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*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. Cost of membership is a once only fee of \$50. Enquiries about membership or receipt of the Newsletter by e-mail should be directed to the Secretary, VicRoads Association, by phone or e-mail as shown above. Visit our website at <https://vicroadsassociation.org>*

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Dear Members

We are already a month into autumn but with the continuation of February's warmth, many of our deciduous trees are still wearing their summer gear. I must confess a certain nostalgia for the autumns of my teens when the weekend chores of many householders included sweeping the fallen leaves into big piles and burning them.

I miss the sweet incense of those burnt leaves and the smoky haze that permeated the still air of those long autumn afternoons. Those were the days when fire was the weapon of choice for disposing of unwanted articles, and many backyards boasted an incinerator for that very reason. Of course, those things were terribly bad for us and are now thankfully distant memories. But still ...

On 4 March, eleven members and partners set off for Orbost on the first leg of a journey to Cooma for a presentation on the Snowy Hydro 2 Project, followed by a visit to Canberra. A big thanks from those who attended to Jim Webber and David Jellie for planning a memorable trip.

Rosslyn and I were unfortunate to have missed the Snowy trip because we had booked an 11-day tour of New Zealand's South Island well before the Snowy trip date was announced. Back in 2020 our tour of both islands was truncated after seeing only the North Island, due to the outbreak of Covid. Returning to the South Island in March 2025 confirmed everything we'd been told about this amazingly beautiful place. Nevertheless, after reading David and Jim's report of the Snowy trip (in this newsletter) we realised we had missed something very special.

The other major event was our Annual General Meeting (AGM) and luncheon, held at Glen Waverley on 25 March. Attended by 26 members and a few partners, the meeting, described later in this Newsletter, saw the appointment of a new Committee member and acknowledged the service of three of its members. Members at the AGM supported the motion to adopt the Model Rules for Incorporated Associations as our Association's rules.

## WHAT'S COMING UP

### Our 2025 event calendar

Date	Event	Contact Person
<b>Monday 7 April</b>	From 12 noon. Occasional Lunch, Doncaster Shoppingtown Hotel	Just turn up
<b>Tuesday 15 April</b>	From 10.30 am arrival for an 11.00 am start. Presentation on the National Broadband Network at the NBN's Operations and Management Centre, 1010 Latrobe Street, followed by a light lunch onsite.	David Jellie pdjellie@hotmail.com
<b>Monday 2 June</b>	From 12 noon. Occasional Lunch, Doncaster Shoppingtown Hotel	Just turn up
<b>Wednesday 11 June</b>	Expect a 9.45 am gathering for a 10 am start. Presentations by Sebastian Motta - Director, Delivery NorthEast Link Program, Major Roads Projects Victoria and others at the Koonung Project Office site followed by lunch at 1.00 pm at the Manningham Hotel	Jill Earnshaw jillmearnshaw@gmail.com
<b>Monday 30 June</b>	From 12 noon. Mid-year lunch at Waverley RSL	Ken Vickery kenvickery@tpg.com.au
<b>Monday 14 July</b>	10 am TAC presentation on road behaviour and tour of Road to Zero Education Centre at Melbourne Museum followed by lunch	Jill Earnshaw jillmearnshaw@gmail.com
<b>Monday 4 August</b>	From 12 noon. Occasional Lunch, Doncaster Shoppingtown Hotel	Just turn up
<b>Monday 25 August</b>	Guided tour of the Hellenic Museum at 280 William Street in the city followed by lunch at the Mint Hotel	Patsy Kennedy Kennedyp54@hotmail.com
<b>Monday 6 October</b>	12 noon. Occasional Lunch, Doncaster Shoppingtown Hotel	Just turn up
<b>Thursday 9 October - Friday 10 October</b>	Regional Visit to Ballarat with a roads presentation on Thursday afternoon followed by dinner at the Ballarat Leagues Club. Friday presentation and tour of Alstom Train factory in Ballarat followed by dinner at the Ballarat Golf Club.	Jill Earnshaw jillmearnshaw@gmail.com
<b>Friday October 31</b>	Annual Golf Day Green Acres Golf Club, East Kew	Jim Webber jameswebber1717@gmail.com
<b>Monday 3 November</b>	From 12 noon. Occasional Lunch, Doncaster Shoppingtown Hotel	Just turn up
<b>Thursday 11 December</b>	From 12 noon. Christmas lunch at Waverley RSL	Ken Vickery kenvickery@tpg.com.au

## Visit to the National Broadband Network (NBN) at 1010 La Trobe Street, Docklands, Tuesday 15 April at 10.30 am.

You need to register for this visit – see details below.

The NBN is Australia's national wholesale open-access data network, designed to provide faster and more reliable internet access to homes and businesses across the country, using a mix of technologies like fibre optic cable, copper phone lines, fixed wireless, and satellite.

The NBN is intended to improve internet speeds, reliability, and accessibility across Australia, supporting various aspects of daily life, including online work, education, entertainment, and communication.



The logo will be familiar to you.

NBN Co Limited (NBN Co) was established in 2009 as a Government Business Enterprise (GBE) and is a wholly owned Commonwealth company.

The principal responsibility of NBN Co is to operate and continue to build and upgrade the NBN® network in accordance with the expectations of the Government.

NBN Co works to fulfil the objectives set out by its Shareholder Ministers being the Minister for Communications and Minister for Finance in accordance with the Government's Statement of Expectations (SoE).

The Company's purpose is to lift the digital capability of Australia. NBN Co aims to achieve its purpose by providing fast, reliable and affordable connectivity via wholesale broadband services which meet the current and future needs of Australian households, communities and businesses.

Providing equitable access to affordable and reliable wholesale broadband services is essential in enabling end users to access key health services, maximising employment and educational opportunities, supporting economic growth and promoting digital inclusion.

NBN will host VicRoads Association members at its Network Operations Centre. The proposed agenda for the day is as follows:

10.30 am	Meet in the foyer of NBN's Network Operation Centre at 1010 La Trobe Street, Docklands for registration
11.00 am – 12.30pm	Network Management Centre tour
12.30pm – 1.30pm	Q and A during a light lunch

Members are welcome to invite partners and friends.

If you wish to attend, please contact David Jellie before 10 April on [pdjellie@hotmail.com](mailto:pdjellie@hotmail.com) or call 0418 105 276. If you have any special dietary requirements, please let David know when you register.

### MEMBER COMMENTS AND NEWS

#### From John Lewis

Nice story [about car theft] in the VicRoads Association Newsletter. It's good to have a bit of R&L content.

## 'No Cruising' signs



On our recent New Zealand trip, Rosslyn and I were intrigued by these street signs in Christchurch.

Our airport transfer driver explained that the signs were a response to complaints from residents adjoining major thoroughfares about mainly young male drivers parading their sporty vehicles, with noisy exhausts and wall-quaking sound systems, up and down the road at all hours of the night in an attempt to attract/impress other young persons.

While cruising is an important mating ritual that probably dates back to Henry Ford's day and is a practice that some of our members might remember with affection, it has caused the NZ Government to invest its Local Governments with draconian powers to seize and impound the vehicles of identified transgressors.

Perhaps the Lygon Street dining precinct in Carlton might be an appropriate location for a Victorian trial of these laws.

### From Tom Glazebrook

Refer to the book *Reminiscences of life in the Country Roads Board*, pages 278-279 relating to Bendigo Division:

*"Tom Glazebrook, another well-known and respected D/E Bendigo, is remembered for his aversion to Head Office – "The best view of Melbourne is in the rear vision mirror" was his quotable quote. Although the author of this poem is unknown, it reflected the sentiments of Tom and many divisional staff."*

In a recent letter, Tom said:

I was hoping to read this poem at the farewell in Kew last year, but I could not find it. However, here it is.

### The Engineer's Lament

*A Field Engineer called Charlie McCoffus  
Spent all day in the field and all night in the office  
Checking contracts and estimates too  
To be all picked to pieces by the Head Office crew.*

*They care not for the time nor the money they waste  
If a carbon is missing or a comma misplaced  
But they bounce back the papers with ill-conceived jeers  
To harass the hardworking field engineers.*

*To get back to Charlie, he struggled along  
Till an echoing sound told him something was wrong  
He went to the Doctor, and "Doctor" said he  
"There's a buzz in my brain,  
What's the matter with me?"*

*Well, the medico thumped as medicos do  
He tested his knees and his reflexes, too  
His eyes and his ears and also each lung  
And Charlie said, "Ah" as he stuck out his tongue.*



*The Doctor said, "Gosh, what a narrow escape  
But a quick operation will put you in shape  
I'll take out your brain for a complete overhauling  
And you, meantime, take a rest from your calling".*

*So, Charlie McCoffus went under the knife  
And struggled home brainless and kissed his dear wife  
While old Doc Loonie and two other men  
Were putting his brain back together again.*

*The weeks rolled by and Charlie McCoffus  
Never called for his brain at the Medico's office  
The Doctor got worried, gave Charlie a ring  
"You'd better come round and get this damn thing".*

*"Thanks", replied brainless Charlie McCoffus  
"I don't need it now; I've transferred to Head Office".*

ANON

..... *Interchange*, September 1979

Tom continued:

In spite of what the poem says, I have always had a lot of respect for all those I knew in Head Office. A fine intelligent group of good people. However, there were a number of times, in discussion, when I was able to change their views on various matters.

As a Divisional Engineer, I was in possession of the politics of the situation as well as the technical matters of the project. Country life was good. You could get home from the office in minutes - not like in Melbourne. Cost-of-living, e.g. house purchase price not as high. A promotion to Head Office was costly financially.

However, as a senior officer of the well-respected Country Roads Board, your social standing in the community in all the (then) 30 municipalities was high. Your opinion on community matters apart from roads and bridges was often sought and acted upon.

It's a nice feeling to be in this position not so now, I think. There are no D/Es in the CRB. Money is not everything. I had an enjoyable 34 years in the CRB.  
Regards Tom Glazebrook AM.

## **From Norm Bettess**

[Norm Bettess, who has just joined the Association, has provided this interesting account of his working life with the CRB and its successors. Norm was Dandenong Division's Senior Draftsman at Nunawading between 1971 and 1995. I am sure his story will bring back many happy memories for members who knew him when they worked in or passed through the Division during that period.]

'In early 1966 I was interviewed for a draughting position with the Country Roads Board by a Senior Engineer in Plans and Survey Division, Frank Edwards, and a chap from Human Resources, John Ring. Frank asked me a couple of questions then passed me a piece of paper and a pen and asked me to write my name and a couple of days later I was informed I had the job. My father-in-Law, Jim Drayton, worked with the CRB – maybe he had something to do with the outcome! I commenced in Plans and Survey on the third floor in Head Office on 28<sup>th</sup> March 1966. My commencing salary was \$2,078 per annum.



A young Norm as shown in the CRB Drafting Manual produced by Noel Anderson in the late 1960's

Not long after I commenced with the CRB my young wife Jan resigned from her position at the ANZ Bank to be home with our baby son Len and we were desperate to get our own home so I took on a full time milk round as well as my job with the CRB. This meant that I would be in bed around 7pm, up at 1.30am to deliver milk from the dairy in Doncaster, home for breakfast and a shower at around 6.30am and then off to my job at the Country Roads Board to start work at 8.30am. After 12 to 18 months of this we could afford to buy our own home. Having two full time jobs was tough!

In 1968 we bought our first house in Blackburn North for \$8,000. The bank would only lend us \$6,660 and we had saved \$1,000 so the vendor agreed to finance a second mortgage of \$500. The house needed a lot of cleaning, repainting

and some TLC before it was acceptable.

My job at the CRB Kew Head Office was a very enjoyable experience as my Supervising Draughtsman, Noel Anderson, was a great communicator and teacher/mentor. Work was a great learning place under Noel and there were many happy and memorable times.

One of my first design projects was the Warragul Road railway overpass. Noel took me through the design and draughting process. I was on a very steep learning curve. I then moved onto the Strathmore Bypass project (in particular, the Bulla Road Interchange) and soon after, the Lower Yarra Crossing (Millers Road Interchange).

I was always looking for promotion or upgrades as we needed the money and I loved the work and was conscientious. I became a bit impatient with being overlooked for promotion to Class 2 Draughting Officer so I resigned and joined a private civil engineering company called R. W. J. Young Pty Ltd. It meant I had to travel from Blackburn North to St Kilda Rd each day but my salary went from \$3,950pa to \$5,000pa plus overtime. This was a huge change for me as I went from a drawing office of about fifty people to a room by myself. It took me some time to adjust.

We usually worked on Saturdays doing surveys and then go to the hotel, as the chap in charge was a heavy drinker. This pushed me to my limit and when my friend Steve Graham rang and suggested I apply for the Senior Draughtsman position at the CRB (Dandenong Division) in Nunawading I applied and was interviewed by the Divisional Engineer Frank Docking. In July 1971 I accepted the position and my salary jumped to \$6,180pa. All this happened over approximately eighteen months.

This was the best job I had during my whole working life. I was in charge of the design office of about ten people and also arranged the survey party's program. It was a fantastic work environment with good upper management and a lot of young engineers, draughtsmen and admin/accounting staff. We also had a very active social club who arranged many outings for the staff and their families. The children's Christmas party was always a well-attended function along with the end of year Christmas function held at a local venue. During our lunch breaks we would often go to the local oval and throw boomerangs with Dennis Maxwell or play tennis at the local tennis courts. We also had an indoor cricket team which played in a local competition.

While working at the Country Roads Board we made some lifelong friends commencing with David Miles from the time we met in 1966 at the CRB in Kew. David sat at the drawing board in front of me and we became close friends. Jan and I were invited to Jill and David's wedding.

I met Dennis Maxwell and his first wife Claudia while working at Nunawading, and Jan & Bruce Arnot a few years later. In 1995 Dennis married Dorothy. As a group of eight, and also separately, we have had many, many great times together at Ringwood, Vermont, Rye, Korumburra and Wesburn playing cards and board games, doing odd jobs and some great 'How to Host a Murder' games.

Around 1995 I was promoted to a position in VicRoads Design Department in Kew as the Technical Services Manager. After a short time I was seconded to VicRoads Building Services as their Business Manager and then promoted back into the Design Department (at that time located in Camberwell) as Regional Services Manager in charge of a design office in Sunshine and also in Burwood East.



A recent pic of Norm and Jan on their 50<sup>th</sup> Wedding Anniversary

It was a great job but involved a lot of driving not only between Camberwell, Sunshine and Burwood East but also to all the Regional offices around Victoria. During this time Bill Collins was the Manager Design Department. He was an excellent person to work with – thanks Bill.

On my 55<sup>th</sup> birthday I resigned from CRB/VicRoads and joined Millar & Merrigan Pty Ltd in Croydon as a Project Coordinator/Designer. I negotiated a four day week and a car allowance with Mike Jordan (ex CRB) who had offered me the position.

I worked for M & M for around seven years moving to working at home part time towards the end. With this new job it had made it much easier and enjoyable to move from North Ringwood to Wesburn (in the Yarra Valley) where Jan and I have spent the last 24 years. In retirement we are busy with family, gardening and caravanning around Australia.'

## From Ted Barton

John,

Recently, I was going through my Bookcase and found an old book given to me in 1956 by a neighbour of one of my father's wartime RAAF mates with whom I was boarding in my final year at Swinburne. The neighbour's relative (the owner of the book) had died and, knowing that I was studying Civil Engineering, they thought I might be interested in some of his old text books and gave me several old volumes. Attached hereto are the files for pictures of a couple of pages from one book.

The book, Roads and Streets – Volume 1 – The art of Constructing Common Roads by Henry Law M.I.C.E was published in London in 1895 and was in its fifth edition.

The pictures on the following pages are from the first chapter under the heading "Historical Sketch". It is a description by a Mr Arthur Young of some of the roads in Northern England in 1770.

I found it both amusing and interesting and concluded that it rather fits the current state of our rural roads in Victoria at the present time. The whole book (some 330 pages) is a



fascinating record covering the design and construction of early roads in England including construction methods, materials, pavement design, construction equipment and costings.

Regards, Ted

the Trent, between Markham and Newark, in 1768. At the same time, civil engineers, according to Sir Henry Parnell, "had been too commonly deemed by turnpike-trustees as something rather to be avoided, than as useful and necessary to be called to their assistance." By-and-bye, as people became sensible of the value of time, easier and more rapid means of communication than the old roads were required: improved bridges were built with easier ascents; and, in some cases, cuts were made to shorten the distances, though the general lines of the old roads were preserved. The roads, no doubt, were somewhat improved in this way, but there was no general system or concert between the district trustees.

Mr. Arthur Young, in his "Six Months' Tour," published in 1770, writes of some of the roads in the north of England:—"To Wigan. Turnpike.—I know not, in the whole range of language, terms sufficiently expressive to describe this infernal road. Let me most seriously caution all travellers who may accidentally propose to travel this terrible country, to avoid it as they would the devil, for a thousand to one they break their necks or their limbs by overthrows or breakings down. They will here meet with ruts, which I actually measured four feet deep, and floating with mud only from a wet summer; what therefore must it be after a winter? The only mending it receives is tumbling some loose stones, which serve no other purpose than jolting a carriage in the most intolerable manner. These are not merely opinions, but facts; for I actually passed three carts, broken down, in those eighteen miles of execrable memory." "To Newcastle. Turnpike.—A more dreadful road cannot be imagined. I was obliged to hire two men at one place to support my chaise from overturning. Let me persuade all travellers to avoid this terrible country, which must either dislocate their bones with broken pavements, or bury them in muddy



sand." Even so much later as the year 1809, the roads answered to the description of Mr. Young. Mr. C. W. Ward, writing in that year,\* states that the convex section, as shown in Fig. 1, was the most prevalent in the

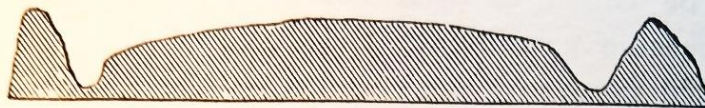


Fig. 1.—Common Convex Road, in 1809.

country. Under the impression that the higher the arch was made, the more easily the road would be drained, the materials were heaped up about the centre till the sides became dangerous, by their slope, for the passage of carriages. The carriages, therefore, ran entirely upon the middle till it was crushed and worn down, and then a fresh supply of materials was laid on, and the road was again restored to its dangerous shape. The sides of the road were but little used, except in summer, or until the heavy waggon had crushed the middle into a surface apparently compact and smooth. In some places, the rough materials were laid in a narrow line, not exceeding seven or eight feet in breadth, along the middle of the road, and the sludge collected from the scrapings of the roads or ditches was placed on each side, like banks, to prevent the stones from being scattered by the wheels. The high convex form was so exceedingly defective as to defeat the object for which it was constructed. Carriages were forced, for safety or for convenience, to keep to the middle, and it was speedily ploughed into deep ruts, which held the rain-water, even when the convexity approached to the form of a semicircle. The central elevation, therefore, was not kept dry; and the central pressure of the traffic forced the material upon the sides, where they lay loose

\* Third Report from Parliamentary Committee on Turnpikes and Highways, 1809.

[Editor's note: I agree with Ted. Dr Clark's words certainly evoke images of Victoria's current road maintenance condition!]

## Our new Committee member, Allison Pinto

We are pleased to welcome Allison, who has just joined the Association's Committee. She will replace long-term committee member John Rebecchi, who resigned at the March AGM after 14 years on the Committee. Allison has provided some details of her interesting working life.



Allison's career began in 1985 in the Mail Room of the Motor Registration Branch at Carlton. After working in Transfer of Vehicle Registration and as a Call Centre Operator in Telephone Information Services she became a Senior Transaction Officer handling more complex requests and providing team support.

In 1996 Allison became a Customer Services Officer in the Information Services Department at VicRoads and handled internal and external requests for accident, traffic, registration and licence data. In 1997 the Carlton office moved to Kew HO, which was fantastic for her as she was living in Kew at the time! Her travel time to work was reduced to 5 minutes. By this stage Allison was married and in 1999 had a son.

In 2003, she became a Senior Data Processor (Accident Team) while still in the Information Services Department, and her main focus was on the management and validation of road safety data.

In 2009 she became a Senior Data Processor (Traffic and Transport Team), where she provided traffic data for internal and external clients and her role involved data collection, analysis and reporting. During this time, her department moved to Church Street, Hawthorn and eventually to 1 Spring Street, in Melbourne. She did not enjoy the train commute to the city!

After several organisational restructures, Allison had two job share roles in two different business areas on a part-time basis. Apparently, she was a pioneer, as this had never been done before at VicRoads! Allison was the Administrative Officer for the Eastern Projects Mitcham & Data Acquisition Officer in Information Access Department. She also had secondment roles in Technical Services, Kew and South Eastern Projects, Hallam, which she enjoyed very much as she performed a range of office administrative functions supporting the business area.

Her final role was Data Acquisition Officer in Information Access Department at Spring Street where she was a client and contractor liaison officer for data collection, contract administration and procurement. There, she continued to work in only one business area before her retirement in 2022.

Allison said, 'During my time at VicRoads I met many staff in different departments, some who have become lifelong friends over the years. I have been on the Gym Committee and Social Club Committee. I currently manage the VicRoads/RTA/MRB Facebook page and I'm on my High School Reunion Committee.'

Thank you for welcoming me onto the Committee. I look forward to the many events to come.'

Allison Pinto



## **Tribute to Biruta Don by David Jellie**

I have only known Biruta in the last few years since she joined VicRoads Association in 2022, but she will always have a special place in my memory. Most of our memories are of the people who have played a big part in our lives – partners, parents, mentors, friends, team mates and colleagues. Biruta was none of these but when she joined our Association, her energy and enthusiasm soon took me over.

She was full of encouragement and ideas and she never failed to warmly acknowledge receipt of our newsletters. She loved reading them and heaped praise on me that I was vain enough to accept. She participated in our activities and if she could not attend, there was always an apology with her best wishes for a successful event.

It started when I wrote a story in Newsletter 235 (July 2022) about Latvia. When researching the stories of the CRB (VicRoads) servicemen for *Roads to War*, I found five of our colleagues who had connections to Latvia so I thought it would be appropriate to honour them by writing about their home. They were Edgar Kayak, Antons Pommers, Augustus (Gus) Veismanis, and Juris and Aivars Bruns.



In the same newsletter, I wrote a story about another Latvian person. When I was researching Edgar Kayak's story, Ozzie – his son – made contact with the Latvian diaspora in Melbourne and discovered Juri Strante who wrote a touching story of being Latvian in Australia. I contacted Juri and he was flattered that I sought his permission to publish it in our newsletter. He commented to me that it is even more important to understand these feelings in light of the Russian invasion of Ukraine – where similar stories will no doubt emerge. I still keep in touch with Juri even though I am a lazy correspondent.

In the following newsletter (No 236) I wrote about another Latvian, Peter Blums, and I thought that was the end of me writing about the Baltic states! But it was not. Biruta exploded out of the blocks with a compelling story – this time about her Lithuanian heritage. You can read it in Newsletter 237 (September 2022).

Biruta came from a refugee family that fled the Soviet Union's invasion of Lithuania during the Second World War. Under enormous hardship they managed to get to Poland and after the end of the War, they were incarcerated in a Displaced Persons Camp in the British sector of occupied Germany. One son died of the cold in Poland and another died of measles in Italy - in 1949 - just before they boarded a ship for Australia.



Biruta was born in Deniliquin, NSW, in 1951 but life was still hard for her family. They lived in a number of tents in Gulpa. Biruta's father was required to work for the Victorian Government from 1950 to 1952 cutting trees for railway sleepers. Gulpa is now a National Park between Deniliquin, NSW and Echuca, Victoria.



In 1952, the family moved to St Mary's on the outskirts of Sydney. This was one of the most socially disadvantaged suburbs in Australia. She was only one of three students from St Mary's High School to go to university and receive a Commonwealth University scholarship.

Biruta received her Honours Arts degree from the University of Sydney in 1974. Soon after she moved to Melbourne to work as a Geographer with the Australian Road Research Board and also to be a live-in tutor in Geography at St Marys College at the University of Melbourne. She found time to study further, gaining a Diploma in Town and Regional Planning from the University of Melbourne.

She worked as a Town Planner in various local councils in Melbourne and was also the Director of her own consultancy firm for about 10 years.

When she joined VicRoads, Clive Mottram recalled that Biruta worked in Planning Investigations for a number of years. She was also involved in the planning of the Monash Freeway and the planning for the upgrade of the Palmers Road corridor.

In 2006, she was sponsored by VicRoads to go to the World Road Congress in Paris. Clive also recalled her work on the history of freeway planning in Melbourne, which he referenced in a paper that he gave at an international conference on Transport and Logistics in Fukuoka, Japan, in 2010. Biruta retired from VicRoads in 2019 just prior to Covid.

Biruta was fiercely proud of her Lithuanian heritage and was heavily involved with the diaspora in Melbourne. She successfully applied to the Lithuanian Government for citizenship thus becoming a dual citizen. She learnt the Lithuanian language and she, and her husband, Peter, have kept in touch with her relatives in Lithuania and Canada on various trips over 40 years.

Last December, Biruta and Peter were delighted to have some relatives from Lithuania visit them in Melbourne. The last time they had met was in Lithuania in 1981. It was part of Soviet Russia until 1991 but is now an independent country and part of NATO and the European Union.

Birute has been a strong advocate for the re-opening of International House at the University of Sydney. She lived there during her university studies. It closed in 2020 due to a development proposal by the University of Sydney to double or triple the number of beds. The City of Sydney and the NSW Heritage Council do not support the demolition of International House because of its historical significance. Development of the site has now been delayed until 2029 or later due to other priorities by the University. Typically, Biruta was appalled at

the waste of existing buildings to remain closed for nearly 10 years given the current housing crisis.

After her retirement, Biruta continued to pursue lots of activities with friends, the University of the Third Age (U3A) Deepdene and her family. Birute enjoyed “zoom” sessions on travel, yoga, family history and heritage buildings. She continued to play tennis twice a week subject to the weather. There was also time for activities at the Lithuanian Club, bridge and photography classes.

She travelled frequently to Sydney to see her elderly mother and former International House residents. Her mother died late last year aged 100 years. Biruta leaves us with an unanswered enigma – the spelling of her name. She used Biruta and Birute. I asked her which I should use and she responded that will do.

Biruta died very suddenly after a walk with U3A friends. She collapsed and didn't regain consciousness. Some might say it is a wonderful way to die but she leaves a big hole in many hearts and minds.

We extend our sincere condolences to Peter, their daughter Monica and family, and Biruta's wider family in Australia, Canada and Lithuania. We all miss her.

## **WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING**

### **VicRoads Association's road trip to Snowy Hydro 2 project 4th – 7th March 2025 by David Jellie**

We had eleven travellers join the trip – Graeme and Jenny Stone, Neil and Linda Jones, David and Jill Miles, Jim Webber, Iris Whittaker, Graeme Newman, Ross Paul and myself.

We met at the Orbost library where I gave a PowerPoint presentation on the construction of the bridges across the Snowy River and its floodplain. May Leatch (of the Orbost Historical Society) had put an article about the session in the Snowy River Mail and it was very pleasing to see so many people I knew from those days – back in the 1970s – turn up.



Our tour group with local people in the Orbost Library for the Snowy River Bridges presentation

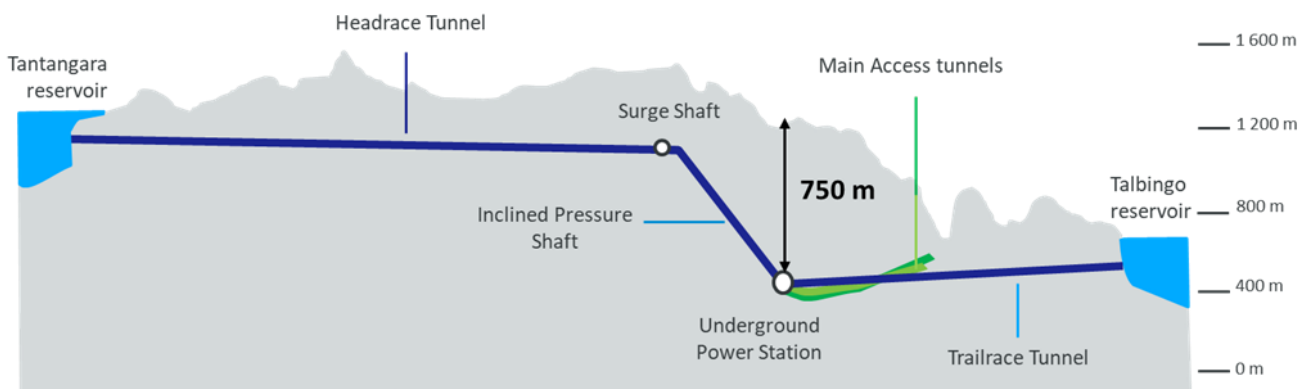
Among them included my doctor, one of my neighbours on the farm where we lived on the banks of the Snowy River at Bete Bolong, and my landlord and landlady from whom I rented their farmhouse for the princely sum of \$10 per week. There were some who worked on the project as well as others who used to work for the CRB. For me, it was very nostalgic and brought back happy memories of an enjoyable experience for me and my family.

That evening, we dined at the recently refurbished Marlo Hotel near MOTS Beach which is an Ozzie name meaning **M**outh **O**f **T**he **S**nowy! It is where the Snowy River enters Bass Strait. The following day, March 5, we drove up the Monaro Highway – following Cann River – to Cooma, NSW, and assembled at the Snowy Hydro Discovery Centre where presentations were given on the Snowy 2.0 project as well as the Snowy Scheme at large.

The Snowy Scheme took 25 years to build - from 1949 to 1974. It is an icon of Australian history, not only for its scope and engineering excellence, but also for the opportunities it provided for many displaced people from Europe following the devastation of their countries during the Second World War. Their efforts have left a magnificent national legacy to Australia.

The Snowy River scheme was principally built as an irrigation system to provide reliable water flow to the Murray-Darling and Murrumbidgee basins to counteract the effects of severe drought and to raise productivity in these areas. It provides approximately 2,100 gigalitres of water a year to the basin for use in Australia's irrigated agriculture industry. Almost as a by-product to the scheme, it also generates large amounts of peak-load, renewable hydropower into the national electricity grid.

The water of the Snowy River and some of its tributaries, much of which formerly flowed southeast onto the river flats of East Gippsland, and into Bass Strait, is captured at high elevations and diverted inland to the Murray and Murrumbidgee Rivers irrigation areas. The scheme includes two major tunnel systems constructed through the Continental divide of the Snowy Mountains. The water falls 800 metres (2,600 ft) and travels through large hydro-electric power stations which generate peak-load power for the Australian Capital Territory, Victoria and New South Wales.



1

The scheme comprises 16 major dams, with a total storage of 7,000 gigalitres (or 12 Sydney Harbours), 145 km of tunnels, 80 km of aqueducts and 33 hydro-electric turbines which generate about 4,100 MW of power.

Snowy Hydro is not a major generator of electricity in Australia's National Electricity Market (NEM). It currently generates slightly less than 2% of the total electricity demand. It is more of an insurance company. Electricity is a product that can't be stored so it must be readily available during peak consumption times and Snowy Hydro can offer electricity to other NEM participants who are seeking protection to limit the risks they face in the volatile NEM.

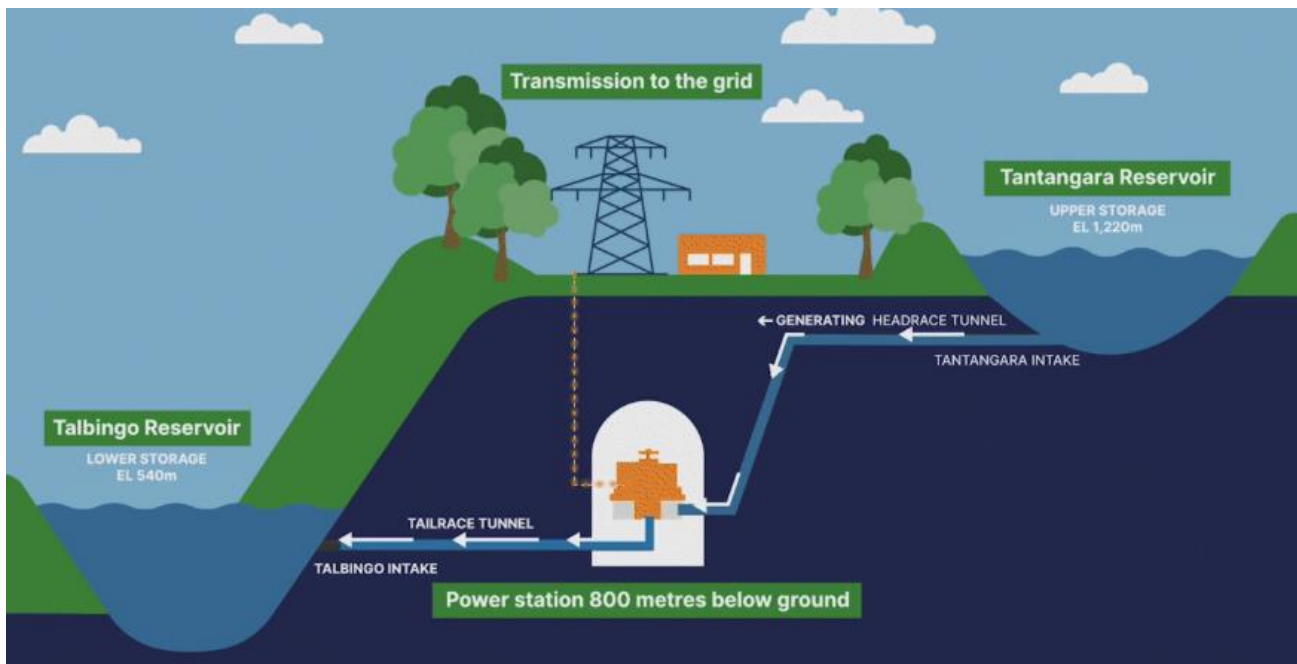
The Snowy 2.0 Pumped Storage Power Station (Snowy Hydro 2.0) now under construction is a pumped-hydro battery megaproject. The dispatchable generation project expands upon the



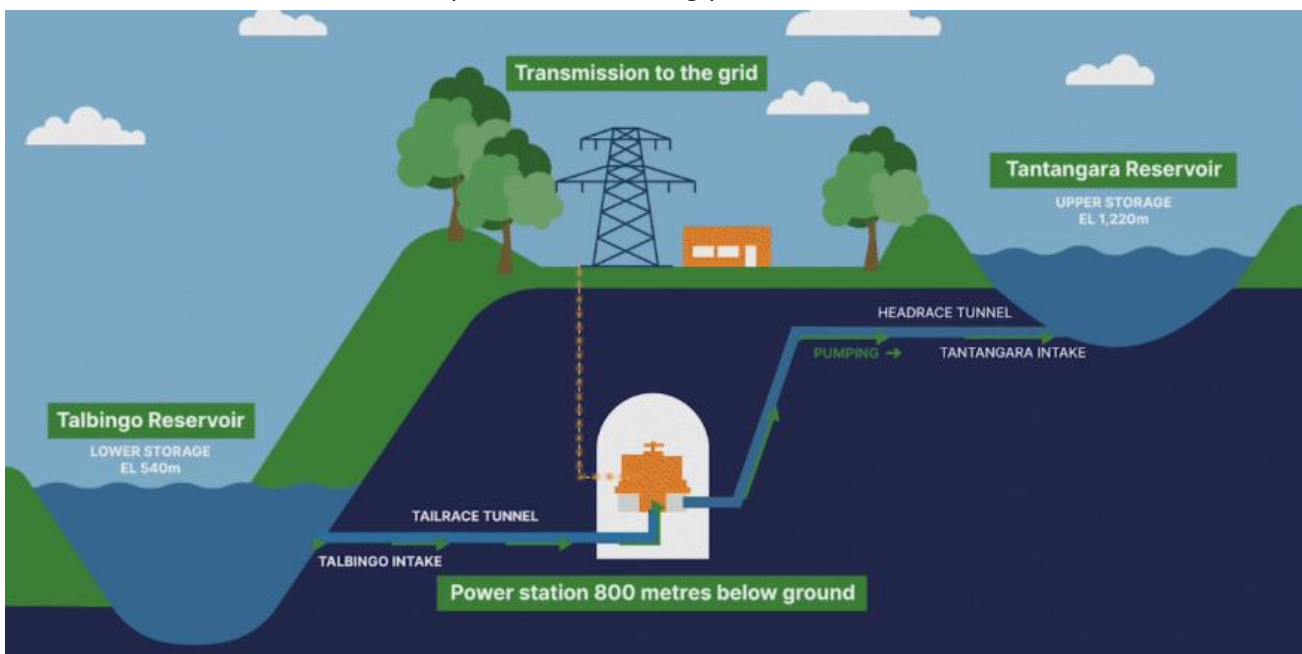
original Snowy Scheme connecting two existing dams through a 27-kilometre underground tunnel and a new, underground pumped-hydro power station. It also includes the longest tunnels at 27 kilometres in length, of any pumped-hydro station ever built.

It is expected to supply 2.2 gigawatts of capacity and about 350,000 megawatt hours (MWh) of large-scale storage to the NEM. It is the largest renewable energy project under construction in Australia. It includes one of the largest and deepest cavern excavations ever.

The 350,000MWh output is sufficient to power 3 million homes for one week whereas conventional batteries have storage for a couple of hours at most. The project involves linking two existing dams, Tantangara and Talbingo, through 27km of tunnels and building a new underground power station 750 m below ground level.



In this diagram, water is being released from the higher reservoir (Tantangara) to drive the generators in the power station during peak demand.



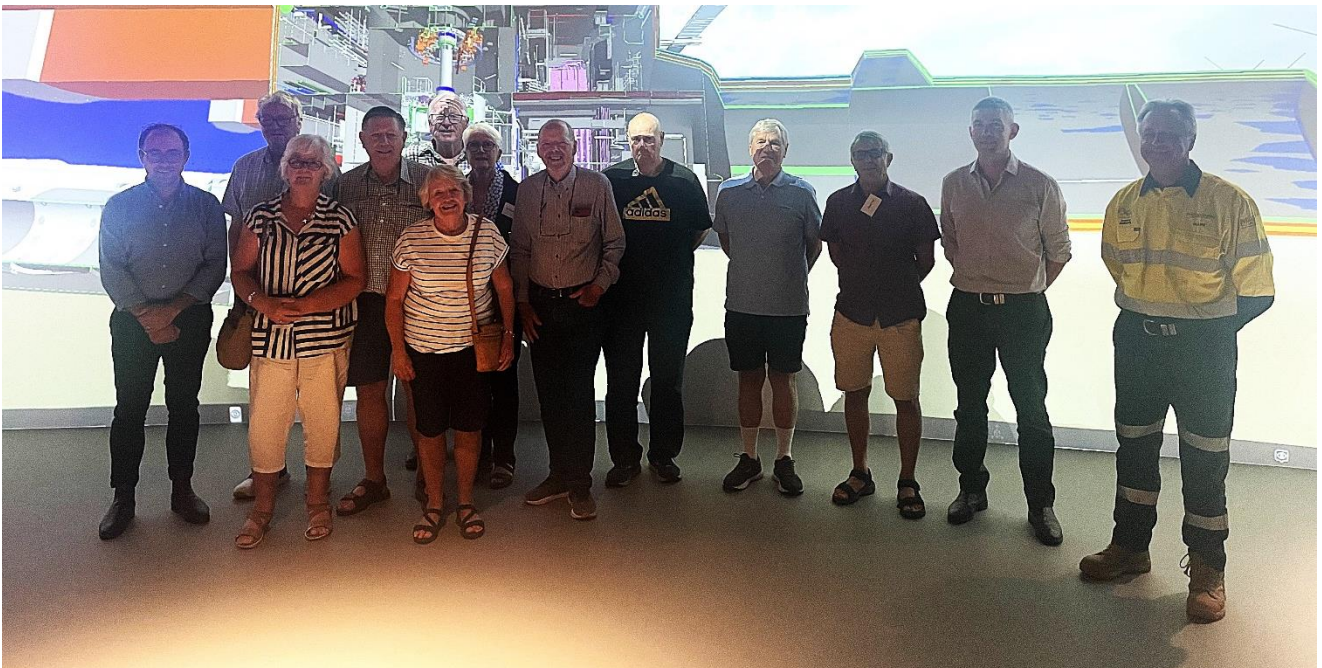
In this diagram, water is being pumped out of Talbingo Reservoir to Tantangara Reservoir during off-peak periods.

Water will be pumped to the upper dam when there is surplus renewable energy production and the demand for energy is low and then released back to the lower dam to generate energy when electricity demand is high. The system will provide flexible, on-demand power while reusing or 'recycling' the water in a closed loop and maximise the efficiency of renewables by using excess solar and wind energy to pump water to the higher dam, to be stored for later use.

Snowy 2.0 is considered to be a win-win project in that it will assist Australia in meeting its global commitments on climate change. It is good for renewables, will generate more power, potentially contribute to lowering electricity prices, and provide jobs and opportunities in regional Australia.

As widely reported in the media, the project has been delayed by tunnelling problems. These problems have been solved and it is now expected that it will be completed in 2028 with a possibility that power may be available in late 2027. We had two brilliant presentations on the project on Wednesday 5 March and we would like to thank the presenters and the manager of the Centre, Tanya Janota, for the excellent arrangements. We thoroughly enjoyed our experience at Snowy 2.0.

One of the outstanding aspects of the presentation was the software used to showcase the project. It is called *Revizto* – Digital Coordination from Design to Construction. It is 3D software in multi-colour and shows the exact location of tunnels and access shafts, locations and angles of bore holes, geotechnical information, surface buildings, surface terrain, and even small items such as rock bolts. It enabled three excellent presenters to quickly move from location to location to illustrate the answer to any questions from our group. Without such impressive software the excellent presentation would have left many unanswered questions.



Our group at the Snowy Hydro Discovery Centre. I apologise for the quality of this photograph but thought I would include it to prove we were there.

We were given a comprehensive explanation of the difficulties that occurred and the eventual solution, when one of the tunnel boring machines (TBMs) 'Florence' encountered a sink hole in October 2023. This was of particular interest to the group.

The actual site of the works was about 40 kms away, so we weren't able to visit them. We then moved across to the control room on the property where the power output from the earlier (1970s) Snowy works is fed into the National Grid. Again, we had a brilliant presentation of the complexity of the financial and power arrangements that occur with the various sources of power across the National network. Our group was treated to a great deal of information that the general public never sees, by experts in their fields.



On Thursday 6 November, we travelled to Canberra. Jim Webber and Iris Whittaker travelled with me and our first visit was to the National Gallery. It was very special. As we entered the Gallery, the first thing we saw was the Ned Kelly series by Sydney Nolan. To see these pictures displayed together so prominently was a pleasure. The colours were vibrant and Nolan has a definite touch in evoking the light, colour and atmosphere of the Australian bush. My wife and I saw this collection at the Qantas Gallery in London in 1964 and it made us feel quite homesick.

We then visited the retrospective exhibition of two Australian women artists – Ethel Carrick and Anne Dangar. I have written about Carrick before in an earlier newsletter. She is a favourite artist of mine and this exhibition was inspiring. I could write pages about it but our new editor, John Wright, might not be too pleased about it so I will include just two photographs (below) that I took at the exhibition. I hope you don't mind my indulgence.

The other artist, Anne Dangar, was unknown to me but I also found her work very inspiring. Most of her work was in ceramics – big, bold designs in the *art moderne* style. I'd better not show a photograph because I have a few more to include in this piece.



Ethel Carrick loved painting market scenes.





Women washing clothing in a stream – in the Middle East.



Jim and Iris – and Blue Poles. Apologies to Jim for half cutting him out!



Jim wanted to see Blue Poles before we left the Gallery. Blue Poles is a 1952 abstract impressionist painting by American artist Jackson Pollock. It was purchased amid controversy by the National Gallery of Australia (NGA) in 1973 and today remains one of the Gallery's major paintings.

The NGA purchased Blue Poles in 1973 for US\$1.3 million. At that time, it was the highest price ever paid for an American work of art. The gallery's director, James Mollison, was not able to authorise purchases over \$1 million, so the acquisition was approved by Prime Minister Gough Whitlam who decided that the price should be made public.

The painting has become one of the most popular exhibits in the gallery for both its value as a major work of 1950s abstract expressionism, and its significance in Australian politics and history. Estimates of the painting's present value vary widely, from \$100 million to \$350 million, but its increased value has at least shown it to have been a worthwhile purchase from a financial point of view.

We then visited the Pompeii Exhibition at the National Museum. This had been in Melbourne, but I missed it, so I was pleased to catch up with it.

Mount Vesuvius had been dormant for about 800 years before it erupted in 79 CE. Although estimates vary, it is now thought that about 20,000 people lived in Pompeii at the time of the eruption. Most people escaped but a significant number did not.

More than a thousand victims have now been excavated. As a series of pyroclastic surges exploded into Pompei, the extreme heat instantly killed anyone left behind. Thick layers of volcanic ash covered the victims, capturing them in the moment of death. When the ash solidified, it created a negative impression that lasted long after the bodies had decomposed.

In 1863 Giuseppe Fiorelli, director of excavations, developed a technique to inject liquid plaster into the ash cavities. When the plaster set, the surrounding material was removed to reveal a cast of these final witnesses to the tragedy that occurred in 79 CE. Laser scanners and 3D printers are now used to make copies of the casts. Displayed at the exhibition are resin copies of casts of a male adult; two individuals, possibly both men; a boy who was at least 3 years old; and a chained-up dog.

We also briefly visited the War Memorial where Jim and I placed red poppies in the roll of honour next to the names of relatives who did not return.

In the evening, we got together at the Ainslie Football Club for dinner – where the lamb shanks seemed to be the fare of the evening.

On our return to Melbourne on Friday 7 March, Jim had made arrangements to catch up with Gary Edwards in Benalla. We met at the art gallery for afternoon tea. Not only had Jim and Gary (and I) worked together, but they both represented the CRB in the annual cricket tournaments held with the Public Works Department in Tasmania.

As it turned out, the major exhibit at the Benalla Gallery was a huge tapestry of Nolan's Ned Kelly painting 'Glenrowan'. As I mentioned above, we had seen the original painting at the NGA on the previous day.

The Glenrowan tapestry is quite large – 4 m by 3.1 m – and it was created in 1973-74. But the amazing thing about it is that it was made in Portugal by the Portalgere Tapestry Workshop. It was one of six unique tapestries Nolan had made based on his series of Ned Kelly paintings. This workshop was used by other Australian artists including Arthur Boyd and John Olsen in the 1970s.



Jim, Iris and Gary Edwards in front of the tapestry. 'Glenrowan'.

The road trip was a great learning experience in the company of rewarding fellowship. Finally, I wish to acknowledge the assistance of Jim Webber in writing this report.

## Traralgon reunion



Left to right and clockwise around the table. Brian Sampson, Greg Fox, Mike McKeon, Michael Kearns, John Paulet, John Clinch, Bill Degnan, John Hutchison, Helen Newitt, Russell Bittner, David Gellion, Rob Butler, John Harris, Terry Dyer and Paul Taylor.



## ANNUAL GENERAL MEETING



At the Glen Waverley RSL on 25 March, the outgoing President David Jellie presented his Annual Report outlining a successful year of well-attended dinners and other activities. He welcomed 26 new members since March 2024, bringing our total membership to 313. David also reported the sad passing of the following members during this time – Les Bull, Birute Don, John Glenn, Colin Kosky, Bob Parr, Barbara Salmela and Leon Stevens.

### **Kew Head Office Closure**

David noted that the Association's most significant event in 2024 was the permanent closure of the Kew Head Office. After the Association wrote to the Minister for Roads late in 2023, agreement was given for many of our members and other former employees to attend a function to say farewell to VicRoads head office.

With generous assistance from the Department of Transport and Planning (DTP), the "Farewell to Kew" was an outstanding success, which brought together 200 former employees – the venue limit. David Jellie, Peter McCullough and Jill Earnshaw all gave presentations, but the day was stolen by Tom Glazebrook, the long-term Divisional Engineer in Bendigo, who captivated all of us with some of his recollections.

### **Committee Membership**

The AGM marked several changes in the membership of the Association's Committee, with David Jellie who has been President since 2003, standing down and his role passing to John Wright, who has been a Committee member since 2017. David said he will remain on the Committee and assist the new President and the Association in any way he can.

Another long-serving Committee member, John Rebecchi, who has made a major contribution to the Association over many years, also retired from the Committee and will be replaced by new member Allison Pinto, who will provide the Committee with an important link to the many former staff of Registration and Licensing. The new Committee will comprise:

President:	John Wright
Secretary:	Jill Earnshaw
Treasurer:	Ken Vickery
Membership Secretary:	Iris Whittaker
Members:	David Jellie, Jim Webber, Graham Gilpin, Patsy Kennedy, Noel Osborne, Alan Mackinlay, Nick Szwed and Allison Pinto.





Our new Committee. From L to R. Ken Vickery (Treasurer), Noel Osborne, Patsy Kennedy, Alan Mackinlay, Nick Szwed, David Jellie, Graham Gilpin, John Wright (President), Jill Earnshaw (Secretary), Iris Whittaker (Membership Secretary) Allison Pinto and Jim Webber.

## Service awards

Members at the AGM warmly supported a vote of thanks to three Committee office holders for their outstanding and exceptional commitment to the Association. For the benefit of our members, they have provided these brief outlines of their working lives and their service to the Association.



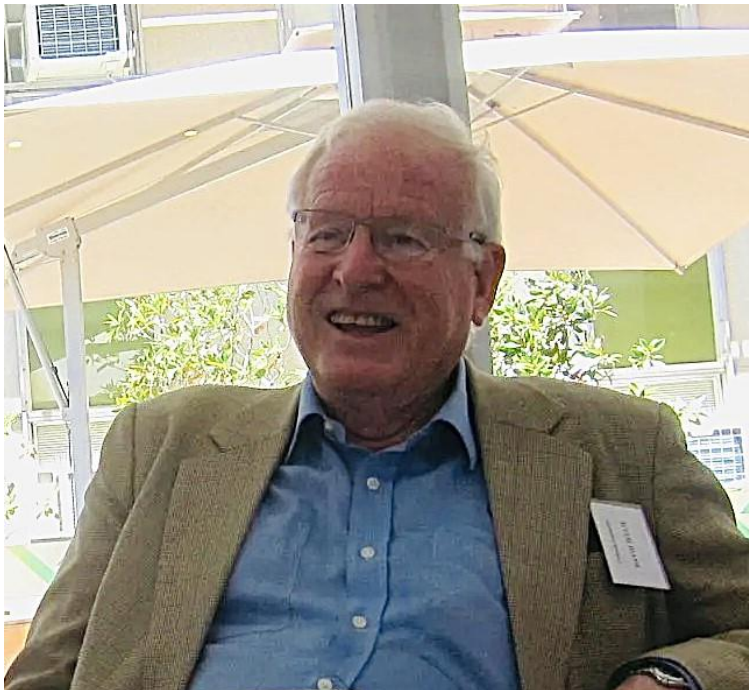
From L to R. Ken Vickery, Jim Webber, David Jellie and award presenter John Wright



## David Jellie

David joined the CRB in 1961 just a few weeks after the opening of the Kew Head Office and commenced in Bridge Design with Erwin Matzner as his mentor. There were a few other VRA members there around that time – Jim Winnett, Jim Webber, Bill Saggars, Colin Roy, Barry Atkinson, Graham Gilpin, Don Jordan, Mal Kersting, Bill Peyton, John Wright, Max Palmer and John Wadell – to name a few.

Apart from a two and a half year break in the mid-1960s – when David travelled to England on a Confederation of British Industry scholarship - he worked for the CRB/RCA/VicRoads until 1988 when he was seconded to the Overseas Projects Corporation of Victoria (OPCV). His experience was quite varied and included bridge design (Tullamarine Freeway, Monash Freeway, Western Highway and quite a few pedestrian overpasses, bridge construction (Tullamarine Freeway, Lower Yarra Crossing Freeway – now West Gate, Snowy River crossing at Orbost and Hume Freeway), and finally, Project management (West Gate Freeway and the Metropolitan Ring Road).



David at the Head Office Closure in 2024

When David joined OPCV, he still kept in close touch with VicRoads. He once estimated that he engaged over 150 VicRoads personnel to work in Asia, the Pacific Islands, and the Middle East on projects funded by the World Bank, the Asian Development Bank, United Nations agencies and Aus AID. After formally retiring in 2001, he worked as a private consultant and wrote many submissions for VicRoads, which by that time, had established its own international projects department. The last job he did for them was in 2015 when he decided that his 74-year-old body and brain needed a bit of a rest.

David joined VicRoads Retirees Association late in 2002. At that time, he was working as a self-employed consultant, mainly trouble shooting and writing reports and methodologies for various Australian and international clients involved in international development – including VicRoads. Bob Swift was the President, Bill Porritt was the Secretary, Ken Vickery was Treasurer and Norma Jones was the Newsletter Editor. Other committee members were Bruce Addis, Bill Brake, Trevor Moore, David Currie, Lillian Moon, Margaret Teehan and Ron Simpson.

In 2003, Bob Swift asked David if he would nominate as President and he agreed. Bob was concerned that the membership, then just over 200, seemed likely to diminish, and David's solution to this was to produce an improved and larger newsletter – although postage requirements limited its size to no more than 16 pages.

David and Norma Jones jointly wrote newsletters until February 2004, when David's first newsletter, No.124, was designed and printed in-house at VicRoads. It was the first edition in colour. In April 2009 'Retirees' was dropped from our name and we became the VicRoads Association.

David said, 'Throughout my presidency I was blessed to have wonderful people as honorary Secretary – Bill Porritt, Peter Lowe, Jim Webber and now, Jill Earnshaw. All of them made

my task easier and I wish to thank them for their service and friendship. In all that time there was one constant – our Treasurer, Ken Vickery ... and he is still going!

Our Association has increased to over 300 members and I am grateful to John Wright for taking on the role as editor - in which he is excelling, and now as President’.

## **Jim Webber**

Jim joined the CRB as an engineering cadet in 1960 after completing the first year of a Civil Engineering degree at the University of Melbourne. After completing his degree in 1963 Jim joined Bob Billinge’s rotation scheme and spent his first four years in Bridge Sub-Branch under Raleigh Robinson and Brian Kemp.

Jim recalls memorable morning tea discussions in Bridge Construction, often involving Tom Russell, about current projects, practices and events.

Moving to Materials Division Jim spent two years working for Alf Gawith and David Currie. He conducted the original roughometer surveys and worked with Roy Gilmour and Graham Bryant on a project involving the brittle fracture of steel. During this time he completed a part-time Diploma of Town & Regional Planning at the University of Melbourne.



Jim in 2011

In 1971 Jim gained a CRB Scholarship to undertake a master’s degree in Highway Engineering at the University of New South Wales. Kay and Jim had a young family and he was able to walk to the University while at weekends the family could all walk to Coogee Beach. He remembers it as a wonderful course and a great family lifestyle.

Joining Dandenong Division Jim worked for Ted Goddard on the initial works for the Mulgrave Freeway (now Monash Freeway). As the project got underway, Jim moved to the Doveton Project Office and worked with Dave Capon who managed the Materials testing. He said he was fortunate to have worked for Ted and be part of Dandenong Division with its wonderful camaraderie under DE Stan Hodgson and an extremely active social club.

In 1974 Jim was seconded to the NAASRA truck mass and dimension exercise *Economics of Road Vehicle Limits Study* (ERVLS). The small, very competent study team from various State Road Authorities and the Australian Road Research Board was led very capably by Tony Fry.

In 1976 Jim gained a Confederation of British Industry (CBI) Scholarship where he worked for nearly a year as a traffic engineer with Mott Hay and Anderson Consulting Engineers and was involved in noise prediction models for a major road project in Cornwall. It was the first time his family had been overseas, with their children attending the Coulsdon Primary School.

Back in Australia Jim became the Assistant Advance Planning Engineer under John Pittard. He later became the Program and Budgets Engineer, the Road Planning Engineer, and in 1982, the Assistant Chief Planning Engineer, working for the very competent Bill Thomas. During this period Jim was also the APEA rep. on the Road Construction Authority (RCA) Task Force.

In 1982 the Cain Government moved responsibility for major road planning from the RCA to the Ministry of Transport (MoT). Jim was seconded to the MoT to lead a small road planning



team, which he did for five years. During his time at the MoT Jim completed a part-time Graduate Diploma in Organisation Behaviour, winning the Mobil Prize for the best overall student.

When responsibility for major road planning was returned to the RCA in 1986, Jim led two very extensive Environment Effects Statements into the Eastern Freeway from Doncaster to Ringwood, including the Ringwood Bypass. In 1989 Jim went overseas on long service leave, when he undertook an Advanced Management Course at Stanford University in California.

Jim retired from VicRoads in December 1991, after becoming the General Manager of the Small Business Development Corporation. He later became a Deputy Secretary in the Department of Planning and Development, before he retired from the public service in 1996. He then set up pTrans Pty Ltd, a planning and transport consultancy, where he worked for a decade at Melbourne Docklands and managed overseas study tours for Australian and New Zealand architects for 25 years.

Jim became a member of the Association in October 2008 and joined the Committee in 2013. He became Secretary in 2015 following the resignation of Peter Lowe and continued in this role until 2024. Jim remains a member of the Committee.

### **Ken Vickery**

Ken joined the CRB on 30<sup>th</sup> September 1973 as a Leave Clerk in the Personnel Section. His job was to maintain all leave records and he had the dreadful task of collecting all the “sign on” sheets at 8.35am precisely and immediately put a huge red cross against any name which did not have a signature. Then on the phone to find out why that staff member had not signed in, and, if told they were on leave (sick, annual or other) a slip was prepared until a leave form arrived. If a staff member forgot to sign in on four or more occasions for the month then they would be reported to the Divisional Head.

In 1997 Ken was appointed as Project Clerk on the Mulgrave Freeway Project where among his tasks was organising plant hire. Ken recalls having a bond with all the project staff and fondly remembers the lunch time dart games and the afterhours activities.

The lure of Head Office took Ken back to the Personnel Section as the Leave and Statistical Records Officer and following a reshuffle of the Section he was placed in charge of the Personnel Services section responsible for Payroll, Leave and Superannuation.

This was a challenging position - no more so than the amalgamation of the payroll for the RTA staff. At one point his Section worked 24 hours straight to complete the manual transfer of RTA records to the existing RCA payroll.

Ken’s section was responsible for the administration of the many “downsizing” projects over the years and this was the catalyst to learn more about the respective Superannuation Schemes. As a result he was able to work on a computer program to finally provide staff with superannuation quotes not even available from the State Superannuation Board.

This program was adopted by the Public Transport Association and used to advise its employees of entitlements. The program also highlighted the financial advantages of resigning before reaching retirement age (55) and hence the 54/11 quickly became the catch cry.

Ken had a passion for assisting employees in their decisions surrounding the massive changes in Superannuation in the late 1980's and also advice regarding the Voluntary Departure packages during the Board's downsizing program. This was the catalyst to apply for a departure package but it was rejected by the then CEO Reg Patterson on the basis that no replacement could offer advice on superannuation. Following Reg's retirement in 1993 he successfully applied again and left on 30th September 1993 after 20 years' service and commenced a career in Financial Planning. Ken's first client was Reg Patterson and that was the catalyst for many relationships with VicRoads employees.



Ken at the Glen Waverley RSL, where he is also Treasurer

Ken was encouraged to join the Association by the late Bill Porritt and has been a committee member holding the position of Treasurer since 1999. The task of collecting the yearly subscriptions (\$6) by cheque was cumbersome and he eventually convinced the committee to change the fee to a "lifetime" subscription and payable by EFT. The task of keeping the books has now been greatly reduced.

In conjunction with Ken's role as the Association's Treasurer, one of his more important duties has been to organize the Association's functions at the Waverley RSL where he has also held the position of Treasurer for the past 11 years.

### **VicRoads Association Rule Changes**

The AGM approved a new set of rules for the Association, which were described in detail in our last newsletter and subsequent email advice. These are available on the Association's website <https://vicroadsassociation.org/social/>

### **CONTINUING JOHN WRIGHT'S WORK ODESSEY ...**

At Head Office, one thing that hadn't changed in 1967 was the morning sign-in. At the exact second of 8.30 am, a designated timekeeper would rule a line beneath the last on-time entry. I'm not sure what the rules were, but one timekeeper would do this even if people had arrived on time but were queueing up to sign the book.

One morning, I was the last to sign the book before the deadline. Behind me was a surly chap who seemed to spend a lot of time at work managing his private real estate business. We were all shocked – but not surprised when, in response to the timekeeper's smirk, he punched him in the face, knocking him to the floor. I didn't hear the outcome but some serious counselling might have been involved – with both parties.



## Don Peckham

In 1968, Don Peckham joined Dandenong Division from the UK. An engineer in his late thirties, he was an outgoing, likeable person. Don had worked for London's drainage authority, which sometimes had him inspecting that city's famous sewers. He said he could always tell which ethnic suburb he was under, based on the smell of the sewage. In the early 1950s, Don conducted a long-range courtship with his fiancé Edith, who lived in Glasgow. Every weekend he would ride his motorcycle from London to Scotland, to be with her.

In addition to being a competent engineer, Don's great talent was practical jokes. A fellow engineer Bill had boasted about the fiddles he'd made in his recent tax return. Don persuaded me to phone Bill pretending to be from the taxation office. Bill was initially sceptical when I told him that the Tax Office was concerned about irregularities in his return, but I had done my homework and was armed with all the necessary addresses and phone numbers. Finally convinced, Bill hesitantly asked me what the problem was. I told him that Tax Office policy was not to discuss these matters over the phone, and that he'd have to come in to discuss them.

Poor Bill came out of his office white-faced and in a flat spin. We all had difficulty keeping straight faces. However, when Bill told us he was going into the City to have it out with the tax people, there and then, I had to quickly engineer another phone call from the Tax Office, explaining that it had all been a misunderstanding. Bill then asked if that meant his return would be on its way soon, and I promised him that I would expedite it. As things turned out, his tax return *did* arrive quite early and Bill never suspected he had been 'had'.



I suspect Don was involved in a wonderful practical joke against me that year. I had returned to my floor as the other guys were finishing their morning tea.

One of them handed me a cream bun. It looked wonderful - lightly glazed, dusted with just the right amount of icing sugar and filled with cream with a hint of strawberry jam peeping out. However, when I tried to bite into it I discovered it was as hard as a rock – much to the enormous amusement of all the others present. It had probably been sitting in somebody's cupboard, undiscovered for a year or so.

In the early 1970's, Don's betting was a regular feature at morning teas with all the other engineers in the back room at Nunawading. He and Richard Murphy would frequently have bets about the numbers on \$5 notes. There was also much fun between Don and engineer Gary Scott (famous for Gary's Oak on Tynong Hill). One morning, a dead wombat turned up on either Don or Garry's desk, much to the outrage of the Divisional Clerk, Vic Lawther.

Don worked as a sector engineer in the Division's 'high country', which involved him driving through the snow in winter. The Board, ever generous to its workers, refused to allocate him a car with a heater and demister. Don managed the Hampton Park Project until his promotion to Assistant Divisional Engineer, Bendigo in 1974. He died there in October 1995, aged 62.

## Surveying

In addition to design work, I also carried out minor surveying work. In those days Freddie Lutz allocated survey equipment and he took his job very seriously. Because I wasn't a fully qualified surveyor, Fred sometimes gave me the oldest items of equipment he could find.

Once, he gave me a very ancient 'Dumpy' level which had four levelling screws (modern ones only had three because four screws were difficult to adjust). I was later told that Ian Rennick's grandfather had used this instrument surveying the Hastings to Red Hill Railway in the previous century. Although it was very heavy, I found its weight to be an advantage, because

the lighter, more modern levels would vibrate in the strong winds that blew across the volcanic plains at Kal Kallo, where I was setting out a truck checking bay.

### **Dandenong Division moves to Nunawading**

Early in 1969, the CRB purchased the old City of Nunawading municipal offices. I was sent out to survey it and prepare a plan to facilitate our relocation.



The Division's new home dated back to 1927. Behind it was a decrepit, older building known as the Rear Town Hall (probably the original Shire office), which was eventually demolished. In later years, the CRB added other buildings behind it to house the Division's expanded planning and design sections. I worked in all of them.

On the weekend before we moved in, I worked with Gordon Bracher, a strapping young engineer who had recently joined the Division, to assemble and place the office furniture and fittings. Gordon was a keen lunchtime runner who would chide us for sitting around reading while he was out striding through the local streets in his shorts.

Around 1976, Gordon left us to work in Bendigo and later moved to Nightcliff in Darwin, where he worked as an area manager. He died of a heart attack in Tennant Creek in 1983, aged 40.

### **The Drawing Office**

It was a well-lit room located towards the rear of the main building, with a pleasant view of the lawn and adjoining garden. The four draftsmen were Harold Matthysz, Wally Alschinger, Alan Armstrong and me. During the end-of-year break we were joined by CRB cadets, including Phil Symons (son of the late Jim Symons) and Ray Berrell.

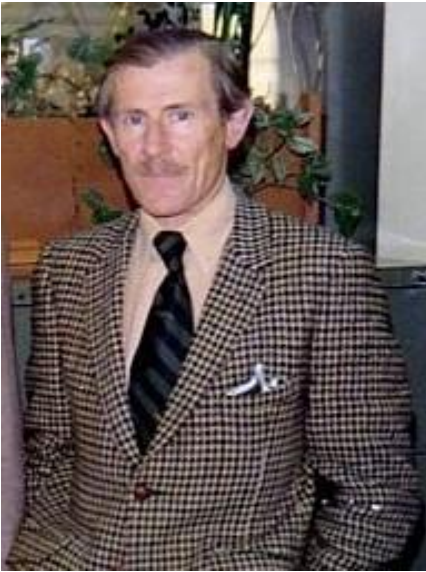
One day, we heard a strange noise outside. An out-of-control car was skidding sideways along the lawn between us and the Fire Station after colliding with another car at the front of the property. Its spinning wheels flung clods of turf and mud onto the drawing office windows. Fortunately, nobody was hurt and no windows were broken. Jim Webber, who was walking past our office in the main corridor at the time, was just as surprised as we were.

In 1971, Harold Matthysz left the Division to join Road Design in Kew, and Norm Bettess, whom I'd known in Plans and Surveys but had left to work with a private Civil Engineering company R W J Young Pty Ltd, returned to the CRB and took over his position. Steve Graham, also from Plans and Surveys, replaced Wally Alschinger when he left to work in the CRB's Hawthorn office.



## Bill Kendall

With the 1969 move, Bill Kendall became the design office manager. I had known him from the late 1950s when his drawing desk was next to Dick Coulter's in the Exhibition Building. Bill lived in Templestowe with his wife, Olga and their young family.



Bill was a gentleman and a wonderfully compassionate person, but he sometimes judged new beards and haircuts critically and offered unwanted (but probably justified) fashion advice. However, Bill always did it in a spirit of fun and we all loved him.

I subsequently discovered, from David Jellie's research in his *Roads to War* series, that during WW2, Bill had been an air wireless mechanic with the Royal Australian Air Force and had spent some years based in England. He never talked about it.

Later still, when John Glenn was promoted to head the Major Projects section upstairs, Bill stepped into his role as the Municipal Engineer, and David Rowland, another veteran from Plans and Surveys, took over the design section.

After Bill's retirement dinner at Forest Hill in the mid-1980's, I sometimes encountered him working as a consultant to the City of Croydon. I later heard that he had died from leukaemia in 2006.

## Moon Landing

On 24 July 1969 most of the Divisional staff were either listening to portable radios or crowded around a small TV set in Accounts, joining the then largest audience in earth's history to watch Apollo 11 land on the moon.

The drawing office staff decamped to watch this once-in-a-lifetime event on the TV at my home in nearby Donvale. Just being able to land men on the moon was a fantastic engineering feat in itself. Being able to watch and hear Neil Armstrong stepping down from the ungainly lander onto the surface of the moon in real time was a technological feat par excellence!

## Overseas student adventures

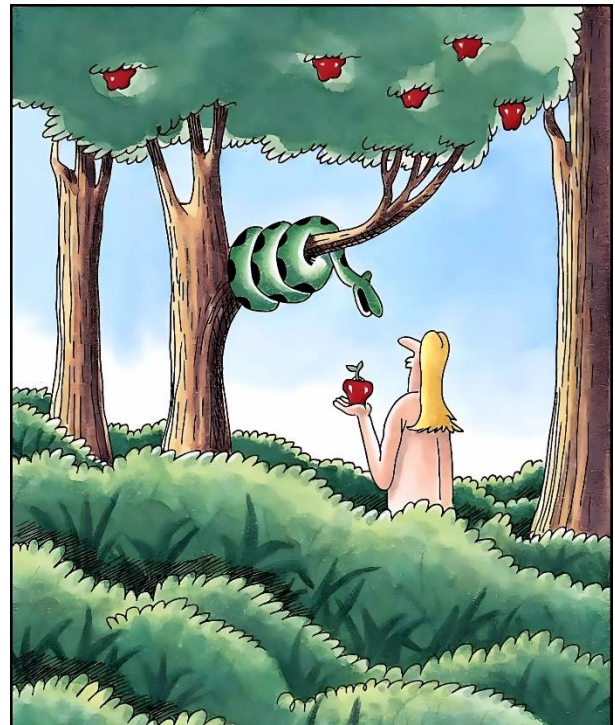
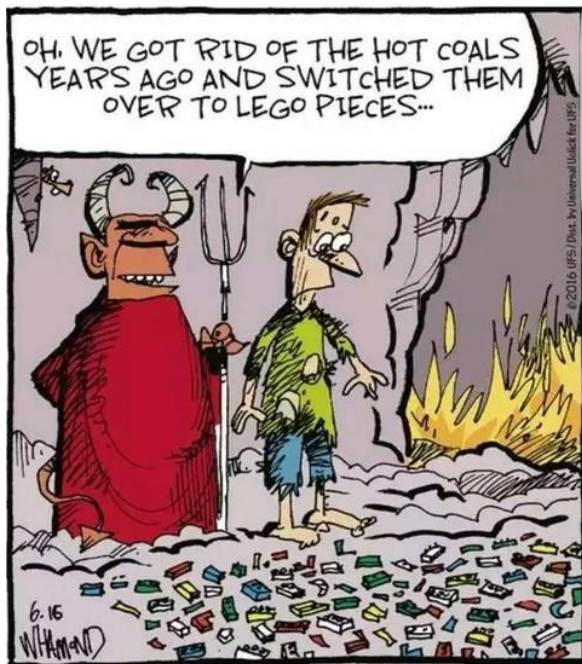
Around this time the Division hosted several overseas students. One was a young Thai chap of slight stature named Rerk, who assisted me on a bridge site survey at Tooradin.

Wearing gumboots that came up to his knees, Rerk walked out onto the mud flats, holding the levelling staff. I was set up on the highway embankment. Rerk was out of sight below me but I could see the top of his levelling staff through my instrument. Suddenly, the staff disappeared and I heard Rerk call out. He'd sunk up to his knees in the mud, and water was about to pour into his gumboots. Laying a piece of scrap timber on the mud, I gingerly made my way out to Rerk, who was looking very anxious, and was able to lift him clean out of his boots and deposit him on dry land. Retrieving his gumboots from the mud took a lot longer.

Another student, from Hong Kong, accompanied me to Tooborac to assist with a survey of a railway underpass. He initially refused to climb onto the bridge because he was worried a train might come. I was certain the line had been closed for years and told him so. After confirming that the rails *did* look very rusty, the student reluctantly clambered onto the track with the levelling staff. No train no problem. Shortly afterwards, with our work completed, we were about to drive away when, to my enormous embarrassment, a goods train thundered over the bridge. My assistant was briefly rendered speechless but the look on his face spoke volumes.

To be continued...

## Humour



"Well, I'm not sure. I guess it's been washed"

