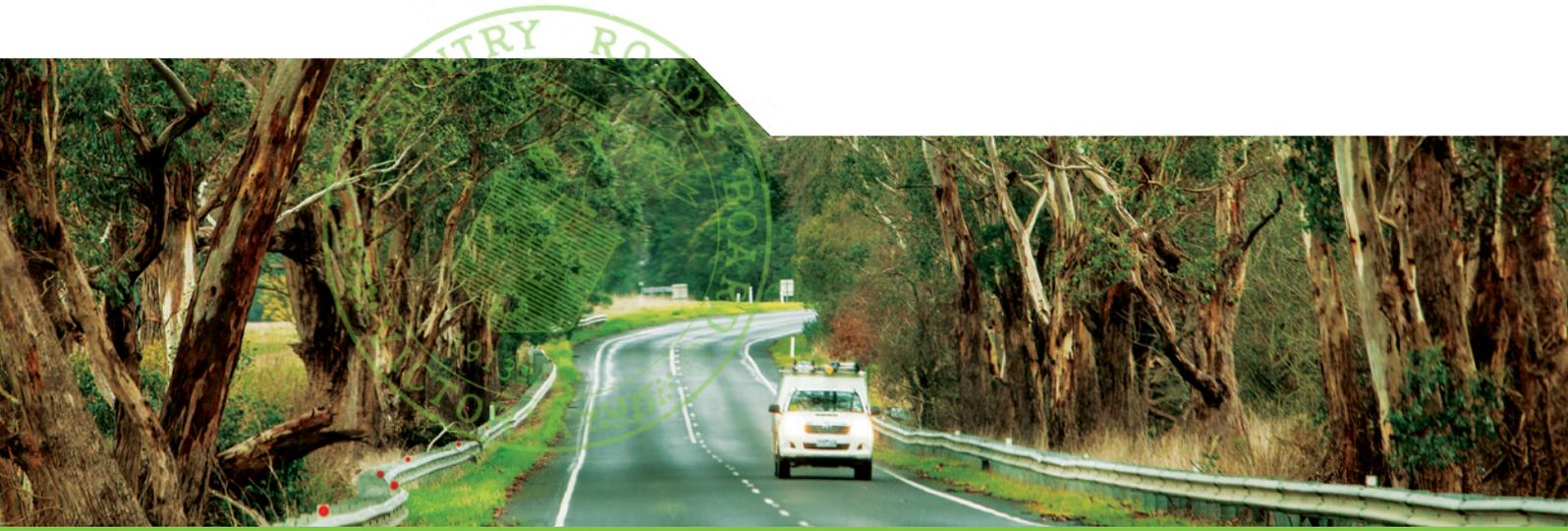


VicRoads Association

Newsletter No 197



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

Dear Members,

On 4th May, Jim Webber and I went down to Traralgon to meet with Scott Lawrence, VicRoads' regional manager, to discuss the program for our visit to their office in September. We met Norm Butler and Peter McCulloch for lunch. Norm and Peter are helping us with local arrangements. Both are in rude good health. Peter is heavily involved in the Golf Club where he was instrumental in restructuring its management structure as a Board – and he himself has been chairman for the last eight years. He also spends one day a week mowing the fairways.



Norm is in the front row on the left hand side and Jim is third from the left in the second back row.

You have all heard the term “six degrees of separation”. It is the idea that all people living in the world are six or fewer steps away from each other so that a chain of “a friend of a friend” statements can be made to connect any two people in a maximum of six steps. However you have to be very careful to choose the right six people to make the connection. Well in the case of Jim Webber and Norm Butler, they only have to take one step. They both went to primary school together and were in the same class in 1947.

We had a great meeting with Scott who is very keen to welcome Association members to Traralgon in September. We talked about local issues in the Latrobe Valley, current projects and programs, and economic and social development issues – and how VicRoads is addressing these. Of course road maintenance came up in the conversation as well as motorcycle safety. Magnificent scenery, iconic tourist attractions, and an unspoilt natural environment make Gippsland a magnet for motorcyclists. The downside is that 50% of Victoria’s motorcycle trauma occurs in Gippsland. Scott and his team at VicRoads Eastern Victoria have developed a strategy to reduce this trauma.

Scott is preparing a draft program for a two-day visit which I will inform you about in the next newsletter.



Talking of degrees of separation, I had a few ex-VicRoads blokes over for lunch last week – all of whom I was involved with during my career with the Overseas Projects Corporation of Victoria. Perhaps they are not the most handsome of people but they did terrific work in places such as Samoa, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, South Africa, Bangladesh, Nepal, Indonesia, and Malaysia. Perhaps I have forgotten a few places but they probably don't remember either. And here they are.

Of course there were many others from VicRoads. When I retired from OPCV I counted them up and found over 150 from VicRoads participated in our projects. Apart from the countries mentioned above there were others such as Singapore, Thailand, India, Pakistan, China, Philippines, and Ireland – and probably more. They were heady days indeed!

David Jellie - Editor



Bob Cross, Peter Lowe, Ted Barton, John Trainor, Rob Aitken, Doug McLaine and Bob Parker



Dates for your diary

Our program this year is as follows:

DATE		TIME	EVENT
June	Monday 5	12 noon	Occasional lunch, Shoppingtown Hotel
	Monday 19	9.50am	Visit to Infrastructure Victoria
July	Monday 31	9.50am	Visit to Melbourne Metro Rail Authority
August	Monday 14	12 noon	Occasional lunch, Shoppingtown Hotel
September	13 and 14	TBA	Visit to VicRoads Regional Office in Traralgon and local attractions
October	Monday 9	12 noon	Occasional lunch, Shoppingtown Hotel
	Thursday 12	6.00 pm	Drinks and dinner at Waverley RSL
	Monday 30	9.50am	Visit to VicRoads South Eastern Projects
November	Monday 27	12 noon	Occasional lunch, Shoppingtown Hotel
December	Monday 4	12 noon	Christmas lunch at Kew HO
2018			
February	Monday 12	12 noon	Occasional lunch, Shoppingtown Hotel
	Monday 23		Members and Guests Golf Day



What's coming up

Occasional Lunches – Shoppingtown Hotel – Monday 5th June and Monday 14 August

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

Visit to Infrastructure Victoria – Monday 19th June 2017 at 9.50 am

Infrastructure Victoria (IV) is a new authority with three key roles as follows.

- Prepare a thirty-year infrastructure strategy for Victoria.
- Provide advice to the Victorian Government on infrastructure matters.
- Publish research on infrastructure matters.

The delivery of Victoria's first ever 30-year infrastructure strategy was one of Infrastructure Victoria's key priorities in 2016. It is state-wide, evidence-based, covers all types of infrastructure and has been developed with all Victorians in mind.

The strategy is the result of a year-long consultation with people and organisations from all over Victoria.

The strategy sets out a pipeline of initiatives – 137 recommendations – to be delivered over the next three decades to help create the best possible future for all Victorians. Some of these initiatives are new build solutions – shaping projects that could transform how Victorians live and move. Many other initiatives involve no construction, but could be even more impactful. It recommends making better use of what we already have and identifies policy reforms to maximise the benefits of new infrastructure. It advocates not just for construction but for maintenance too.

The presentation will also cover port options for the Melbourne Region, including Hastings.

We propose to meet in the foyer of the authority at 530 Collins Street at 9.50 am. Please contact Jim Webber before 12th June if you propose to come – so that he can arrange security passes to enter the office.

Friends and partners are welcome to come along but we want to stress again that our visits should not be used for political lobbying.

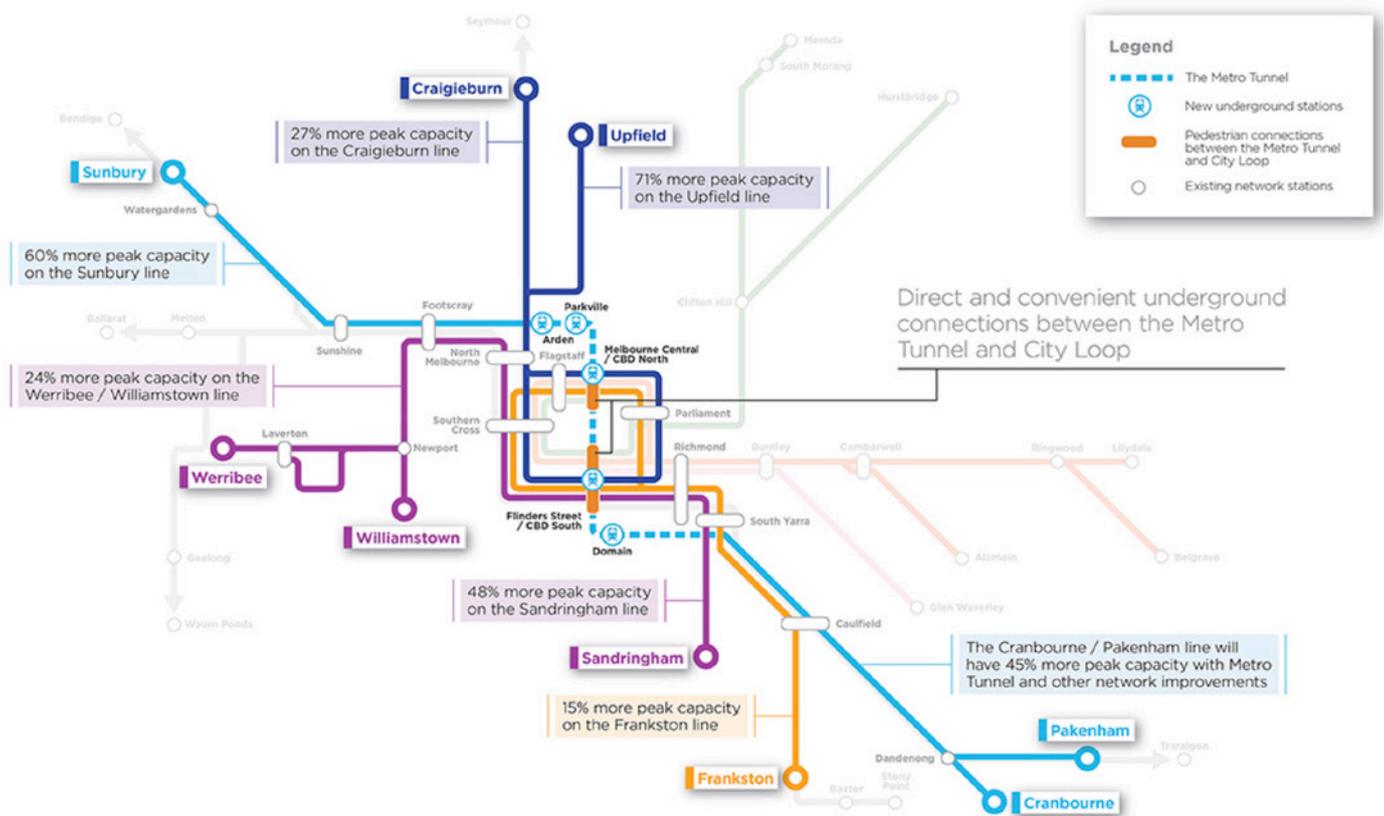
Visit to the Melbourne Metro Rail Authority – Monday 31st July at 9.50 am

We had a marvellous visit to the authority last year and it will be interesting to learn about the progress of the project over the last year. The diagram opposite shows the increase in capacity of the lines in the rail network affected by the project.

Five new metro tunnel stations will be created at Arden (North Melbourne), Parkville (University of Melbourne), CBD North, CBD South and Domain. CBD stations are currently experiencing intense crowding at peak times. The use of the five City Loop stations is projected to almost double from 580,000 passengers a day to 1.1 million in 2031. Once operational, Metro Tunnel's CBD North Station and CBD South Station will more evenly distribute passenger flow and interchange movements in the inner core of Melbourne's rail network, with crowding across all City Loop stations expected to drop by about 20 per cent.

We propose to meet in the foyer of the Authority at 121 Exhibition Street at 9.50 am. Please contact Jim Webber before 24th July if you propose to come – so that he can arrange security passes to enter the office. After the presentation many of us have a light lunch at a nearby restaurant.

Rail network capacity diagram.



NEW MEMBERS

We welcome the following people to our Association:
 Rob Aitken, Gordon Anderson, Colin Bates, Evan Boloutis,
 Graham Brookes, Ken Daley, Russell Fairlie, Kevin Fox,
 Don Howie, David Nash, David Shrimpton and
 David Williamson.

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING

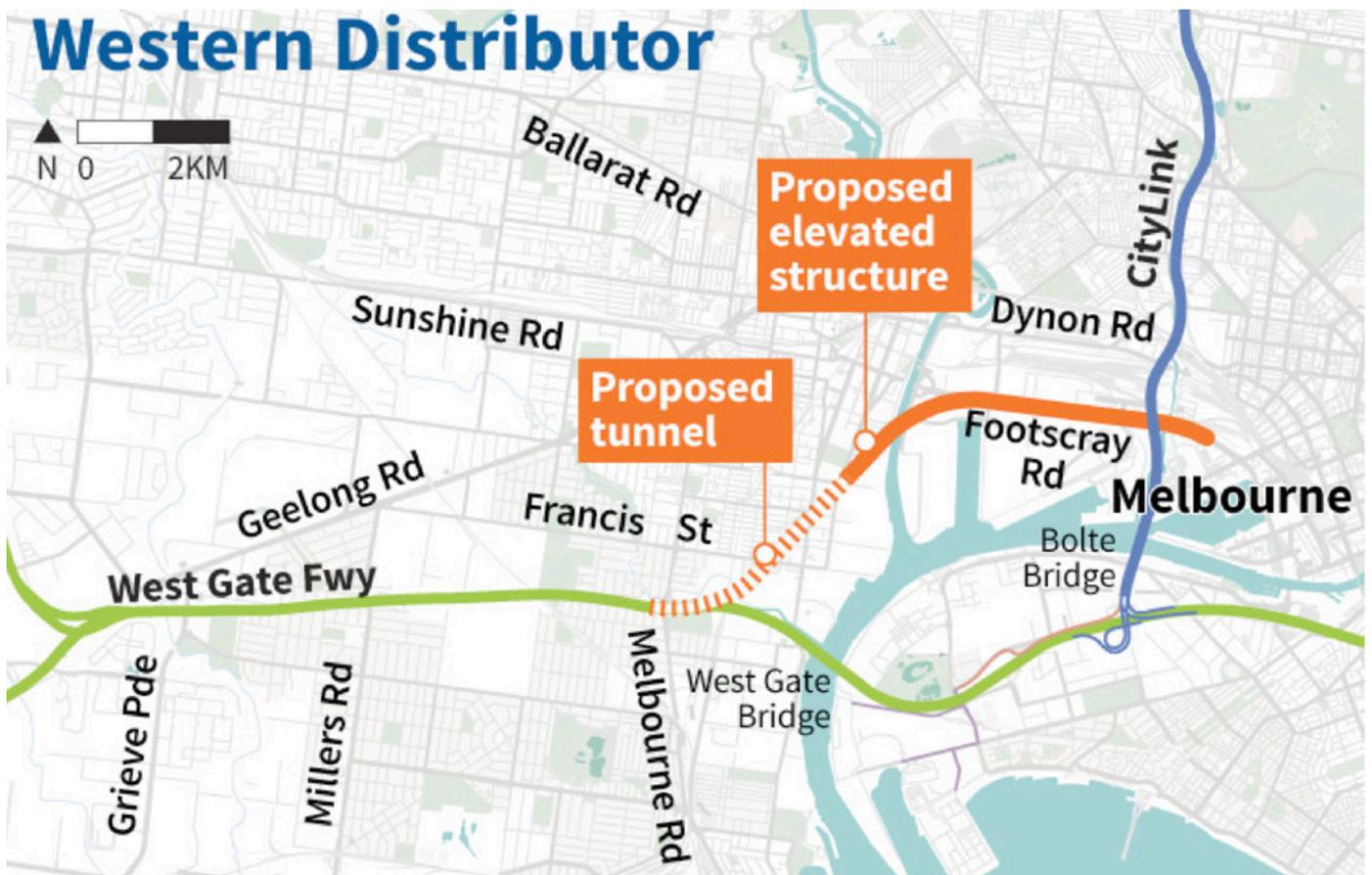
Visit to the West Gate Tunnel Project – Monday 1st May

We had an excellent attendance of 35 members to hear the Chief Executive, Peter Sammut, brief us on the project.

Transurban has partnered with the Victorian Government to build the \$5.5 billion West Gate Tunnel Project, which includes the Monash Freeway Upgrade and access improvements for Webb Dock. The Project addresses a number of critical challenges in relation to traffic, growth and liveability across Melbourne. It will provide an alternative route to the West Gate Bridge crossing, direct access to the Port, and with the advent of truck bans, remove thousands of trucks from residential streets in the western suburbs.

The scope of the West Gate Tunnel Project includes:

- A tunnel under Yarraville to the Maribyrnong River connecting the West Gate Freeway with the Port of Melbourne, CityLink and the CBD
- Ramps between West Gate Freeway and Hyde Street for trucks carrying dangerous goods
- Two additional lanes in each direction on the West Gate Freeway between the M80 Ring Road and Williamstown Road – widening the freeway from 8 to 12 lanes
- A bridge over the Maribyrnong River joining an elevated freeway above Footscray Road
- Improved access to the Port of Melbourne with links to Appleton Dock Road, McKenzie Road and Dock Link Road
- Extra lanes and upgraded smart technology on the Monash Freeway between Warrigal Road and Koo Wee Rup Road
- A new flatter, longer ramp from Cook Street to the Bolte Bridge to help reduce truck roll-overs
- Major new cycling and walking paths





Artist impression of the bridge crossing the Maribyrnong River

More than 200,000 vehicles cross West Gate Bridge every day putting great stress on the local infrastructure. The rapid growth in the west is putting an even greater stress on the infrastructure system. The main aims of the West Gate Tunnel Project are to:

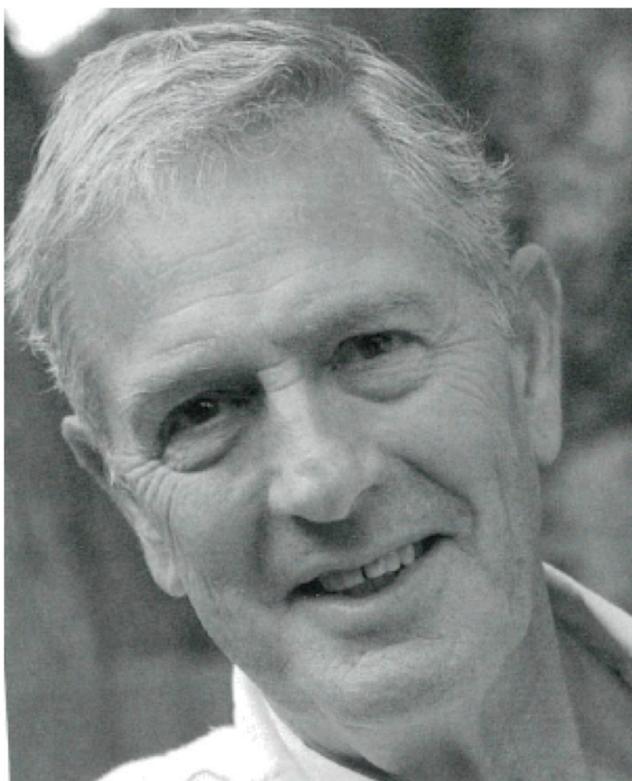
- Provide an alternative route to the West Gate Bridge
- Reduce truck traffic using local streets in the inner west
- Reduce trucks using West Gate Bridge
- Reduce traffic congestion on the road network
- Improve connections to Melbourne's road network
- Streamline efficiency in moving freight, especially to the Port of Melbourne.

Following the presentation questions were raised about:

- the likely toll (still subject to negotiation with the Government),
- the geology of the tunnel area (highly weathered basaltic clay),
- the potential for rail access to Webb Dock,
- whether the project is subject to a Material Adverse Effect (it is not),
- the limited material and staffing resources for the project given the large number of similar projects,
- potential problems with pavement shape and ride quality,
- hazardous loads not able to use the tunnel,
- the complicated geometric layouts will be a challenge to drivers unfamiliar with the project,
- whether the project will adversely affect ramp movements with a future East-West Link (it will not),
- the benefits to the community,
- the extent of traffic modeling (by Veitch Lister),
- the role of the independent reviewer, and
- the Government's involvement in the planning, design and construction of the project.

VALE

We extend our condolences to family and friends of Robert Meggs, Denis Daly, Joe Gwizdek and David Beattie.



Robert 'Bob' Meggs

Robert was always known in the organization as Bob. He died suddenly of a heart attack, in April, at the age of 77. He was still working as a structural design engineer for the engineering firm of AECOM.

Bob was born in Ararat but when he was an infant his family moved first to South Melbourne, then Malvern, and then later out to Doncaster – which he always referred to as home. He spent his childhood there when much of the area was orchards and farms. He went to Swinburne Technical College and the University of Melbourne. I first met Bob on the football field at Glenferrie Oval when the Gordon Institute of Technology played Swinburne. Little did we know then that we were destined to become close colleagues and good friends. We both started work at the CRB at around the same time – as design engineers in Bridge Sub-branch.

Bob loved the science of structural design. He was to my mind a brilliant designer who understood the behaviour of structures and he was a leader at the time in the design of box girder bridges. If I recall correctly, Branco Tavcar designed the first post-tensioned, pre-stressed box girder bridge at the Lancefield Road Overpass on the Tullamarine Freeway but Bob further developed the design to produce what was then the longest spans on the Kilmore interchange on the Hume Freeway. These are my recollections and no doubt there may be someone who has a better memory than I.

To further develop his expertise, Bob undertook a Master's Degree at the University of Melbourne investigating shear lag in box girders. Again dredging through my memory of years ago, Professor Len Steven's commented that Bob's thesis was one of the best pieces of research work that he had assessed.

His other passion was sport – especially football and later tennis. He and I were both March champions training with the Hawks at Glenferrie Oval but he returned to Doncaster where he played for many years in the Eastern Suburbs League competition. In a way his football style was very similar to his engineering – precise and considered. This was also the way he played tennis and after we went our different ways for many years we resumed our friendship on the tennis court both as partners and foes.

Bob was truly a gentleman. He was calm and considerate with everybody. He would listen carefully to what was being said and if he disagreed with a point he would gently make his view known without raising his voice. This self-effacing approach was very powerful and he commanded a deep respect with all those with whom he had dealings.

Although Bob's heart was in bridges (and especially in bridge design) he did serve in other areas of VicRoads. He was the Materials Engineer in which position he managed the engineering research projects within VicRoads. After retiring from VicRoads Bob at the age of 57, he joined Hardcastle and Richards and later the American firm of URS, working in their Melbourne office in Southbank. URS were consultants to VicRoads for the maintenance and strengthening of the West Gate Bridge. This was a job made in heaven for him and he supervised this work with distinction. URS was taken over later by AECOM who were only too pleased to have his expertise at their disposal – he worked there until his sudden death.



Many people have contacted me on learning of Bob's death. Peter McDonald said 'Very sad to hear of Bob's death. A true gentleman pretty much of the old school. Humble too but very smart.' Gary White said 'Thank you David for letting us know about our long time friend Bob. I remember our first connection with Bob was when we played sport with the Gordon and Swinburne. What a great person, engineer and support he was to us all in the regions'. Ted Barton said 'Many of you will have known Bob and I'm sure, like me, are saddened by his passing. I remember him as a very nice person, an excellent engineer and a great contributor in discussions relating not only to bridges and structural work but also to traffic and road management matters generally in the CRB/RCA VicRoads that I was involved with at the time'.

Bob had to give up tennis because of his heart condition. But he still supported his beloved Hawks with a passion - what a great last decade he has had - and he loved gardening, art, wine and food. Bob was an excellent water colourist - a pursuit he took up about 40 years ago - and according to his family he became quite a coffee snob in his later years.

Bob's death has taken a little bit of me with him but I will always remember this calm, measured and gentle person as a giant in the bridge fraternity in Australia.

David Beattie

Peter McCullough sent me a message to inform me that David Beattie died on 17 April at the age of 87. David succeeded Tom Stratford as the Board's driver and held that position for many years. Peter said that the cliché "one of Nature's gentlemen" has probably been used rather loosely over the years but it was certainly appropriate in the case of David Beattie. On more than one occasion he was mistaken by a councillor in some country shire for the Chairman or a Board Member.

David was the Board's driver throughout Tom Russell's period as Board Member and Chairman. Tom made the comment to me that David was meticulous in all his planning and an excellent driver.



Denis Daly

Denis Daly, a stalwart of our occasional lunches at Doncaster, died in February aged 88. We think he was the longest serving attendee at these lunches and we always enjoyed his company. Denis was born in Malaysia in 1929, the middle child of five children. His father was a locomotive inspector and his mother a midwife - both of Eurasian background. They lived in what is now Singapore.

He had a happy childhood but when the Japanese invaded Malaysia, the family was conscripted into forced labour and Dennis was a witness to many atrocities. Denis was the family member who was sent out of the camp for shopping and for messages because he was said to be the most Asian looking. All the family survived the war and Denis was then able to resume his schooling.

All but one of the siblings emigrated from Malaysia in search of opportunity and education. Denis arrived in Australia in 1949 and he never returned to Malaysia or saw his mother again. He linked up with relatives in Perth, where he studied and completed a Civil Engineering degree in 1954 at the University of Western Australia. Despite passing his Senior Cambridge exam in Malaysia and doing his best to educate himself during the war - for example by reading one book per day - he found he had a lot of catching up to do at university. For example he had never heard of the periodic table in chemistry.

After graduation he moved to Melbourne and then shortly after he joined an American Firm - Kaiser Walsh Perini Raymond - on the Snowy Mountains Scheme where he worked for 18 months. This was an unforgettable experience and he accumulated a nest egg of sufficient size to buy the latest Holden or a block of land in Beaumaris. He chose the former. He was back in Melbourne for the 1956 Olympics. His father played hockey for Malaysia and he arranged for Denis to meet the members of the of the Malaysian hockey team at the Olympic Village. While there, he was swamped by sports fans and after truthfully answering where he was from and what sport he played (hockey), he readily obliged their requests for an autograph.

When he joined the Country Roads Board, he started work in Bridge Design Division. He married Nora in 1959, and they moved to Belmont in Geelong, where Denis took up a position as construction manager on the Great Ocean Rd between Anglesea and Lavers Hill. The Great Ocean Road beyond Apollo Bay was sealed during this time. He was also in charge of the Divisional laboratory. In this capacity he had one adventure when he, and a fellow engineer, were shot at by an irate farmer when they were undertaking an inspection of land compulsorily acquired by the CRB for quarrying purposes.



Denis at the Great Ocean Rd

Denis loved Geelong. His interests at this time revolved around family and friends, cooking curries, fried rice and barbecues, sports (he played competition hockey into his 40s), James Bond novels and movies, World War 2 history and its gruesome stories (probably a legacy of his war experience). He remarked that he was never hungry in this country. He worked tirelessly in the community and provided pro-bono services in the construction of an oval at the local school.

After retiring from the CRB Denis and Nora shifted to East Doncaster in 1987. He was employed by Hume Council, and subsequently found other work with large engineering firms in the area of engineering quality assurance. This work took him all over Victoria, and for a spell down to Penguin in Northern Tasmania where he worked for Sinclair Knight Mertz on the Bass Highway. He retained his interests in reading, cooking and his Christian faith.

Around 1990, the Federal Government decreed that all federally-funded works were to be carried out under quality-assured contracts. Prior to this, VicRoads had employed clerks-of-works, inspectors and testing officers to closely-supervise and check all materials supplied and work carried out under a contract, to ensure that specified requirements had been met. With quality assurance, it was the responsibility of the contractor to demonstrate that those requirements had been met. VicRoads would carry out limited surveillance and audit of the contractor's quality system.



To test the efficacy of this very different approach, a quality-assured earthworks and drainage contract was let for part of the Western Ring Road Project, to Denbo Constructions, owned by Ian Nadenbousch (Nadbo). Denis was appointed as Denbo's quality manager, with responsibility for developing and implementing a quality system. Starting from scratch, and on a very steep learning-curve, he did so very successfully. Having the forbearance to put up with Nadbo, who was not the easiest person to work for, was quite an achievement in itself. Following the successful completion of the works under this contract, all federally-funded contracts in VicRoads were carried out under quality assurance. Much of what Denis had developed was picked up and used by other contractors.

Denis also worked for John Holland Constructions as quality manager on the construction of the Calder Freeway in the Woodend and Kyneton areas. Following his eventual retirement, Denis joined the Vicroads Association. For more than fifteen years, he was the most-regular attendee at the Occasional Lunches at Shoppingtown Hotel.

Denis is remembered as a very caring person who was always ready to share his knowledge with others, and to assist them in any way that he could. He was truly a very good bloke. We shall miss him.

(Written with the assistance of Kel York and Denis' son, Michael)

Joe Gwizdek

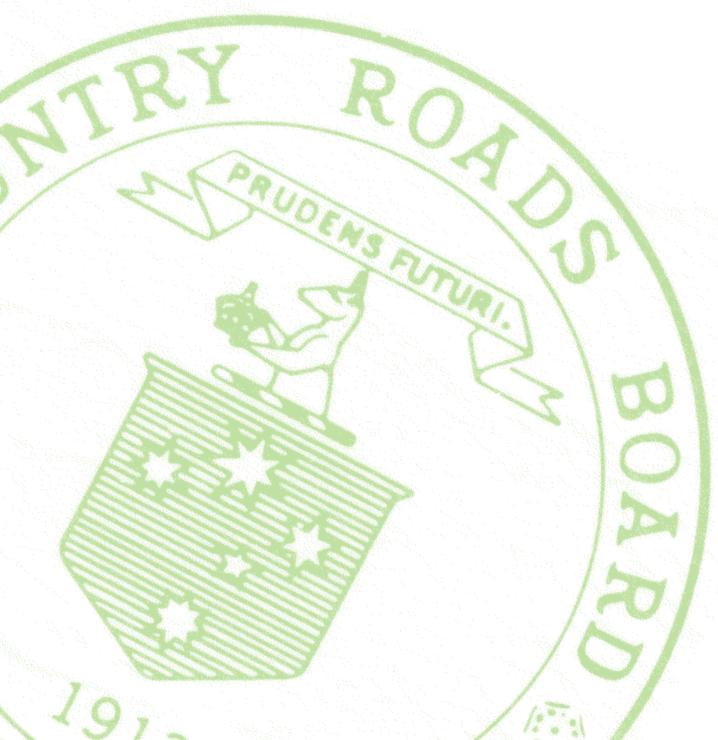
Joe passed away early in May after a battle with prostate cancer. Joe was a legend in the CRB, RCA and VicRoads where he served over a period of 50 years. Most of his career was spent working in the Bairnsdale office and he will be greatly missed in the communities around Gippsland. His laconic style and his great range of jokes endeared him to everyone. Joe always had time for people and loved to share his stories. In fact he invented 'Joeisms' which became part of the local lexicon – such as 'tinsel' for wire rope barriers.

He worked with the Operations Team maintaining and improving the roads in Gippsland. Over the fifty year time span of Joe's work about 40 years was with VicRoads and the rest was for local councils. I remember visiting Bairnsdale with the VicRoads Association about five years ago and Joe was talking to us about road maintenance. We were lamenting the time it took to repair potholes in the road surface. Tom Russell said that he had been nagging the local council for months about getting a pothole fixed in Fitzsimons Lane in Templestowe. Then Peter Lowe said he had the same trouble about a pothole in the Wonthaggi to Cape Paterson Road in South Gippsland. The discussion proceeded and Joe wandered out of the room and came back a few minutes later to say that both of them will be fixed in the next few days. Joe was the quintessential fixer.

I am pretty sure that Joe was of Polish descent and I am somewhat abashed that I don't think I ever asked him about his background. Perhaps one of the readers might be able to help me out.

On other aspect of Joe's career worth mentioning was his 12 months service in Bhutan - served in two 6-month stints. Joe was engaged by the Snowy Mountains Engineering Corporation to participate in a road maintenance project funded by the World Bank. He went across to Thimpu where, working with Bhutanese counterparts, he inspected the road network and then developed a road maintenance manual and management system suitable for use in the mountainous terrain of Bhutan. He achieved this in six months, returned home to Bairnsdale for six months and then spent the following six months training Bhutanese road managers in implementing the project. A few years later, I went over to Bhutan, and when I mentioned Joe's name to the people in the Highways Department, all their faces lit up.

Joe was a one-off character. Funny, friendly and few knew more about road maintenance than he. He would have spent many weeks involved in emergency works cleaning up after floods and fire always with his sense of humour intact. He will be sadly missed in Gippsland and throughout VicRoads.



NEWS FROM VICROADS

John Merritt on autonomous vehicles

John Merritt (CEO) was in the United States recently looking at the latest developments in autonomous vehicles. He reported as follows:

“For the last two days I have been in San Francisco at the start of the Roads Australia study visit looking at issues related to autonomous vehicles. We are here because Silicon Valley is just down the road, and we have spent today with Google X, and Waymo, their autonomous vehicle project, and Lyft, an Uber equivalent who is developing a driverless ride share service. Yesterday we were in Sacramento visiting the California Transport Authority, which is the most energetic State road authority in the US in regulating for autonomous and semi autonomous vehicles. They have 29 companies approved to conduct autonomous vehicle trials on their roads, and they expect to have regulations that allow fully driverless vehicle testing in place this year.

There are common themes on both the private and government sides of the issue. Most conversations start with the appalling road fatality numbers (over 40,000 a year in the US, and deteriorating), and the expectation that reducing the human element will improve this dramatically. There is also a lot of focus on efficient movement and the pressures of congestion here driven by growing populations in the cities and the same urban design legacies that we are dealing with. Ride share is potentially a part of the answer, and driverless ride share vehicles could be financially attractive. However there is a risk ride share is luring people from public transport and putting even more cars on the road. It feels like that here, where public transport usage is falling, ride share is everywhere, and vehicle kilometres travelled is rising.

One of the big questions is when. There are certainly a lot of problems to be solved, but the level of testing, expectation and enthusiasm here is significant. The distinctive Google cars were a common sight on the streets today. Semi autonomous cars that can hold their place in a freeway lane, and accelerate and brake safely are virtually here now. A commercial driverless vehicle that can operate in a contained and practiced urban area, shuttling people to stations or shops appears to be within 5 to 10 years away. A car that can go anywhere seems a lot further away.

We are in the States until the middle of next week, visiting Pittsburgh to meet with Uber, and learn about their autonomous vehicle trial, meeting with other road authorities and visiting Carnegie Mellon University, who have been researching and developing in this space for decades.”

Maintenance of country roads

The recent budget announced by State Government has seen a significant increase in maintenance funding for regional Victoria - \$260.3 million for regional roads compared to last year's figure of \$130 million for both regional and metro. About time if you ask me!



Towards Zero 2016 - 2017

Towards Zero 2016-2020 is Victoria's road safety strategy and action plan that was launched last year. It involves a \$1.1 billion investment and has a target to reduce the number of lives lost on Victorian roads to below 200 by 2020. This equates to a 20 per cent reduction in road fatalities over the next five years.

The development of Towards Zero 2016-2020 was a collaboration between VicRoads, the TAC, Victoria Police, Department of Justice and Regulation and Department of Health and Human Services. Key in its development was engagement with the Victorian community and road safety experts. 2,800 people submitted comments and views including drivers of all ages, motorcyclists, truck drivers, heavy transport owners, cyclists, taxi drivers, driving instructors, road trauma victim groups, and representatives from community road safety partnerships, local government, police and emergency services.

Face to face meetings involved hundreds of people at public forums in Richmond, Cranbourne, Frankston, Coburg, Melbourne, Werribee, Benalla, Ballarat, Bendigo, Sale, Wodonga and Horsham. Information and feedback gained from these forums and discussions shaped the strategy and action plan and it is intended to continue with this dialogue during the life of the program.



The strategy draws on research evidence from the world's best performing countries. The result is:

- A significant increase in investment in safe roads infrastructure
- A major effort to engage with the community on key road safety issues
- New initiatives to encourage safer behaviours
- New measures to ensure that vehicles are as safe as they can be.

VicRoads' role over the four year program will be to:

- treat over 2500 kilometres of rural roads with safety treatments, including flexible safety barriers and tactile edge and centre lines on rural roads
- improve the safety of cycle and pedestrian routes
- develop a smart phone app, with speed alerts when drivers exceed the speed limit, to make it easier for drivers to travel at safer speeds
- develop an "offenders" package tackling drink driving offenders with measures including an interlock requirement for all drink drivers
- work with local government to create safer speeds on local streets through traffic calming measures and make barriers more motorcycle friendly on high-risk motorcycle routes
- develop a practical safe driving program for beginner drivers.

The strategy and action plan for Towards Zero 2016-2020 can be found on the internet at towardszero.vic.gov.au

I propose to include extracts from the strategy in future newsletters to inform you about key aspects of the program.

NEWS FROM OUR MEMBERS

John Wright

I have received many comments about John's recollections and I know that you are keen for more. In the last newsletter, we left John's stories when he was talking about many of the people he worked with, the last mentioned being Bruce Hamilton. John and Bruce travelled together on many CRB jobs, and we resume with some of their more memorable experiences. Hang on to your seats!

The dynamite purchase

The CRB was constructing the Devil's River access road near Eildon and required large quantities of dynamite to deal with reefs of hard rock. On a sunny afternoon, Bruce and I drove out to Nobel Park to collect a large quantity of high explosives and detonators. We had a Holden panel van with two painted wooden signs stating "Danger - High Explosives" in big red letters to place on the front and rear of the van after we had loaded it.

Arriving at the factory, we presented our order and despite our denials were frisked for matches and cigarette lighters. Our van was then loaded to the ceiling with boxes of dynamite. We were then directed to walk to the end of a long footpath specially coated with an anti-static surface, and wait there to receive two boxes containing 1000 electrical and mechanical detonators. A guy in a white coat walked up a similar, parallel path set back about six feet from ours. He stopped opposite us, grinned and said "Catch!" - throwing one box to me and another to Bruce. It was so unexpected, after all the safety precautions that we nearly died of heart failure.

Still shaking, we drove out of the factory to return to Kew, with me sitting in the passenger seat nursing the detonators because they had to be carried separately from the dynamite. It was a warm day and shortly after we set off we discovered that the warning sign on the front of the vehicle was cutting off all the air to the radiator, which was boiling. We removed the sign and threw it in the back with the dynamite and continued our journey - almost having a rear-end collision with another car waiting at the lights because we were both looking at a pretty girl on the footpath.

A day at the Peninsula

Bruce and I drove down to the Mornington Peninsula to conduct a sight distance test on the highway between Sorrento and Portsea. This involved two people each carrying a steel pole with a sighting hole located 4 ft 6 inches above its base. The poles were connected by a length of string equating to the calculated stopping distance for a car travelling at the local speed limit. The objective was to determine where double white lines should begin and end, based on the points where one of the poles was no longer visible through the sighting hole of the other.

We had advanced some distance towards Portsea when we heard a vehicle approaching. It was a large, expensive car, driven by an older, well-dressed woman who was looking right at us. To our horror, she did not stop or slow down but drove straight at us. Bruce was closest and had to jump for his life, leaving his pole on the road. Her car ran over it with a loud clank and then came straight for me, but I had left the road by that time. There was nothing we could do about it. By the time we had brushed ourselves off and thought about getting her car's number, she had gone.

On our way back to Kew, we had just turned from Nepean Highway into Hawthorn Road when we noticed a dark blue Humber sedan ahead of us, driving slowly down the middle of the road. I was driving and, assuming that the vehicle was about to make a right turn I moved to its left. The vehicle then sped up and moved across to cut me off. The driver appeared to be an older man in a yachting jacket and a cravat and he looked very red-faced. I got the impression that he had just left his gentleman's club after more than a few fine after-lunch ports with other captains of industry and was outraged to see two louts driving a government car on his taxes on what could only be a very frivolous matter indeed.

Up ahead, a tram heading in the same direction was slowing to stop. Our man in the reefer jacket waited until the last moment before suddenly passing it. We thought he had gone, but some distance ahead we encountered him dawdling in the middle of the road, after which he performed further baffling and dangerous antics. Although strongly tempted to pass, I held back, knowing the driver was trying to goad me. We eventually passed him several kilometres up the road when he pulled into the kerb and stopped. I had a feeling he was writing down our registration number, and I was right.



At work about a week later a pompously worded letter to the Minister arrived from a person with a hyphenated name complaining about my dangerous driving. I was asked to account for myself. I prepared a report setting out in detail this person's incredible behaviour and pointing out the patent impossibility of some of his ridiculous claims (He said that we had followed him for three miles at speeds of up to 80 miles per hour whilst he was driving within the 30-mph limit). I also said we thought he was very drunk, going on his florid appearance and erratic behaviour. The Board accepted my explanation and the complainant received a very curt letter stating only that their officer's account differed considerably from his and that no action was proposed.

The King Street Bridge

In 1959, the CRB was building a major, new crossing of the Yarra River between Queen and Spencer Streets. The project would carry an extension of King Street beneath a new overpass at Flinders Street, across the Yarra and thence via a long, elevated section, flying over City Road on a 290-ft. span and ending deep into South Melbourne. The entire bridgework was comprised of technology not previously used in Victoria - the use of high tensile steel girders.

This was the CRB's first major foray into the City of Melbourne since completing the Swan Street Bridge in 1952. The Board was inordinately proud of this mighty work, and the entire head office staff - clerks, typists etc. were given a special presentation by the Board members and ferried to the site in buses, where they were able to walk out onto the new works taking shape over the Yarra.

When the project was well advanced, I was called into the office of one of the Board Members and asked to prepare a set of simplified drawings of the project to accompany his submission to the prestigious Journal of the Institution of Engineers. My initial attempt was not well received and I eventually prepared a greatly improved set. No pressure, mind you.

The King Street Bridge was opened in April 1961 and collapsed in July 1962 after six of its girders on the outbound carriageway cracked on a very cold morning under the weight of a low-loader transporting an excavator. When the horrified driver ran back to get help, a disbelieving policeman on point duty told him to stop being a nuisance.

I was working with Bruce Hamilton on the 4th floor at the Kew Head Office when a call came through saying the bridge had collapsed. Donning our dustcoats, we grabbed a car and hot-footed it to South Melbourne. The Police and MMBW officials closed the site, but our dustcoats must have identified us as technicians, so we were able to walk unchallenged beneath the collapsed section and see what had happened. It was a most amazing sight. All six of the 6-ft deep girders supporting the carriageway had cracked from top to bottom, with all of the cracks originating from the ends of the lower flange cover plates. The fracture line was very silvery and crystalline - in brilliant contrast to the dull, red-painted sides of the beams. Mercifully, the fracture had occurred in South Melbourne where the bridge was close to the ground, near the end of the long ramp down to Kingsway.

A subsequent Royal Commission revealed multiple causes for the disaster. Firstly, the steel supplier had been unable to achieve the necessary tensile strength and had cheated by adding chromium to bring the steel up to the necessary strength. This was expressly forbidden in the specifications because it made the steel brittle at low temperatures. I also heard a story that Johns and Waygood had complained about the specified pre-heating of the beams (to normalise welding stresses) because it was taking far too long and causing delivery delays. The story went on to say that these beams were subsequently cold welded, which locked up enormous stresses in them. When I was attending night school during the Royal Commission hearings, one of my classmates told me his father had been a night watchman at Johns and Waygood's factory, where the beams were being made. His father had commented on the loud groans coming from the cold-welded beams that went on all night.

Thirdly, some well-meaning person had lightly welded across the ends of the lower flange cover plates to keep the weather out. This was the location where maximum tensile stress occurred and was exactly where all of the cracks originated.

Dale

Dale was a draftsman from the adjacent Traffic and Location Division. We had common interests and we got on well together. Amongst other things, Dale introduced me to the delights of Jimmy Watson's wine bar and bistro in Lygon Street, Carlton. We would occasionally head off there in our lunch break - purchase a bottle of rough burgundy wine for a few shillings, a crusty bread roll and a nice, thick, raw T-bone steak. There were little hot plates available for the customers, who would cook the steaks while pouring burgundy over them from time to time. By the time the steak was cooked and most of the wine had been consumed, the steak and the bread stick was absolutely delicious.



Shooting expeditions

Dale had a friend, Alan, who like me also became an engineer and later joined Dandenong Division. Alan was very droll but was nevertheless an enjoyable character. His great passion was organ playing and he was known to wander into Town Halls and commence playing their massive organs. He was once ejected from Melbourne Town Hall for doing this. About every three months or so, we would all nick off from work after lunch to go shooting near Lerderderg Gorge. I remember standing in a wet field and noticing both Dale and Alan almost helpless with laughter. It wasn't until I looked down that I realised I had been standing on a red ants' nest and thousands of them were slowly climbing up my legs. No doubt my frenzied reaction to this horrifying discovery, in which I rapidly discarded most of my clothes, caused them even further amusement. Like Indiana Jones and snakes, I had a major problem with ants.

Leaving the Exhibition Buildings

In November 1960, the CRB's new headquarters in Kew were nearing completion and a major packing exercise was underway to facilitate the move from Carlton. Dale and Alan approached me with a plan to climb the dome of the Exhibition Building and erect a "For Sale" flag on its flagpole. It would be our way of saying "Goodbye" to the old building. As most of the work documentation had been crated, there was very little for us to do. I stayed back after work one evening and used many white ink bottles to create a suitable flag out of my old, green drawing board cover, which along with my old desk, would not be making the journey to Kew.

Late in the following morning I embarked upon our adventure with Dale, Alan, Geoff and Max (Alan and Max were old school mates of mine from Caulfield Technical School). There were school exams taking place in the Exhibition Buildings, and maybe 500 students were sitting silently in its various wings, heads down in deep concentration. We got in through the main western entrance and we were heading for the stairways when a security guard approached us and asked us what we were doing. I was at the rear of our little group, trying to hide my drawing board cover behind my back.

Alan explained that we were all sailing for England in a short while, and that we were keen to take one last look at our beloved Melbourne from an elevated position before we left. To my amazement, the guard accepted this and our promise to be as quiet as mice. I guess the guard thought we would be looking out the windows of the upper floors of the building, safe in the knowledge that access to the roof and beyond was effectively denied by a succession of locked doors.

I quickly discovered that Alan was a skilled lock picker, and in no time at all we were on the tarred, flat roof of the main building, admiring the view and making our way towards the base of the dome tower. The steel rung ladder up the outside of the dome tower had no protective cage around it. We commenced our long climb with Alan at the front followed by Dale, Geoff and myself with Max at the rear.

After climbing upwards for what seemed an awfully long time, the climbers ahead of me stopped. I appreciated that Alan might need to pick another lock at the entrance to the dome. However, I quickly realised that the problem was not Alan - it was Geoff just ahead of me, who had frozen in fear and was unable to move. As the minutes dragged by I began to realise just how high we were and to appreciate the fact that my fingers on the rungs were the only things between my life and death - thoughts no doubt running through Geoff's mind. I was also mindful of the need to keep a grip on my drawing board cover.

Looking almost straight down for hundreds of feet I could just make out some tiny figures standing in the courtyard at the rear of the CRB offices. Somebody was pointing upwards at us. I realised that I was looking at the Board Members and sincerely hoped that they would not be able to recognise us on the ladder.

Geoff was mercifully able to recover his wits and soon we were all standing on a narrow, steel platform outside a door giving access to the top of the dome. It was quite dark inside the door and I could just make out a long, inclined wooden plank that connected the base of the crow's nest structure with the outer door. There was only a loose rope at waist level to hold on to. We would have to cross this plank to gain access to the crow's nest. The plank sagged alarmingly when we stood on it, so we decided to cross it one at a time. Looking down I realised that I was looking at the other side of the thin, painted interior lining of the dome, because I could see the floor of the Exhibition Building far, far below through cracks in the lining. I gave the flag to Dale to attach to the ropes on the flagpole.

The passage inside the crow's nest structure was very tight and we had to take turns to wriggle up it so that we could enjoy Melbourne's (then) ultimate view. I remember being able to see right across the pale blue of Port Phillip Bay, but it was too hazy to see the Heads. Arriving back on the roof of the main building, we looked up to admire our handiwork. To our disappointment, the flag had not unfurled. There was no way I was going up there again but Dale, fearless as ever, climbed up again with Alan and successfully furled the flag. Safely back on the ground, we made our way to the nearest telephone box and rang the Herald newspaper to report the placement of the flag. At that time, the Herald paid for such snippets and they duly sent a cheque for a small amount, which we cashed and bought beers with.

Misadventures with alcohol

My first CRB Christmas Party

A few days before Christmas 1958 I managed to get permission to leave early to attend a Christmas party with my friends from the Public Works Department at the back bar of the Oriental Hotel. After a while and a few beers, I left the Oriental to return to the CRB, where I bumped into Long Jack Ryan, who dragged me up to the Lemon Tree Hotel for a few Christmas ales. I arrived back at the office to discover that the CRB Christmas party was getting under way in a long tin shed known as the Immigration Hall. By this time, I was feeling no pain whatsoever. A refrigerated keg was tapped into, and a friend from the Printing Office produced a large bottle of whiskey, which I also partook of. It was definitely my undoing.

I was becoming seriously intoxicated when a small, grey-haired gent in a suit, holding a warm glass of beer, started walking through the throng, shaking hands with all and sundry. I went over and introduced myself. I dully realised, upon grasping his renowned dead-fish handshake that this person was none other than the Chairman of the CRB. After I had finished, and no doubt had practically anaesthetised him with alcohol fumes, he remarked "So, they actually let you work here, do they?" I think my mouth was still open in horror when he turned away to talk to somebody else.

Shortly afterwards, I left the Immigration Hall with a friend and nearly came to further grief when we realised that we were playing drunken 'chasey' outside the Board Room. We were told by somebody very senior to shoot through, as there was a meeting going on, and mercifully the unlit corridor was too dark for them to recognise us.

I got as far as the foot of the Exhibition Gardens when the rapidly rotating sky caused me to sink down onto the lawn near the corner of Rathdown and Victoria Streets. One of the older draftsmen from Plans and Survey, Bill Kendall, kindly handed me a ten-shilling note and told me to get a taxi home. Unfortunately, I was too affected to distinguish ordinary cars from taxis and I knew that it would not have covered the fare home. I eventually made it down through the city to Flinders Street Station where I managed to catch the correct train to McKinnon before lapsing into an alcoholic daze on the seat.

For reasons I cannot clearly remember, my fellow passengers woke me when I got to McKinnon Station. By the time I had walked home, it had started to rain and I was wet through and feeling dreadful - having thrown

up several times on my long, staggering journey from the Exhibition Gardens. Nobody was home and I had great difficulty finding the back-door key, because it was hanging on a peach tree in the back yard. There weren't many leaves left on it by the time I found the key. To make things worse, my mother woke me up when she got home and made me attend midnight mass at St Kevins with her.

There were many other CRB Christmas parties after that, and I managed to avoid excessive alcohol consumption at them. In later Christmas meetings, when the Board members came through our office, the Chairman, Donald Victor Darwin, mercifully never alluded to our unfortunate, initial meeting - although there would be a faint smile on his face when he shook my hand.

Counter lunch peril

I had a further adventure with supplies for the Devil's River road. One morning I was asked to collect a load of drilling steels from the CRB Port Melbourne Store Yard and deliver them to the Eildon construction compound. Whilst waiting at the Yard for these to be found and loaded, I got into a conversation with Colin Swan, one of the senior managers. As it was close to lunch time he invited me to have a counter lunch with him. We had a very enjoyable lunch and I can't remember how many beers I had, but it was clearly too many.

Feeling very chipper, I set off in my heavily loaded utility along the Boulevard, with a view to taking a short cut to Bridge Road. Travelling too fast, I was halfway through a tight bend near Collingwood when I heard and felt all the drill steels roll to one side of the utility's tray with a great crash. At the same time, the two passenger-side wheels started to lift upwards. I still don't know how I managed to stop the utility from rolling, but I do recall swerving right across to the opposite side of the road to do so. Mercifully, nobody was coming from the opposite direction. This was a very sobering experience and I managed to drive without further mishap to a worksite at Narbethong where overseer Joe Dean (a huge, older man) told me he could smell beer on my breath from six feet away. I finally arrived at the Devil's River camp near Eildon, where I succeeded in backing the ute into a timber storage shed as I was manoeuvring to unload the vehicle. There was a huge crash from the inside, and I rushed in to see what had happened. There had been a high stack of boxes full of dynamite against the wall. Now, they were all over the floor. I managed to restack them all before anyone found out.

CRB vehicles

No luxuries for engineers

After I obtained my licence I began driving CRB vehicles. In those days, most supervising engineers were issued with a Holden utility. The Board members, some of whom probably remembered riding horses over pack trails, did not believe in their engineers driving vehicles fitted with a heater, windscreen demister or windscreen washer, as it considered these items, including car radios, to be decadent luxuries suitable only for the plush limousines they purchased for themselves and a few, very senior officers.

Amazingly, this policy extended even to those engineers who were required to regularly drive in the mountains during the snow season. Those unfortunate individuals were grudgingly allowed to purchase (at their own cost) stick-on window demisters that plugged into the cigarette lighter socket. However, they were almost useless in the absence of a heater. Keeping the mist from the inside of the windscreen was a never-ending battle with a large cloth carried in all cars. Also, driving on busy highways in winter often necessitated getting out every 10 miles or so to wipe the mud film from the outside of the windscreen.

I was working as a surveyor and design draftsman for engineer David Emery, who was in charge of reconstructing the Acheron Way, just out of Warburton. The existing road was unsealed, very narrow and with tight bends. My job was to assist in surveying the road ahead of the roadworks (which were being carried out by a CRB Direct Labour gang under Overseer Len Smith), return to the office to plot up this information and prepare design drawings so that the work could proceed unhindered.

On one occasion, I drove Dave's Holden utility alone from Carlton to the Board's construction camp near Cement Creek. I slept and ate at the camp for several days, which was quite an experience. At the end of the first day all of the workers wanted to go to the Warburton pub for a drink - as was the fashion then. A lot of them piled into the back of my ute and I drove them down and back - careful not to drink too much, now that it was legal for me to do so. We enjoyed a hearty meal at the camp, and a huge, bearded guy who operated the excavator was actually served three meals because one was clearly insufficient to service his massive frame.

Anyway, on the following day I was driving the utility along the clay subgrade, which was wet and slippery, when the rear wheels started to spin. I wasn't going very fast, but I had forgotten to remove my foot from the accelerator pedal and the car nosed into the clay bank with a mild thump, pushing the bumper bar end into the front wheel.

I was just assessing this damage when the huge excavator guy came up to help. He grabbed the corner of the bumper bar to straighten it, and in doing so, dragged the vehicle right across the road formation. Thanks to his efforts, I was able to drive back to Melbourne the next day. Sometime after the inevitable accident report was submitted, I was shown a letter to the Divisional Engineer from the Chief Engineer, Johnny Mathieson, asking him to ensure that I was properly instructed in driving the Board's vehicles.

The 'Clink'

When I joined the CRB there was a requirement (I think) that certain CRB vehicles allocated to Head Office were not to be taken home at night, but were to be stored overnight in the basement area of the old Eastern Market, which was located on the corner of Bourke and Exhibition Streets - known as The Clink. There was always a race in the morning by CRB rail commuters to pick up these vehicles and get a free ride to the office. The Eastern Market was demolished in 1960 and the Southern Cross hotel was built on the site.

The Gatekeeper

There was a short, older English staff member who always wore an immaculate dust coat and whose responsibilities included placing a stout chain with a 'closed' sign on it across the Rathdown Street entrance to the CRB car park at the end of the day and removing it early in the morning. I recall seeing him dusting and polishing his pale blue Humber sedan during lunch and morning tea breaks. It was his pride and joy. Being first to drive in, he always got the best spot in the shade near the door.

When the CRB moved to Kew, he kept his old job and remained responsible for locking and unlocking similar chains across the driveway entrances to Denmark Street. One morning I arrived very early after walking from Glenferrie and glanced out of a window on the north side to see the immaculate pale blue Humber coming down Denmark Street and turning left into the CRB entrance at the front of the building. The poor chap must have had something considerable on his mind because he drove straight through his own chains and smashed both of his headlights. I felt very sorry for him.



Our new Kew headquarters

In November 1960, the CRB moved its headquarters from Carlton to 60 Denmark Street, Kew. Well prior to this, the staff had been polled as to which of a number of locations they might prefer to move to. However, the reality was that the old Kew Railway station site was always going to be chosen, simply because it was available. One rumour was that very few staff wanted to work in Kew and the Board members had chosen it because most of them lived along the tram routes servicing Kew (not that any of them would stoop to catching trams).

Kew was difficult to reach by rail because the nearest stations, Glenferrie and Hawthorn, were 20 minutes' walk. For me, travelling from McKinnon meant changing trains at Richmond. Catching a tram from Glenferrie to Barkers Road was all but impossible in the morning because hordes of beefy MLC school girls with their monster bags clogged the aisles and rendered access impossible for any other passengers.

The new building was 'H' shaped and 9 storeys high. Consistent with the Board's austere views about motor vehicle creature comforts, no air conditioning was provided. Despite aluminium shutters installed above the windows to reduce sun glare, the offices were like ovens in the summer. It must have been the only major office building constructed in Melbourne at that time with no air conditioning. Years later it would cost a fortune to have a 2nd class system retro-fitted to the windows.

Looking back, I think the least recognised triumph of the new headquarters was the fact that it finally accommodated all of the various branches of the CRB, such as Plans and Surveys, Title Survey, Bridge Division, Metropolitan Division, Traffic and Location, Survey, Printing and so on in a single building. Previously, all of these entities had been housed in various 'tin sheds' scattered around the rear of the Eastern Annexe of the Exhibition Buildings. At the time of the move, the Materials Testing Division was still located in Drummond St, Carlton and would stay there until a new companion building was constructed for it in Kew on the corner of Wellington Street.

Dandenong Division was located on the 4th floor of the northwest wing and I managed to score a desk overlooking Denmark Street and the southern part of the City.

Shortly after we moved in, there was a grand opening attended by all of the staff. The Minister for Transport, Sir Thomas Maltby (after whom the Maltby Bypass of Werribee was named) gave a fine speech, which inspired all of us.

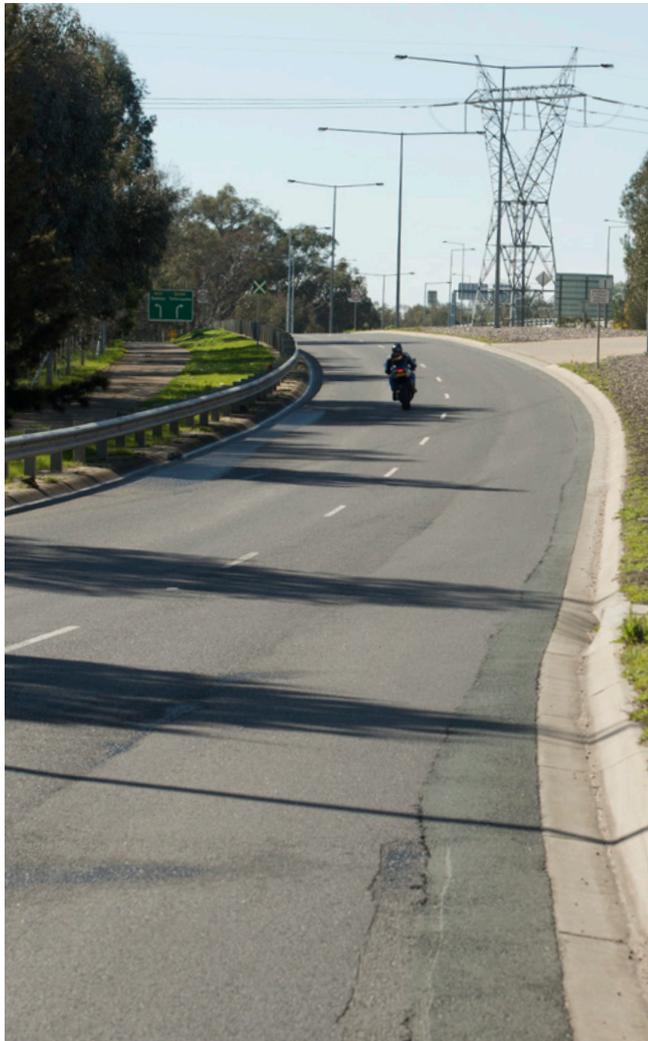
One of the more welcome facilities in the building was a large cafeteria run by Mrs Best. There had been no cafeteria in the old CRB building. Her large, tasty meals were served on equally large plates and were fantastic value for the money. At lunchtime staff queued right out to the lifts. Regrettably it was only to last until the first accounting period revealed how much the meals were costing the Board. Suddenly, Mrs Best disappeared and the meals and the plates became much smaller under a new manager.



The Hume Highway

The Death Dip

The 2-lane Hume Highway north of Melbourne was littered with potential death traps. One of these was in the old volcanic plains not far past Craigeburn, which was called the Death Dip because it claimed a lot of lives. The highway appeared flat and straight but in fact dipped into a deep depression for a short distance, which hid oncoming vehicles from sight. Approaching drivers who thought they had heaps of overtaking distance available, ignored the double lines and often fatally discovered there was no safe distance when an oncoming vehicle suddenly popped up out of the dip right in front of them. After far too many unnecessary deaths, the Death Dip was eventually filled in.



Greens Pinch

A few miles north of Kilmore, the Hume Highway passed through a steep and narrow road cutting called Greens Pinch. It was a bottleneck for traffic because there were no passing lanes, and many accidents happened there. A contract was let to an earthmoving company to construct an improved road alignment that was 50 feet lower through the hill and four lanes wide to accommodate passing lanes in each direction.

When the earthworks were well advanced, it became obvious that a serious surveying error had occurred, because the contractor had gone 4 ft. too deep across a 60-ft. wide cutting in hard rock. The blame was said to have been attributed to incorrect levels assigned to wooden reference pegs, placed by CRB surveyors before construction along the side of the road clear of the earthworks. It was quickly discovered that when the site was being cleared, his inexperienced plant operator had knocked out a lot of pegs and had simply hammered them back into the ground where he thought they should have been. Whatever the real reason, I heard that the supervisor was sacked and ended up managing a haberdashery shop.

The work went on, incorporating the lower road level and we were eventually called up to Kilmore to double-check the levels of some critical pegs along the top of the deep cutting. At this stage, traffic was being routed through the cutting on a temporary, unsealed track. Blasting was going on and from time to time the traffic was halted to allow this to proceed. We had stopped for a smoke-oh during one of these traffic halts and were watching the powder monkey walking about the blasting site, calmly lighting the many fuses protruding from the ground.

Not long after he had walked away we heard shouts and car horns from the waiting line of cars and saw, to our amazement, a smallish red vehicle driven by a woman swerve around the flagman holding up the traffic and proceed along the track towards the blasting area. When she saw the smoke hissing out of the ground ahead of her, the penny must have dropped and she hit the brakes, barely 100 ft. away from the blast site. In those days, OH&S measures were minimal and there were no heavy blast mats to prevent rocks from being thrown up. The woman had barely stopped when the charges blew with a mighty whump and a cloud of dust - out of which large chunks of rock flew through the air and crashed all around her. Miraculously, none of them landed on her car. She must have sat there for five minutes before she recovered her wits and drove shakily off towards Broadford.

Pretty Sally Hill

In the early 1960s the Hume Highway climbed up the Great Dividing Range from the little township of Wallan in a long, straight upgrade that tested the endurance of many trucks. Some distance before the summit the long straight ended with a 90-degree bend to the left followed by a short straight and then another 90-degree bend to the right. Many vehicles came to grief on the bend at the beginning of the long, straight downgrade.

I saw two accidents near the summit. One involved an old furniture removal van, which had been labouring up the hill from Wallan. As it negotiated the left-hand bend the rather tall vehicle slowly toppled over with a loud and somewhat musical crash. It was full of furniture, including a piano. I felt sorry for the poor people who were moving house. On another occasion, we were returning from Kilmore when we encountered three men standing by the side of the road on the downhill side of the sharp right hander. They were terrazzo tilers and their trailer, containing a large, specialised concrete mixer, had parted company with their truck on the bend and sailed off into space and disintegrated into many pieces, far down the boulder-strewn hill. They were in tears, as the lost trailer was a major part of their business.

After many complaints from the road transport industry, the government funded new highway works at Pretty Sally. The new alignment would keep the long upgrade but cross the summit at a lower point and provide four lanes to allow cars to pass slower trucks. The CRB Plans and Survey Division was given the task of designing the road works and preparing the plans. A contract was eventually let for the works, but by the time they were completed, the contractor went broke and sued the CRB for negligence in preparing the design.

The court case was quite interesting and revealed shortcomings on both sides. To begin with, the contractor had no experience in blasting solid rock in the long, deep cutting and had over-blasted by about 10 feet on either side. This created a huge problem with disposing of the surplus rock, which had to be transported to nearby fill areas and placed in massive berms. However, under skilled questioning by the contractor's QC, the CRB was forced to admit that its design crew had erred in its balanced earthworks calculations by assuming that the material in the cuttings was clay and shale - not rock. In other words, had the cut material been clay and shale the excavated volume would have compacted by about 15% and would have been just sufficient to construct the intervening fill areas.

However, because the cut material was solid rock, albeit hidden beneath a deceptive layer of dirt and grass, it did not compact and instead bulked out in volume by about 15%. This meant that even if the contractor had blasted correctly he would still have had nearly 30% more filling material than was needed. It was an understandable mistake by a draftsman and one that escaped the scrutiny of the senior draftsman - who was absolutely mortified.

Despite this damning evidence against the CRB, the judgement went against the contractor because, under the terms of the contract it was the contractor's responsibility to check that the plans were correct. The contractor's name was Bill Singline, from Tasmania, who lost everything. Curiously, his name was to pop up in the late 1960s when he was the Chairman and key stakeholder of a mining company, Tasminex, which was involved in a major share manipulation fraud. A recent mining journal article reported:

There were market rumours about Tasminex undertaking drilling at Mt Venn that saw its price rise from \$A2.30 to \$A18.50. When Tasminex's chairman and key shareholder, Tasmanian businessman Bill Singline, mentioned to journalist Trevor Sykes that the company had struck massive sulphides and the prospect could be bigger than Poseidon (Poseidon Ltd had been the catalyst for the share market rage with its Mt Windarra nickel find). Sykes filed the story that evening, too late for most Australian deadlines, but on its release in time for the London market, with the share price rising as high as \$A75. From that point it was all downhill, ending with a Tasmanian Government investigation disclosing that Singline sold shares in this peak period to realise \$1 million, a massive sum in those days.

The Gordon Collis incident

Every now and then I would find myself in the lift with one of the Board members and I always tried to become invisible - along with everybody else. I remember one exquisitely embarrassing incident in a packed lift descending to the lobby when the Board member, Caleb Roberts, who was the son of the famous artist Tom Roberts, who founded the famous Heidelberg School of Art. Mr. Roberts, mistook me for Gordon Collis, who was my height and also had short red hair. Collis was a well-known footballer (who won the Brownlow Medal in 1964), playing at centre-half-back for Carlton in the Victorian Football League. Mr. Roberts asked if I would be playing at centre-half-back on Saturday, and I mumbled "Yes, Sir". He said "Well, good luck then" and stepped out of the lift. Everybody else in the lift knew I wasn't Gordon, but none of them said a word or looked sideways at me.

This concludes John's recollections. Thanks to John for allowing us to publish them. It was quite a roller coaster!

TRIVIA AND DIDACTIC WHIMSIES

Reunion of Greats

In response to the invitation for a rather unusual reunion of all time greats -

Newton said he'd drop in, Socrates said he'd think about it, Ohm resisted the idea, Boyle said he was under too much pressure, Darwin said he'd wait to see what evolved, Pierre and Marie Curie radiated enthusiasm, Volta was electrified at the prospect, Pavlov positively drooled at the thought, Ampere was worried he wasn't current enough though alternately none were, Audubon said he'd have to wing it, Edison thought it would be illuminating, Einstein said it would be relatively easy to attend, Archimedes was buoyant at the thought, Dr Jekyll declined - he said he hadn't been feeling himself lately, Morse said, "I'll be there on the dot. Can't stop now, must dash", Gauss was asked to attend because of his magnetism, Hertz said he planned to attend with greater frequency in the future, Watt thought it would be a good way to let off steam, Wilbur Wright accepted, provided he and Orville could get a flight, and Dr. Sigmund Freud couldn't help but give it the slip!

Sound advice

A young man and a priest were playing golf together. At a short par three the priest asked, "What are you going to use on this hole, my son?"

The young man said, "An 8-iron, father, how about you."

The priest said, "I'm going to hit a soft seven and pray."

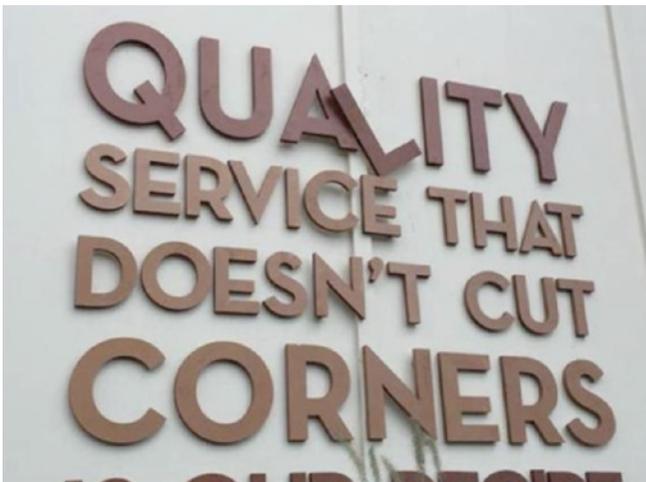
The young man hit his 8-iron and put the ball on the green.

The priest topped his 7-iron and dribbled the ball out a few metres.

The young man said, "I don't know about you, father, but in my church, when we pray, we keep our head down."



Unfortunate ironies



1984 mystery

Barry Atkinson gave me this photograph showing then Chairman Tom Russell chatting up a couple of dudes in what looks like the theatre. The negative number indicates it was 1984. The mystery remains however. Who are the other two people and what was the occasion?

