

VICROADS ASSOCIATION INC.
Reg. No. A0022250S

45th Annual Report
March 2024

I apologize for my absence at this year's AGM and I am most grateful to Jill Earnshaw for stepping in to present this report.

Membership

Our membership has reduced to 290 people - although this is a little misleading. At the last AGM our numbers just exceeded 300 so it appears that our numbers have reduced. However, when we converted to electronic delivery of the newsletter, we lost touch with some members who received the newsletter in the mail. So, we sent a letter to all people who received hard copy newsletters requesting them to provide an email address. About 30 did not respond. Many of these were partners of members who had died and some had lost touch for one reason or another. When you take this into account, our membership has remained pretty steady.

Since our last AGM in March 2023, the following people have joined our Association - Marion Fantin, David Keam, Kevin Mintern-Lane, Lloyd Rowe, Martin Habgood, Warren Blandy, Bob Parker, Bruce Harnett, Neil Jones, Barry Mulholland, Brian McNamara, John Harper, Robert Adams, Leon Szarski, Neville Schmidt, Paul Petridis, Geoff Jameson, Tony Hillman, Peter Carter, Heather Thompson, Bruce Thompson, Kevin Rhodes, Raj Ramalingam and Karen Macdonald. Twenty four new members is the biggest yearly increase for the last twenty years.

It is also my sad duty to report the death of the following members during this time - Stewart Gavin (aged 106), Sandor Mokos, Barry Fielding, Bruce Addis, Peter Lowe, Kevin Tehan, David Ferguson, Ted Saunder and Elizabeth (Noel) Hoitinga. Sandor and Bruce were committee members and Peter was Secretary of the Association for over ten years.

Newsletter

I now produce a newsletter every month. In fact, last year there were 13 issued. They are very well received and I think they have become a catalyst for people to join. I know that the readership extends well beyond our membership - including many people who are eligible to join. This is a bit disappointing but on the other hand, I am pleased that it reaches out to as many ex-colleagues as possible.

Because the Department of Transport and Planning withdrew its support for issuing hard copies, all newsletters are now emailed to members or member's contacts.

In a way, this is easier for me. I think the document is easier to read and I don't have to constrain my writing to about 22 - 24 pages of 10-point script - which was condensed down to 16 pages with a lot of reduction and juggling of the photographs. I now use a 12-point script and I can run over the previous page limit and include as much as I like. The photos are larger too.

Many people comment on the work load in writing them but I really enjoy doing it, so don't feel sorry for me. It exercises my mind and keeps me out of mischief. It is also great to receive contributions from members.

Our website

Nick Szwed is our webmaster and he does a great job managing it. We have a constant stream of hits from all over the world and there are people in Belgium who must love us because we get about 20 to 30 hits from them each month. Thanks Nick, for all the work you do for us.

If you haven't seen it, visit vicroadsassociation.org to see what I mean. It is probably the largest, single source of data about VicRoads.

Events

We had six occasional lunches at Doncaster Shoppingtown Hotel last year. We used to get between 15 to 20 members turning up but, in 2023/24, we have had a marked increase in patronage and we reached a record high of 29 members. I want to thank Kelvin York who still makes all the arrangements with the hotel.

Kel has reported that the average attendance has lifted to 25 and 48 individuals have participated in this period. Well done everyone!

We also had two dinners at the Waverley RSL last year - one in March and the other in October. The latter was the highest patronage ever (32 members) and the meal was excellent. Thanks to Ken Vickery for making arrangements for these. These were so successful we decided to have another event there - a lunch on 2 July 2024.

Our excursion last year was the second to adopt a two-night stopover. The first was our visit to Warrnambool region in 2022. Last year, in November 2023, we visited Ballarat and Bendigo - each night we were joined by local colleagues for dinner. We travelled from Ballarat to Bendigo via the grain country as far west as Horsham. The Stick Shed at Murtoa was a highlight and the silo art was memorable.

In May 2023, we organized a lecture by Bernard Shepherd (former Global Leader - Transportation with GHD and a member of the Rail Futures Institute) to talk to us about issues relating to urban and regional railways in Victoria. This was well attended and generated a lot of interest and discussion.

We also visited the Fox Classic Car Exhibition in September. Suffice to say that the Revheads among us were ecstatic and even members like me - who consider a car as a way of moving from one place to another - were very impressed. Jill Earnshaw organized this visit after which we had a delicious lunch cooked by the marvellous refugee women who were so delighted to share their dishes with us.

Our Annual Golf Day was held in October 2023 at Green Acres Golf Club. The winner was Roy Gilmour - for the third time. We propose to send him to another course next year!

The biggest date on our calendar is the Christmas lunch at Waverley RSL in December. In 2023 we had an attendance close to 100 people and everyone enjoyed the friendship and nostalgia that these events evoke. Once again, we have to thank Ken Vickery for these arrangements. I also want to thank Jill Earnshaw for making up the Christmas hamper for our lucky draw. How perceptive she was in designing it to be carried comfortably on a train, as the winner was Laurie Watson who carried it on the train to Ballarat!

Finally, just a few weeks ago, Peter Don from the Railway Futures Institute and the Town and Country Planning Association, addressed us on the subject of rail as a catalyst for regional growth. This built upon the earlier lecture by Bernard Shepherd and was well received by all our members.

Committee

Our Committee Members are:

President: David Jellie

Secretary: Jim Webber

Treasurer: Ken Vickery

Members: Patsy Kennedy, Graham Gilpin, John Wright, Alan Mackinlay, John Rebbechi, Iris Whittaker, Jill Earnshaw, Noel Osborne and Nick Szwed.

Ken Sinclair attended many of our meetings as a non-voting observer but nonetheless, he was able to participate in our discussions.

We have held six meetings, five in 2023 one earlier this year.

I would like to thank all the committee members for their support. Jim Webber, especially, does a brilliant job as our secretary and Ken Vickery keeps our income and expenditure under close scrutiny as Treasurer.

I also want to thank Iris Whittaker for managing our membership data and keeping all the details up to date - not a simple task.

I have already mentioned Nick's work on the website and Jill Earnshaw has arranged some of our excursions easing the burden for Jim and myself.

I also want to thank Patsy Kennedy who designed and implemented a new version of the Association's application form which can be found on our website.

In fact, all the committee members have helped in some way or another and I want thank them on behalf of the Association.

Rules of Association

At the last AGM a motion was passed that we should review the rules of association and make appropriate amendments as deemed necessary. We are an incorporated organization under an Act of Parliament and are obliged to respect its requirements.

Graham Gilpin and Alan Mackinlay reviewed our rules and noted that the government is in the throes of revising the model rules for organisations such as ours. We have therefore, deferred our review until the new model rules have been promulgated.

Acknowledgements

I wish to thank Doug Thompson for auditing our accounts.

Thank you to all our members for being so loyal and appreciative of what we do. After all, that is our mission - to support each other with our friendship.

David Jellie
President
March 2024