivals Peter McIntyre and Michael Metcalfe (*Around the Bay in a Day* cycling veterans — see story below) who rode 20 km from Mt Waverley and Ringwood respectively.

For those of us now feeling a bit guilty, perhaps the following extract from Bicycle Victoria will help dispel cycling myths and more of us pedalling in 2000.

Problem: I'd love to ride my bike to work, but it's too slow.

Answer: Bicycle Victoria's research shows that for trips under 5 km it is usually quicker to cycle than drive. And if you live within 15 km of the CBD, then at peak times, it is quicker to ride.

Bay ride calls for tough stuff

"As a first-timer, the eight-day trip initially seemed daunting, and it was certainly hard work at times. Towards the end though, both my fitness and confidence levels had increased and I flew along Victoria's country roads on my bike, feeling as if I had been doing it forever.

"Personally, it was an incredibly challenging and rewarding experience, and I encourage staff at VicRoads, particularly other women, to take advantage of this marvellous opportunity in November this year."

Three of the keenest cyclists at VicRoads — Roger Palmer, Peter McIntyre and Michael Metcalfe — successfully battled headwinds, ferry troubles and even sabotage to complete 'Around the Bay in a Day 1999'.

The 3500 riders in this annual 210 km event gather in Port Melbourne, then half of them head for Queenscliff and half to Sorrento. There, they catch the ferry across Port Phillip Bay and when they land on the opposite shore, complete the loop back to Port Melbourne.

This year the starting flag fell at 5.30 am on Sunday 24 October, and the VicRoads trio — who were Queenscliff-bound — joined the sprint to see who could be first

over the Westgate Bridge, before settling into a steady tempo along Geelong Road.

"The leading groups were averaging 40-45 km/h until we reached Corio, and we three were doing well," reported Michael Metcalfe. "Then a strong headwind slowed the field to 20-25 km/h, which made catching the 9 am ferry a challenge."

In fact, the main ferry had broken down, causing chaos as increasing numbers of cyclists swamped the usual car traffic, although it allowed one VicRoads rider to catch up after overcoming a badly cramped leg muscle.

Eventually a small ferry was called into action, and the first 500 cyclists embarked, many enjoying a spray-drenched crossing thanks to the ever-present headwinds. These continued to slow the field between Sorrento and Mordialloc

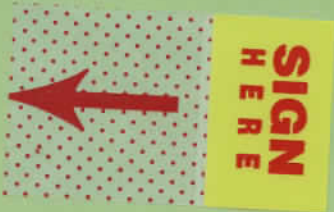
— but the VicRoads group managed to avoid the tacks someone had 'thoughtfully' scattered on the road just outside Rosebud.

Even better, the trio succeeded in achieving their goal of completing the distance in less than seven hours' riding time.

"More corporate teams are entering the ride, and we're hoping VicRoads may decide to sponsor a team for 2000," Michael said. "If you're interested in riding in the next event, give one of us a call."

Thanks to Michael Metcalfe for his great report.

If you are interested in joining in the ride this year, contact Michael Metcalfe (extn 2890), Roger Palmer (extn 2915) or Peter McIntyre (extn 2234).



A 28-strong team of VicRoads cyclists joined in the statewide Ride to Work Day organised by Bicycle Victoria.

'Around the Bay in a Day' cyclists (l to r): Roger Palmer, Michael Metcalfe and Peter McIntyre. The trio hopes to organise a VicRoads corporate team for this year's event.

Customer service success for Metro South East

Metro South East's R&L offices were judged customer service champions in the 1999 Whitehorse Business Awards.

"The Awards are an annual event sponsored by the Whitehorse Business Group," explained Senior R&L Manager Rob Kriek.

"They recognise achievement in the areas of business acumen, development of new business and customer service within the City of Whitehorse.

"Entrants must make a written submission, then a formal presentation to the judging panel. This was our second attempt in the customer service category of the Awards in three years — and we won!

"Our submission was based on the performance measures we've established to measure customer service, which have led to a significant cultural change in the Region's R&L offices over recent years," Rob continued.

"We didn't focus on an individual office, but on our network as a whole. But we were still eligible for the Awards because the Regional office is located in the City of Whitehorse."

A written submission was delivered in mid-September, Rob and Nick Constance (Office Manager, Burwood East R&L) faced the judging panel in late September, and on 22 October there were celebrations all round as the winners were announced.

"Nick, Dean Zabrieszch and I attended the presentation," Rob said, "and Regional Manager Geoff Shanks joined us at the cocktail party following the presentation.

"I was very proud to accept the Award on behalf of the Region and, more particularly, on behalf of the R&L staff who provide such excellent customer service in each of the R&L offices in our network.

"Our achievement was even more significant because we are the first government organisation to be recognised by these Awards, most of which are won by entrepreneurial businesses within the City of Whitehorse."

The Award plaque will eventually be given pride of place at the Regional office. At the moment it's on the road as each R&L office in Metro South East takes a turn to proudly display this tangible evidence of their winning customer service.

Pictured at the presentation of the 1999 Whitehorse Business Awards are (l to r): Geoff Spring, Chairman of the Whitehorse Business Group, Cr Kaele Way, VicRoads Senior R&L Manager Rob Kriek and Cr Peter Allen.



Smell the Begonias!

Don't miss the annual Sports and Entertainment Weekend, this year being held in Ballarat 4-5 March, the same time as the famous Ballarat Begonia Festival.

Popular events such as golf, tennis, indoor cricket, netball, horseriding and the traditional Sunday barbecue

are being offered. New activities, including a ferry ride on Lake Wendouree, gokarting, tenpin bowling, volleyball and inline skating have also been added.

Bop to the beat of local band 'Jelly Bean Addiction' at the annual dinner dance, being held at Hollioake Park Tennis Complex. The Pyrenees Mountain Winery tour, another highlight, includes a spitroast on the balcony of Taltarni winery.

Don't miss out on this great weekend! Book and pay by 11 February, and be in the running to win a mystery flight.

Congratulations to Western Region for organising a fantastic program. For more information, check the Sports and Entertainment database on VRNOTES1 or contact Chris Dunlop on extn 5735.



Caring for kids

The VicRoads corporate team on their marks at the 1999 Cystic Fibrosis Fun Run Relay.

Pictured (l to r): (back row) Tom Le, John Harper, Daren Fawkes, Lisa Hellard and (front row) Roger Palmer, Ray Malins, Peter Carter, John Anderson, Robyn McCutcheon and Barry Green.

VicRoads is continuing its proud tradition of supporting fund-raising for medical research.

Cystic fibrosis runners triumph again

The VicRoads Fast Lane team — sporting a slight change in personnel — was back on the track at St Kevin's College in October 1999, to defend the title they won in the corporate division of the 1998 Cystic Fibrosis Fun Run Relay.

They succeeded in great style — and their colleagues VicRoads Roundabouts (somewhat disrespectfully dubbed 'the social team') also put in a sterling effort, finishing third.

Rumour has it that the Metropolitan Fire Brigade team is already in training for the 2000 event, determined not to be beaten three years in a row!

The Relay raised \$14,500 for the Cystic Fibrosis Association's family support and research program, an increase of \$1000 on the previous year's total.

Congratulations to our runners who put in such a great effort:

VicRoads Fast Lane: Ray Malins (Captain, TRUM), Daren Fawkes (TRUM), John Harper (LI&S), Roger Palmer (TRUM) and Peter Carter (RSM)

VicRoads Roundabouts: John Anderson (Captain, Metro NW), Tom Le (RSM), Robyn McCutcheon (Information Services), Barry Green (Commercial Services) and Lisa Hellard (Information Services)

The relay is an annual event coordinated by the Victorian Road Transport Association to raise funds for the Cystic Fibrosis Association. Organisational sponsorship for the VicRoads teams was again provided by TRUM and Public Relations.

Keeping the Convoy rolling

Organisers of the 1999 Convoy for Kids — an annual family fun day that has raised more than \$96,000 for research into childhood asthma since 1994 — were quick to call on traffic management experts VicRoads for assistance when they changed venues from Pakenham to the Melbourne Fruit and Vegetable Market in Footscray.

The task was to manage a convoy of more than 1000 trucks converging on the market from four staging areas, for their own safety and to minimise disruption to other drivers.

"We've been involved before, but the change of site did provide an additional challenge," said Ron Kerwood, Transport Safety Services Team Leader at Metro North West.

"However, I was confident the Convoy would be trouble-free as long as communications between the various agencies was maintained."

Ron was proved right — despite a few complications added by the roadworks around the Docklands area — and the Convoy arrived safely to enjoy a day of music, rides, trucking displays, feasting and an auction, raising \$15,000 along the way.

In thanking those who had contributed, Convoy for Kids President Jumbo Kennedy said the event would not be possible without the assistance of organisations such as VicRoads. Negotiations for the 2000 Convoy are under way as we go to press with AFL Park a likely venue.



The 1999 Convoy for Kids in action.

Words at Work

Ken Russell of Road System Management has fingers in many pies — which led him to come up with the plea “Will the real ESD please stand up?”. Indebted to Ken for his heartfelt request, *Drive Times* investigated some of the possible candidates.

Ecologically Sustainable Development

There is no commonly accepted definition for this term. In fact, some environmental groups regard it as self-contradictory, believing any further development will be necessarily unsustainable from an ecological point of view. In Australia, the Federal Government has suggested the following definition: “using, conserving and enhancing the community’s resources so that ecological processes, on which life depends, are maintained and the

total quality of life, now and in the future can be increased”.

Another writer looks at it from this perspective: “we don’t inherit the environment from our parents . . . we borrow it from our children” — and should treat it accordingly.

Economically Sustainable Development can be broadly defined as the ability of an economy to grow continuously whilst maintaining low inflation and sustainable debt. ESD is achieved through maintaining responsible fiscal and monetary policies and achieving ongoing structural improvements that increase the international competitiveness of the economy, such as tax reform and labour market reform. The aim of ESD is to avoid situations where an economy experiences short periods of economic growth accompanied by high levels of inflation and unsustainable growth in foreign debt: a situation which normally brings on a sharp economic downturn.

Electronic Service Delivery

refers to initiatives to improve customer service and business performance by providing information services to customers and stakeholders using some form of electronic interface. This interface could include multimedia kiosks, the Internet, Electronic Funds Transfer and Electronic Data Exchange. These generally streamline interactions and improve access to services. For example, VicRoads customers can now renew their registration, obtain their demerit point record and conviction history, obtain a vehicle securities register certificate, book a licence test or learner permit test and change their address 24 hours a day by using the Internet and telephone.

Using the VicRoads Web site <http://www.vicroads.vic.gov.au>, customers can also obtain real time traffic information, give feedback and ask questions via email, download VicRoads forms, request publications, obtain

accident data and consult the VicRoads Registration and Licensing Policy and Reference System (PARS), enabling them to sort out many queries, rather than calling VicRoads or attending an R&L office during business hours.

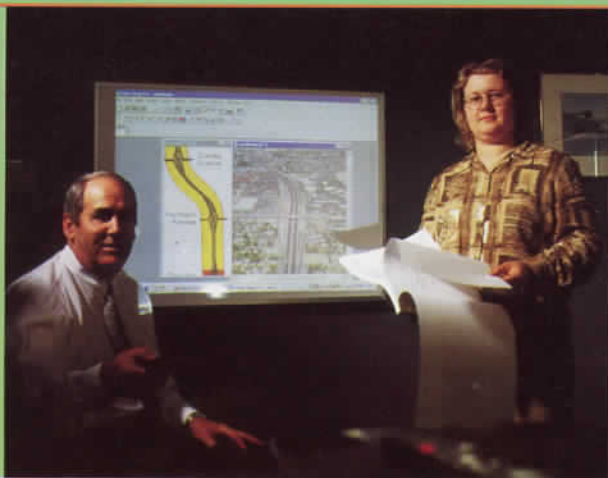
Environmentally Sustainable Development

Consensus within VicRoads Environmental Services Unit is that this is the same as Ecologically Sustainable Development, and has crept into use because the word ‘environmentally’ is better known.

Environmental Services Department (ESD)

Yes, even our own Environmental Services unit gets confused as to whether people are referring to any one of the above definitions or to our actual unit.

Thanks to Ken Russell for his inspiration, and to Chris Egger (Corporate Planning) and Melinda Collinson and Praveen Reddy (Environmental Services) for their expert contribution to our ESD investigation.



To help meet the peak short-term staff requirements of a \$US80m freeway construction project in Phoenix, Arizona, the project’s prime design consultants URS Greiner Woodward Clyde took on VicRoads Design Team Leader Bob Shovelton and Design Officer Julie Kolodziej for a minimum three-month assignment.

Bob and Julie actually spent about five months in the States, from January 1999 — and proved great ambassadors for VicRoads, as a letter from the consultants to VicRoads Chief Executive Colin Jordan testifies.

Vice-President David French commended Bob and Julie on their excellent computer skills, knowledge of highway design principles and standards and problem solving capabilities, noting they were able to offer valuable technical insight on the use of ‘MicroStation’.

“Not only were Bob and Julie valued for their technical capabilities, they were a pleasure to work with,” Mr French wrote, concluding, “All in all, it was a very positive experience for all concerned.”

Bravo Bob and Julie!

Design Team Leader Bob Shovelton (left) and VicRoads Design Officer Julie Kolodziej (right) worked on the design of major freeway extensions in the city of Phoenix, Arizona, USA and each spent five months working in the USA.

Signs of the times

Traffic signals have come a long way since the first set, installed in London in 1868, literally got things going with a bang.

The signal in question involved red and green gas lamps attached to movable arms. It was a great idea in London's already congested streets, but the available technology was not up to the task. One of the lamps exploded — and traffic signal experiments halted for the next 50 years.

The first manually operated, three-colour signals were installed in New York, USA, in 1918. The Americans were also the first to test the potential of vehicle-activated signals. In the early 1930s, microphones were placed at the side of the road, and drivers were requested to sound their horns to bring about a change in the signals. Not surprisingly, there were many objections to this scheme, so research took a different direction: the placing of electrical contacts in the path of vehicles.

In London, the British were also working on vehicle-activated signals and the first were installed in 1932. Almost unbelievably, history repeated itself and there was an explosion when the signals were initially turned on — gas had seeped into the controller cabinet. But the Britons of the 1930s persisted and vehicle-activated signals soon became established. Three years later, the first linked systems were established in London and Glasgow.

The first traffic signal in Melbourne — at the corner of Collins and Swanston Streets — went into action at 10 am on 16 November 1928 — only to expire at 3.50 pm when the belt driving its mechanism broke. It was quickly repaired and, the records say, worked smoothly from then on, but the police remained sceptical about this challenge to their traffic controlling authority, describing it as “not only ineffective in controlling traffic but . . . a source of danger to both motorists and pedestrians”.

However, the Melbourne City Council of the day was undeterred by the comments, and on 21 January 1929 it approved the purchase and installation of two further sets of signals, taking the grand total to three. Seventy years later, VicRoads alone maintains nearly 3000 sets of signals located throughout Victoria.

A collector is born

Traffic signals have two key elements: the control systems (originally mechanical and now computer-based) that tell them what messages to send and the display equipment that allows them to convey the messages to road users. The latter has evolved considerably since the days of the exploding gas lamps — and Bruce

Operations, can not only tell you all about it but can show you some fascinating examples of old signal lanterns he has collected during the past decade.

“I like old things and I decided to start collecting traffic signal memorabilia when the Signal Installation and Maintenance Department was in Mulgrave. When things are superseded, they're regarded as junk for a while, but eventually they become rare and valuable.

“I'm hoping to gather examples of the whole range of display equipment, like the lanterns from 40 or 50 years ago. They were great heavy things made of brass, because the metal was easy to form and corrosion-proof. They'd look beautiful stripped and polished up, but the brass was covered by black paint, so they didn't look all that different from today's plastic versions.

“I also want to preserve examples of lanterns that use different sorts of light sources, such as normal filament globes, low-voltage quartz halogen globes and the latest, LED (Light Emitting Diode) technology.”

Something old . . .

Bruce's newest treasure has nothing to do with globes at all. It's one of the old clock-style traffic signals that were once found scattered throughout Melbourne, and served their last years regulating traffic heading down the Nepean Highway to the Mornington Peninsula beaches in the early 1970s. (There is still one in operation, controlling pedestrians only, at Scotch Parade, Chelsea.)

“The signal was found lying around their depot by Boroondara Council, and probably came from the corner of Toorak Road and Warrigal Road.

“People liked these signals because they're like analogue watches — you could literally see how much time you had to wait. They were run by an electric motor located at the bottom of the pole, and allowed a bit of flexibility because you could speed up or slow down the motor. You could also give one road more time by changing the split of the colors on the face of the clock.

“Their main shortcoming was that they weren't vehicle-activated, so they were unsuitable for the sort of traffic management needed today.”

. . . Something new

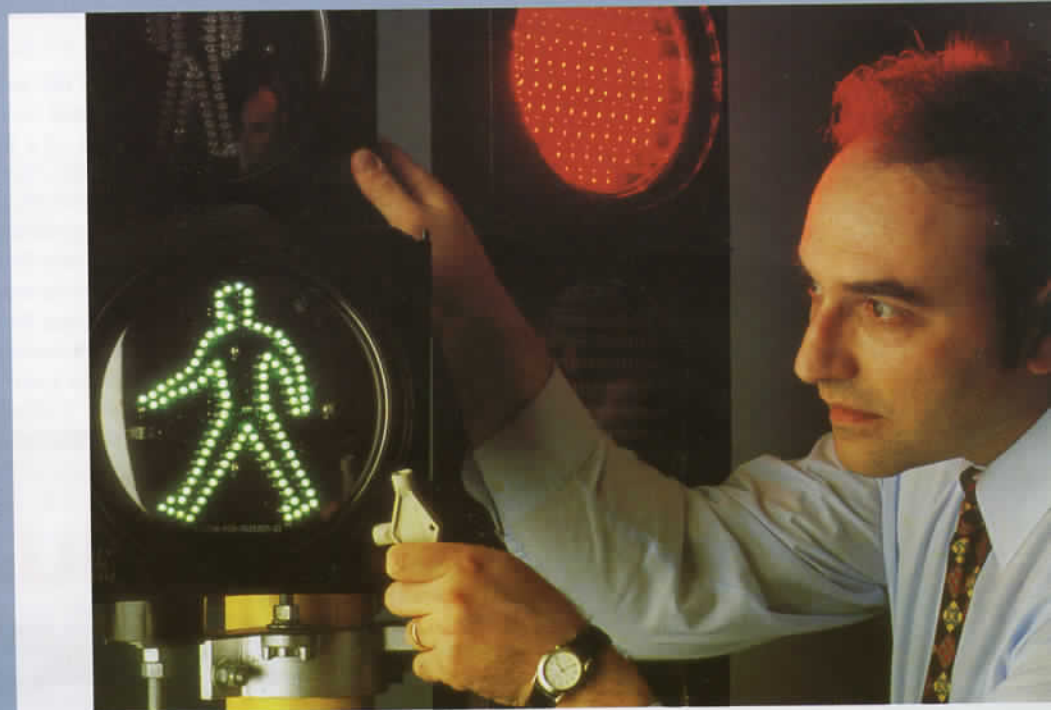
Another disadvantage was that the clock signals were difficult to light at night — in stark contrast to the latest LED signal technology being developed by Bruce and his team.

“Unlike most of our current traffic signals, which use a single globe, LED technology uses many little globes or ‘dots’, which are wired separately. In the case of red and green, this involves 80 to 100 dots, while amber requires 150 to 200 dots to achieve the desired brightness.

“One benefit of this is that one or two dots may ‘blow’ over time, but road users are still able to see the colour in the remaining dots. With a lantern lit by a single globe, if that blows, drivers can be left guessing.

“Another benefit relates to cost. LED lanterns consume less than 20 per cent of the power used by conventional lanterns, the dots last for ten years (compared with one to three years for other types of globe) and cost less to maintain.

“By using fewer resources, they're also good news for the environment.”





Left:
Peter Alysandratos, Senior Standards and Development Officer in Traffic and Road Use Management, is pictured with the new LED traffic signals. The new signals are being installed at selected locations to demonstrate their high optical qualities and expected power and maintenance cost savings.

Right:
VicRoads is acknowledged as a leader in intelligent transport systems. VicRoads Planning and Implementation Project Engineer John Bruzzaniti is pictured using a laser radar gun to test the accuracy of the new advisory speed sign on the Hume Freeway at Beveridge. The sign can also be used to display other text messages, offering important information to motorists.

All he wants for Christmas

When you're visiting Bruce's collection ten years from now, you'll doubtless find a range of LED technology on show, keeping the story of the evolution of traffic display equipment up-to-date. You'll also find examples of the control equipment, ranging from the earliest mechanical systems to the most recently superseded computer system, which Bruce is gathering now.

One thing he'd really like to get his hands on, however, is another piece of display equipment he has never actually seen himself.

"People talk to me about the 'bar' lights in Geelong. They worked a bit like the clock lights, but instead of a clock face they had bars of red, amber and green lights made up of neon tubes, and you watched them switch through these until they reached the color you wanted."

If you notice a set of bar lights nestling among the weeds in a depot (or back garden) near you, give Bruce a call. He'd be delighted to fill this gap in the collection. *Many thanks to Bruce Hearn for the research on which this story is based.*



LI&S staff milestones honored



Staff of Land Information and Survey and the Commercial Services Directorate plus partners of award winners recently gathered to celebrate the achievements of several staff members.

Six staff were honored for passing significant long service milestones: Max Corry (40 years); Ken Adams and Bob Deery (30 years); and Terry Benesh and Tony Sheaffe (20 years).

Susan Herrick was recognised for the successful completion of her degree, Bachelor of Applied Science (Surveying) with Honors.

LI&S Manager Frank Culliver introduced each award winner, giving a short history. Chief Executive Colin Jordan and Director of Commercial Services Miranda Douglas-Crane spoke briefly and presented certificates and gifts.

Max Corry, VicRoads Manager, Survey Operations (left) is pictured receiving his 40-year long service award from Chief Executive Colin Jordan.

Calling all athletes

After the success of the inaugural event last year, the call has gone out for competitors for the 2000 Active for Life Australasian Public Sector Games.

The Games will be held in Melbourne from 26-30 April 2000, and you don't have to be an Olympian to compete because competition is structured by ability levels. Anyone who is a current or retired member of a public sector

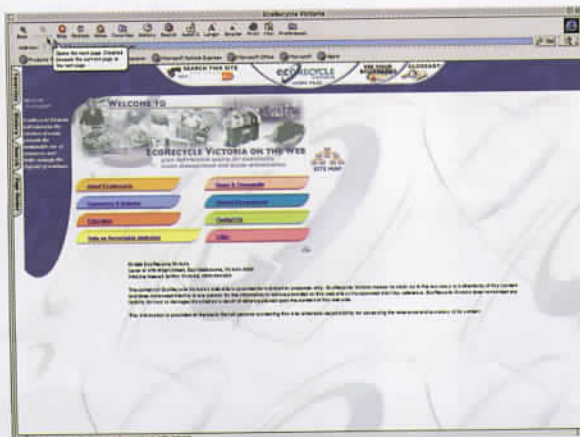
organisation or does business with the public sector and is willing to have a go has got what it takes.

The 18 sports at which you can try your hand are athletics, badminton, basketball, cycling, duathlon, golf, indoor cricket, lawn bowls, netball, road run/walk, soccer, softball, squash, swimming, table tennis, tennis, touch and volleyball. They'll be played at world class venues including Melbourne and Olympic Parks, the Melbourne Sports and Aquatic Centre and our famous sandbelt golf courses.

"The Games are about the enjoyment of participation, team building, camaraderie and the fun of playing sport together, and are not to be missed," the organisers say. "Just ask your colleagues in one of the 300 organisations that competed last year."

For further information, ring the Games hotline on 03 9583 9178, check out the Games Web site at <http://www.publicsectorgames.com.au> and register an expression of interest.

Web site tackles waste



If you're involved in a project that needs input on waste management, visit EcoRecycle Victoria's newly enhanced Web site.

The EcoRecycle site <http://www.ecorecycle.vic.gov.au> is packed with useful information including site maps, word search, downloadable images and publications plus a comprehensive database on recycling services and recycled products in Victoria.

Also available are information on EcoRecycle's grants program, which supports recycled product and infrastructure development, industry case studies, tips on how to develop a 'Buy Recycled' purchasing program and more.

EcoRecycle Victoria is the State Government agency charged with encouraging Victorians to reduce waste. The information on the Web site is kept up-to-the-minute but in Victoria you can also call their Infoline on ph 1800 35 32 33.

Hot contenders for Olympics

Preparation is hotting up for the two VicRoads Olympic contenders, Rayoni Head and Michael McLean, while Tony Biancacci is just back from Lyon, the venue for this year's peak bocce event.

Badminton champion Rayoni is in the midst of a complicated 12-month qualifying period that finishes at the end of April 2000.

"If I can maintain my current position as number one player from Oceania in Ladies Singles, which is my chosen event, I will qualify," she said.

"I have had my most successful year, with highlights including winning the Fiji International Singles Title and reaching my highest world ranking of number 21 in Ladies Singles."

Rayoni's next trip is to Europe, where she will play seven qualifying tournaments, and has been greatly assisted by the fundraising BBQ & Raffle Spectacular held by the VicRoads Kew Social Club in late October 1999.

"I have never received so much support from such a large group of people before, and I was very touched," Rayoni said.

"Badminton is a minor sport in Australia, so we have only limited funding and sponsorship opportunities. I am grateful for the support of my current sponsors, Carlton, Ashaway and ASICS as well as the support from VicRoads.

"The support of so many people from VicRoads will definitely help me to play the required number of tournaments to give me the best chance to qualify for the 2000 Olympics."

Still on the right tack

Michael McLean has also been in Europe recently, in pursuit of his goal of sailing for Australia in the 2.4mR class at the Sydney 2000 Paralympics. Michael gained valuable training and racing experience competing in the Finnish and Swedish 2.4mR National championships in the lead up to the 1999 World titles, which were held in Marstrand, Sweden, in late July 1999.

Michael achieved some excellent placings during the European season, and raised his world open ranking from 50 to 39, and his disabled ranking from ten to eight.

He has also been awarded a full scholarship by the Victorian Institute of Sport, and is thankful for the support of a number of sponsors, including VicRoads and Cadbury Confectionery.

In the first two selection regattas, in September and December, Michael came second to his main rival. Competition for the one place in the Australian Paralympic sailing team will be very keenly contested at the World Championship in March, after which final selection will take place.

Michael's plans for the World Championship seem well on track.

He recently won the open Victorian State Championship in a very impressive display of heavy-weather sailing on Port Phillip – his first major regatta win – and then came equal third in the open National Championship in Canberra in light and fluky winds on Lake Burley Griffin. He was beaten in the Nationals by a former Olympic sailing medallist and a former national champion in major sailing classes, and tied on points with his Paralympic rival. He now goes into the World Championship full of confidence.

Since the World Championship is to be held in Melbourne, we'll all have an excellent opportunity to see Michael in action. Look out for news in *Drive Times* and the major media.

Aussie team on the way up

The World Bocce Championships were held in the French city of Lyon in mid-November and contested by 30 nations. Tony Biancacci of VicRoads Design is the National Coach for the Australian bocce team, which is gradually working its way up the world rankings.

Our best results on this occasion were in the doubles, where the Australian team was nudged into fourth place by the Algerian team – by one point, and only after an extra play-off match that lasted three hours!

In the singles, Australian champ Steven Chiandotto made it to the round of eight, being knocked out by the eventual fourth place-getter Gerard Pignone of Switzerland.

Steven also put in a great performance in the Progressive Throwing to come fifth.

Commenting on the results, Tony said the team's performance was sound and they made history by beating France for the first time.

"Despite home-ground advantage, the French were still upstaged, and about 3000 French spectators sat around like stunned mullet as they witnessed their team's finals hopes destroyed," Tony said. "It added insult to injury – having lost the rugby, tennis and bocce to Australia, the French are probably worrying about what lies ahead!"

"Australia is now ranked fourth in the world, and the team has set itself the goal of winning the next Championships, to be held in Slovenia in two years' time."



Badminton champion Rayoni Head greatly values the support of VicRoads and her colleagues in her quest to represent Australia in the Sydney 2000 Olympics.



Tony Biancacci discusses tactics against the Algerians team during timeout.





VicRoads 47-year veteran John Cunningham pictured on the job as patrolman.

Great Ocean Road, the place John Cunningham calls God's country.



Happy in God's country

John Cunningham has worked for VicRoads for more than 47 years — all of them along the Great Ocean Road.

“Back in 1952 I was working on farms, in the wool sheds and making hay,” John recalled. “I also caught rabbits and sold the skins — there was good money for skins then.

“This fella next door used to work for VicRoads (then the Country Roads Board) and he asked if I wanted a job working on the landslips on the Great Ocean Road.

“So off I went, and that’s where I’ve stayed — it’s God’s country along there.

“Things were a bit different back in the 1950s - the hours were longer, there were fewer holidays and not much safety gear.

“There were plenty of slips because of the construction work going on to make the road safer. To clear them we’d often just cram a stick of geli [gelignite explosive] in the rocks and run for cover.

“Another regular job was helping drivers who couldn’t get their caravans round hairpin bends like the Devil’s Elbow.

“At 10 am we’d light a fire to boil the billy for morning tea. Later on, we were issued with little gas cookers, which were better in fire danger periods, and now we bring a Thermos.”

Born and bred in Bellbrae, John married his sweetheart Joan at the old Bellbrae Church, and moved just a few miles down the road (it was miles then) to build their house at Anglesea — virtually next door to the CRB depot.

“The patrol used to work between Torquay and Lorne, but now we’re based in Geelong it can be anywhere between Geelong and the South Australian border,” said John, who began as a patrol assistant, moved on to second patrolman, then lead operator. He staunchly resisted promotion to overseer, preferring to stay closer to home with Joan and their two children.

“I didn’t want a life where I was away from Monday to Friday, and then had to leave again on Sunday night,” he said.

John acknowledged the many improvements in working

conditions achieved during his time at VicRoads, although he regrets the passing of the sort of characters who simply wouldn’t cop today’s work environment.

When he’s not tending the Great Ocean Road, John likes to travel. He’s been to Alice Springs five times — once in his superbly maintained Morris Minor for the Morris Minor Car Club’s national rally — and is heading for Darwin in his holidays next year. He has also travelled overseas, but would rather see more of Australia before crossing the oceans again.

But don’t think travel is part of his retirement plans, because John doesn’t have retirement on his mind at all.

“I like the companionship at VicRoads, the young people and the old — I’m like Poppa bear with his young cubs. I told the boss that the day I get sick of getting up and coming to work, he’d be the first to know, but so far I’ve enjoyed it all, and there’s more to come.”



A montage of images from Peter Hasset's stay in India.

Memories of India

Precious pearls and lapis lazuli, plump, perfumed mangoes, the dubiously named Hash Harriers, and drivers so intrepid he preferred to stay a passenger are all part of Peter Hasset's memories of his recent stay in India.

Peter quit sedate downtown Geelong in November 1998 for Hyderabad, capital of India's second largest state Andhra Pradesh, on his second overseas posting for VicRoads.

"Hyderabad has a population of approximately 7 million, and about 30 of them are Europeans working on projects," Peter explained.

"It's a long way off the typical tourist route, but it does have all the mod cons. My wife Glenda and I eventually settled in a three-bedroom apartment and were lucky enough to be looked after by a terrific cook and maid — even though we didn't speak each other's language.

"One of the first things we had to get used to was the traffic. During the day the streets are packed with vehicles, about 70 per cent of them scooters and trishaws (auto rickshaw), and there are few traffic lights or roundabouts. The practice is to give way to the bigger vehicle — which may be a tip truck packed with 50 people going to a wedding!

"The tendency for gridlock is increased by the movement of cows. The dairies are in the middle of town, and the cows (actually buffaloes) are milked at 9.30 am and then driven through the morning peak hour to forage by the river. They make the return journey around 3 pm, which is the evening peak hour.

"The roads are clearer at night, so drivers tend to go at a squillion miles an hour — which is pretty hazardous for the sweepers. They're an army of women, all immaculately groomed and dressed in lovely saris, who sweep down the roads and lime the gutters and fence lines each night."

Gone to the dogs

On their arrival in Hyderabad, the Hassetts were immediately snapped up by the Hash Harriers — who have nothing to do with a certain controversial herb.

The name 'Hash' comes from the nickname given to the Royal Selangor Club Chambers in Kuala Lumpur, where Hashing seems to have originated between World Wars I and II, while harriers are a type of hound used for chasing hares. Now a huge international organisation, the Hash Harriers enable expatriates working in overseas countries to have a 'helluva good time' by combining a run (following a trail laid by a Hasher known as the 'hare') with a beerfest, assorted tribal rituals, and feasting.

"We met once a week and every full moon and it was the best way to meet people," Peter said.

"About 25 per cent of our group was Indian, and it was a great way to slot into local social networks."

Peter and Glenda found the exuberance of the Hash Harriers quite a challenge at first — but Glenda had no inhibitions when it came to haggling over pearl and lapis bargains.

"Hyderabad was once a great diamond area — but it's now known for freshwater pearls and leather goods," Peter explained.

Mangoes and more

Breakfast at the Hassetts apartment was pretty much what they'd have back home, apart from the buffalo milk on the Kellogg's Corn Flakes, while curry was the order of the day for most other meals.

"Andhra Pradesh has its own distinctive cuisine which is aromatic rather than hot — birianis and kormas.

"We were too far inland to obtain fish, so we ate chicken curries to the point where we almost grew feathers!

"We could get European food at the city's top hotels, but most other restaurants served curry."

When Glenda returned to Australia, Peter gradually lost sight of his toes. "The prawns, roasts and birianis have been great," he wrote in his weekly email.

"Mahesh the cook is serving meals for three, I eat two."

Peter's real passion, however, was "mangoes — bloody beautiful. At 40 cents a kilo, I am starting to look like one."

Some like it hot

Unlike the curries, the temperatures were very hot for two months of Peter's stay: 46 degrees every day, quite a change from the mild climes of Geelong.

"It was a real problem if you wanted a shower in the late afternoon, because the cold shower was almost too hot stand under.

"But for most of the year the weather is brilliant, and the sun doesn't seem to be as hot as it is in Australia."

Goodbye and hello

"India is an enchanting place for travellers looking for a destination that offers history combined with livable budget accommodation and plenty of people who speak English," Peter said.

"It's really the last bastion of quality travel on a shoestring.

"In Andhra Pradesh there are magnificent old forts and tombs including Golconda, which is one of the biggest forts in India. It was mostly built by the Qutab Shahi kings, and once withstood a siege that lasted eight months.

"I'm looking forward to going back to finish the project. We've written all the manuals and contracts, and the next steps to train the contractors and their staff in modern maintenance practice.

"I miss the social life too — and Glenda misses those pearl shops! And I do find myself hankering after one of Mahesh's birianis and kormas from time to time."



The infamous Hash Harriers in action. Peter said it was a great way to meet locals, as well as other ex-patriates. Peter is behind the camera in each photo!

Getting to know Leanne Seddon

VicRoads Road Maintenance Engineer
Leanne Seddon pictured on the job at
Great Alpine Road in 1997.

After completing her civil engineering degree at Monash University, Leanne Seddon was snapped up in the VicRoads 1994 graduate intake. She is currently working as a Road Maintenance Engineer in South East Metro and eating a lot of chocolate.

How did you come to join VicRoads?

I was looking for work in construction and when I saw the advertisement for the graduate recruitment program in the newspaper, I thought it looked promising. I applied, and was lucky enough to be chosen.

What does your present job involve?

It's mainly management of road maintenance, to ensure the roads are maintained to the very high standards demanded by the public. There are a couple of VicRoads staff but most of the work is done by contractors. I've had formal training in contract management, and the rest I'm learning on the job.

Where else have you worked in VicRoads?

I actually started in Metro South East, in traffic engineering. It was still at Nunawading then. Next I went to Benalla on one of my six-month rotations, but stayed for three and a half years! It was a good training ground and yes, I did get sucked into things theatrical — Jim Tullberg is a very persuasive individual!

I did a bit of everything in program delivery while I was at Benalla — maintenance, construction and contract management. The highlight was managing the sealing of the Great Alpine Road from Dinner Plain to Horsehair Plain. Then I headed off to Metro North West as a Maintenance Engineer for about six months, and returned to Metro South East in July 1999.

Is your career turning out the way you expected?

Absolutely nothing like it, but then I think it would be boring if it did. I've found my options at VicRoads are much wider than I thought they'd be. I expected to spend more time working in construction, but maintenance seems to be in my blood!



What is your long-term ambition?

Apart from reaching the age of 80 with all my faculties intact, I'd like to work in a developing country for a while with an organisation like World Vision or the Red Cross. Eventually I'd like to run my own company, and I think the future is probably with things like project management, or consulting areas like occupational health and safety and quality assurance.

What are your personal interests?

I like hiking, tasting red wine (that's probably why I stayed in Benalla for so long) and I play a lot of sport, particularly netball and volleyball. I also read anything I can get hold of.

Tell us about the pet in your life.

His name is Sebastian, and he's an enormously large grey cat who fights anything he can lay his paws on, and eats absolutely anything, too. He really believes he's a dog, and he likes other dogs, but he'll still fight them.

What is your favourite food?

There's no doubt about this one — chocolate! I'm a bit fussy though, my real favourites are Lindor and those sea shells chocolates, but it makes me easy to shop for at Christmas and birthdays.

What is your favourite colour?

It changes with my mood. Yesterday it was yellow, but today it's blue, probably because of the blue summer sky.

What is your favourite past-time?

Need you ask? Reclining in a chair with a good book, a glass of wine and lots of classy chocolate.

What football code do you follow?

I'm in the 'don't really care' league, but if I was pushed, I'd say I barrack for North Melbourne because of my Dad. The sports I follow are tennis and netball.

What makes you laugh?

Douglas Adams (of *Hitchhiker's Guide to the Galaxy* fame). Actually, it doesn't take much to set me off — I have a well-developed sense of the ridiculous.

What would you do if you won Tattsлото?

I did win \$28 recently, so I went out to dinner with friends and bought the wine. If I had a big win I would probably spend my life travelling everywhere.

What one thing would you change about the world?

I've consulted widely on this one, but I still need more time. There are the obvious things like world peace, of course. No fat in chocolate would be good, but it's not very noble.