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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>*



Dear Members

This November marks the 27<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the opening of the West Gate Bridge. What is interesting about that day is how the motoring public reacted and the events that followed. The picture above shows the huge turnout on the evening it was opened by the Premier, Rupert Hamer in November 1978.

The West Gate Bridge was one of Victoria's most anticipated infrastructure projects when it finally opened in November 1978 after 10 years of construction, including the tragic collapse that killed 35 workers in 1970. Privately built, its cost was intended to be recovered by user tolls over a 40-year period - after which it was to be handed over to the Government, cost-free.

As Victoria's first tolled bridge in modern times, it was built in concert with the State-funded Lower Yarra Freeway, which connected the Princes Highway at Laverton North with Williamstown Road, and had been opened for traffic in 1971.

As an incentive to use the new bridge, a short toll-free period was declared so that potential users could truly appreciate the savings in costs and travel time the new bridge would offer them. However, many road users were not convinced, and after the toll-free period ended, they shunned the new bridge and, despite studies showing that using the bridge was cheaper, large numbers continued using congested alternative routes through Brooklyn and Footscray.



This picture from the Melbourne Age shows the westbound toll gates at 5.00 pm in an evening peak of 1979.

While Sydneysiders had been paying tolls on their Harbour Bridge since 1932, Victorian motorists clearly viewed tolls in their State as an alien concept – even though the West Gate tolls had been publicly discussed for the preceding ten years. Accustomed to the toll-free convenience of Melbourne’s growing network of freeways, they were not prepared to pay for using a new bridge.

The original bridge tolls were \$0.60 each way for cars, meaning a two-way journey would cost commuters \$1.20 per day. In today’s money the two-way trip would amount to \$7.62, which compares favourably to the \$8.82 peak-hour two-way trip across the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

In 1985, with traffic volumes still languishing, the John Cain Government went to the March election promising to remove the tolls. In November 1985 Cain kept his promise and patronage quickly increased by 45%. I don’t know how much it cost the State, but it was only one of many financial actions, including the Tricontinental, Pyramid and State Bank events that led to Victoria’s major financial crisis and the election of the Kennett Government in 1992.

Following the removal of the tolls, the collection booths were demolished and the adjacent West Gate Administration Building was handed over to the RCA to initially house the project staff of the West Gate Freeway before it later became the West Gate Training and Conference Centre. In his recent story about Vic Asher in Newsletter 273, David Jellie described working in this building during the construction of the elevated section of the West Gate Freeway across South Melbourne. Many of our members would have attended conferences and training courses at this centre and will remember it with affection.

Despite its changed use, the Admin. building still retained most of its original features, including the control room, which overlooked the toll booths. It was still possible to walk along the original tunnel beneath the freeway, which connected the building to the two toll collection points.

In 2010 the State Government sold the 3.1-hectare site at 12-62 Cook Street for around \$13 million to property developer MAB Corporation, who demolished it in late 2011 to clear the way for a new industrial park.

## WHAT'S COMING UP?



This year's Association Christmas party will take place on Thursday 11 December. This is our most popular function and is a great way to wind up the year's activities. Partners and friends are most welcome.

Our Christmas lunch will be held at the Waverley RSL Club which is located at the eastern end of Coleman Parade near the Glen Waverley Shopping Centre. For those wishing to travel by public transport, the RSL is opposite Glen Waverley Station which is the end of the line. There is off-street parking adjacent to the centre but we recommend coming early to secure your spot.

We are planning to start at 11.45 am and we will sit down to lunch at around 12.30 pm. We have a separate room on the first floor with access via the lift.

The cost of the lunch will be \$50 per head (same as last year) which is payable in advance. This cost covers a two course lunch (main and dessert) with two options for each course with alternating serves. Tea and coffee will also be available. Drinks, at bar prices, will be available at the bar, located in the room. It is easier if you have photo ID for entry to the club. Your driver licence will do.

Guests will also have a chance of taking home one of the two Christmas hampers on offer to attendees.

If you wish to attend, please contact Ken Vickery on 0409 561 618 or [kenvickery@tpg.com.au](mailto:kenvickery@tpg.com.au)

Payment should be made in advance via electronic transfer to the VicRoads Association account as follows:

BSB: 083323

Account number: 170934017

Please make sure when paying that you include your name as the transaction reference so that the payment can be attributed to you. Also, if you have any special dietary requirements, please advise Ken when you make your booking.

This is an excellent venue and last year's lunch was the most successful ever. It would be wonderful to catch up with many of you then to celebrate Christmas and friendships.

### **Vale John Torpey**

We were saddened to note the passing of John Torpey, husband of Sandra Torpey, on 10 November 2025. John, aged 80, died in his sleep. Our deepest sympathies to Sandra, who is well known to Road Safety and R&L staff, and her family.

## Moving into 2026 ...

### VicRoads Association 2026 Committee

Our 2026 Annual General Meeting (AGM) will take place on Monday 2 March at the Waverley RSL.

It will be the first AGM under our new Rules of Association, approved by members at our last AGM. These rules resulted in a change to our financial year (it now ends on 31 December each year) and, in accordance with best practice for incorporated associations, a change to voting at this and future AGMs. There will be more advice about this in our December newsletter.

One of the other matters dealt with each year at our AGM is the membership of the Committee overseeing our Association. The Committee meets six times a year with meetings lasting just over an hour. Being a Committee Member is not an onerous role but it is a very important one to the future of the Association and its ongoing activities.

Any member interested in joining the Association's Committee for 2026, or in the future, should contact the Secretary, Jill Earnshaw (jillmearnshaw@gmail.com), who can chat with you about what is involved. Jill can email you a nomination form which would need to be completed and returned to her before 19 January 2026 ahead of the Committee's February meeting before the AGM.

At its November meeting the existing Committee determined that it will be putting a motion to the AGM, recommending that the number of positions on the Committee remain at 12. Should the number of nominations, including those from existing Committee members, exceed the number of Committee positions available, an election may be required.



## The advent of the Road Construction Authority – by John Wright

The election of John Cain's Labor Government in 1982 not only ended Labor's 27 years in the electoral wilderness, but it also marked the beginning of a major change in the management of Victoria's infrastructure and transport services.

Until 1983, Victoria's transport authorities had operated as semi-independent organisations<sup>1</sup>, neither completely autonomous nor fully accountable. While previous Liberal governments had partly addressed issues of poor inter-authority co-ordination, duplication of services and general efficiency<sup>2</sup>, they were keenly aware that the Transport Ministry lacked the power, status and resources to control and co-ordinate the higher-ranking heads of the main authorities<sup>3</sup>.

Determined to establish direct ministerial control of its statutory bodies, the newly elected Labor government introduced the *Transport Act* in 1983, which abolished seven authorities including the Victorian Railways Board, the Melbourne Metropolitan Tramways Board, the Transport Regulation Board, the Road Safety and Traffic Authority and the Country Roads Board - establishing in their places the Metropolitan Transit Authority (MTA), the State Transport Authority (STA), the Road Traffic Authority (RTA) and the Road Construction Authority (RCA).



Under the new structure, the Transport Ministry was administered by Director-General and Minister Steve Crabb<sup>4</sup>, who now outranked the chief executives of the authorities under his control. The Ministry was finally able to co-ordinate services and take responsibility for planning, policy development and budgeting for all the transport authorities.

With the demise of the CRB on 1 July 1983, the new RCA was managed by the CRB's former Chairman, Tom Russell and the title 'Engineer' disappeared from all senior positions, to be replaced by 'Manager'. Its organisational structure was similarly changed. The previous Engineer in Chief's, Secretary's and Chief Accountants branches had now become Operations, Planning and Design, and Corporate Administration. The ten Divisions had become Regions and their Divisional Engineers were now Regional Managers.

Some of the changes created new problems. Ted Barton, who was then in charge of the CRB's Traffic Engineering Division (TED), recalls that more than half of his staff were moved to the newly created RTA. All traffic signal planning and design, which had previously been a joint responsibility of the CRB and RoSTA<sup>5</sup>, was now the sole responsibility of the RTA. However, because the RCA still remained responsible for considerable traffic design work it would now be

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<sup>1</sup> The *Age* Newspaper of the day referred to them as 'fiefdoms'.

<sup>2</sup> In 1974 the MMBW's responsibility for urban roads was transferred to the CRB

<sup>3</sup> A special Public Service Board review commissioned by the previous Liberal Minister, Mr Maclellan, reported that the Ministry was not able to effectively manage the total transport task or develop long-term strategies.

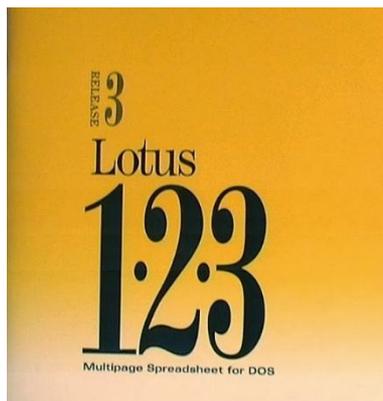
<sup>4</sup> In 1985, Tom Roper became the Transport Minister.

<sup>5</sup> The Road Safety and Traffic Authority

required to seek the RTA's agreement to purchase, design, construct, erect, install, maintain, and operate traffic signals and other traffic facilities.

To prepare staff for the coming changes, regular presentations were made throughout Victoria by the new Head Office General Managers, which included slick professional videos produced by external consultants. These promoted a strong emphasis on customer service, improved efficiency and the need to run the RCA along commercial lines.

As part of the overall corporatisation process, areas within the RCA were deemed to be business areas and would become customers of, or suppliers to, other business areas. Business area managers were required to assess their service delivery costs and charge other business areas accordingly with a view to recovering them. They were also required to draw up Service Level Agreements with their 'customers'.



The new organisation wanted to greatly increase the use of computers, with emphasis on producing electronic documents using the new *Word-Perfect* system. Typing pools slowly disappeared and their staff were assigned to new duties. Managers found themselves attending crash courses in Lotus 1-2-3 at West Gate so they could prepare spreadsheets for their area's activities on the (then) few communal PC's.

The use of computers to improve communication and better integrate the regions was initially problematic because users needed to possess a high proficiency in using Microsoft's numerous DOS<sup>6</sup> commands, which of course was the subject of another new training course at West Gate. The dreaded *syntax error* message appearing on screens plagued many new users of the system, and computer support people quickly became the high priests of the new organisation.

The new government soon revealed a very strong, anti-freeway bias. Around 1987, in the face of appalling traffic congestion along Waverley Road, the Cain Government reluctantly constructed the 'missing link' between the ends of the Mulgrave Freeway at Warragul Road and the South Eastern Freeway at Toorak Road, calling it the *South Eastern Arterial Link*. Not wishing to be seen building a freeway, (and probably concerned about funding the extra cost) the MoT ordered signalised at-grade intersections be constructed in place of the planned grade-separated interchanges at Warrigal, Burke, Tooronga and Toorak Roads<sup>7</sup>.

This strategy resulted in the creation of the infamous 'South Eastern Car Park' between Warragul Road and Toorak Road, where traffic barely moved during peak hours. In the final years of the Labor government, one Transport Minister seriously proposed terminating the Eastern Freeway at Springvale Road and the building of an overpass of the Maroondah Highway at Nunawading to alleviate any consequent congestion problems.

The Cain Government also wanted to change the CRB's long-standing approach to road planning in which community consultation for new, major projects was effectively delegated to the M&MBW<sup>8</sup> and municipal councils when their planning schemes needed to be amended to include those works. At that stage of the planning process, communities were effectively being presented with a *fait accompli* in which the major decisions had already been taken. No doubt,

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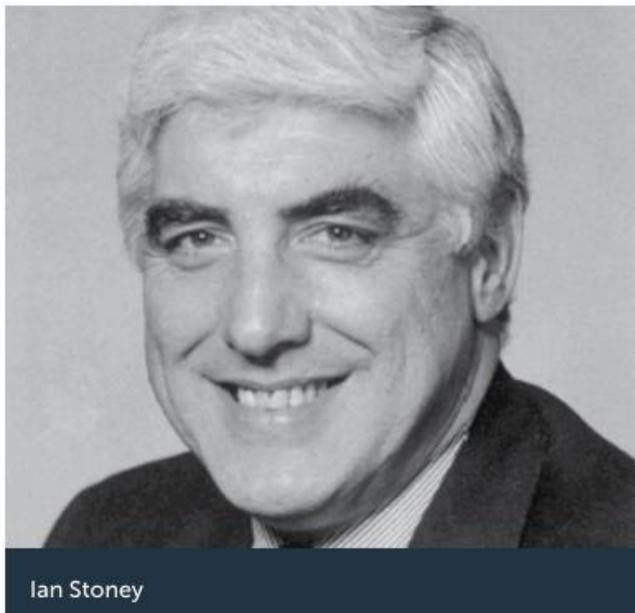
<sup>6</sup> Microsoft's Disc Operation System. It was thankfully replaced by Windows in 1985.

<sup>7</sup> These intersections were eventually grade separated in the mid-90s under the Kennett government

<sup>8</sup> Melbourne and Metropolitan Board of Works. It was the de facto, unelected planning authority for Melbourne until the Ministry for Planning and Environment was created in 1987

some Labor MPs still remembered the violent Collingwood protests<sup>9</sup> about the impact of the Eastern Freeway on the trees in Alexandra Parade in 1977 and wished to be part of a more socially inclusive government.

Consequently, the new government transferred most of the RCA's road planning function into the Ministry of Transport (MoT), with the Minister's roads advisor now playing a significant role in road planning and policy. One of the transferees was Jim Webber, then Assistant Chief Planning Engineer. During his five years with the MoT, Jim directed MoT/RCA project teams in major community consultation exercises including one to reduce heavy truck traffic on Pascoe Vale Road. In 1987 the MoT returned planning responsibility to the RCA.



The major event of 1987 was the appointment of Ian F X Stoney to the position of Managing Director, replacing Robin Underwood who had been temporarily appointed following the retirement of Tom Russell.

Stoney had come from the Victorian Ports Authority with instructions to reduce staff numbers and his own strong belief that *New Age Thinking* could help staff realise their full potential.

I recall that he also removed qualification barriers to senior positions, focussing instead on ability, and made it possible for staff to transfer at the same level between different business areas – something that I was personally grateful for, as it allowed me to move from a position I was effectively stuck in, to one more suited to my abilities.

The three-day *New Age Thinking* seminars, which were open to all staff, were authored by former US prison administrator Lou Tice, who had been saddened by seeing newly released, long-term prisoners committing new crimes so that they could be gaoled again and return to the lives they felt comfortable in.

The course was intended to encourage RCA staff to accept change by demonstrating how easy it is to remain 'comfortable' in an unsatisfactory work or life situation. The intention was that many attendees would recognise their poor, current work and personal situations, overcome their inertia and move out of their 'comfort zones' into new and more fulfilling lives. And of course, it would add value to the new organisation.

The seminars had some unexpected outcomes. Some quite talented individuals concluded that they were wasting their time with the RCA – and promptly left. One of my friends attended with his wife, who took the principal lesson to heart. She obviously said to herself, 'Am I happy with my married situation?' and 'Do I want to continue in it?' The answers to both questions must have been 'No', because she left him shortly after.

Many other things changed under Stoney. David Jellie in his 2016 Newsletter obituary of Ian Stoney noted:

'Some of the CRB's traditional functions were outsourced – the selling off of the plant fleet and the line marking section come to mind – and our direct labour forces were totally eliminated. All of these functions were transferred to the private sector and other

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<sup>9</sup> The CRB actually made a dawn chainsaw raid on the median trees in Alexandra Parade while protesters were still asleep.

technical functions such as road and bridge design, and materials research were reduced and transferred away. Many long-term members of the staff felt threatened by these changes as they felt that the efficiency of the organisation and the quality of its outputs would be compromised.'

And then, like the popular model of an expanding and contracting universe, everything came back together<sup>10</sup> in July 1989 with the creation of VicRoads, which saw the RTA merged with the RCA.

The East Gippsland, South Western and Wimmera Mallee regional offices were closed. Dandenong Division was renamed South Eastern Metropolitan Region; Central Gippsland became Eastern Region; Central Highlands became Western Region; Geelong became South Western Region and a new, North West Metropolitan Region was created. Registration and Licensing staff began moving from Carlton into Head Office.

In writing this relatively brief account of the RCA I appreciate that I have barely skimmed the surface of the impacts of this huge event, and because of my background I have written it from a CRB perspective. I would very much like to hear the experiences of readers, including those from bodies other than the CRB, who were working at that time.

John Wright

### **David Jellie on the establishment of the Country Roads Board**

[Editor's note: The preceding article described the concerns of both Liberal and Labor Victorian governments in the 1980's about the independence of the CRB. In this most interesting article, David Jellie explains why the 1913 Victorian government went out of its way to ensure that its newly minted road authority would be as independent as possible.]

The Country Roads Board was originally set up in 1913 as a Statutory Authority. This is a public body created by specific legislation to serve a public purpose. In the case of the CRB the legislation was the *Country Roads Act*. It established a Board of three people expert in the field, to define and manage Victoria's road network.

As I understand it, the CRB was empowered by the Act to act on behalf of the government and was responsible for setting rules and standards in its field, monitoring their implementation and ongoing application, and managing the public funds provided by the Government for this purpose.

This did not mean that the CRB was free to do what it liked because it was accountable to a Minister who, in turn, was accountable to Parliament.

Many politicians were agitated that a Board of three people, independent of parliamentary pressure, should be empowered to define the state's road system. H.R. McKenzie was the Minister for Lands and he played a major role in establishing the CRB. The independent 'Board' structure was designed to place road finances and control beyond the political pork barrelling that had previously been applied to closer settlement.<sup>11</sup>

McKenzie was concerned about politicians pushing their own interests to the detriment of the state as a whole. Municipalities had previously been asked for information on main roads, but according to them, nearly all their roads were national roads. McKenzie asserted that 'nothing has been suggested better than the independent, unprejudiced authority which we propose.

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<sup>10</sup> The last time all these bodies (or their predecessor organisations) were together was in 1961, when they were all housed in the Eastern Annexe of the Exhibition Building.

<sup>11</sup> The term 'closer settlement' was used at the time to refer to the urbanisation of larger cities, where many politicians had successfully lobbied for better roads – whereas in more remote regions there was less road funding due to poorer political representation.

The municipalities must be prejudiced because of the money involved'. He made it clear that the great advantage of the independent Board was that it put decisions about Victoria's road system beyond the reach of lobby groups, whether at local or State level. Nevertheless, his opponents expressed concern at this denigration of the prevailing parliamentary processes, to which Victoria's appalling roads were a monument.

To illustrate the lack of vision at the time of the establishment of the CRB, no Victorian politician considered constructing roads for motorized vehicles. Roads were meant for horse drawn carriages. Prior to the creation of the CRB car owners had been fair game for those seeking revenue to maintain roads – despite the fact that the roads were being used largely for horse drawn traffic. Although motoring representatives protested the injustice of taxing a small minority to pay for maintenance of roads for all, they were ignored. The justification for taxing motorists was that cars damaged the roads, and on badly built and poorly maintained macadam<sup>12</sup> roads this was true.

William Calder, Engineer of Prahran Council and later the first Chairman of the CRB, was quoted in Parliament as arguing that cars driven at proper speeds did little damage to good macadam, and virtually none to smooth roads. Heavy horse drawn wagons had destroyed Victorian roads from the outset, and were thus 'normal', whereas the new motor vehicles were akin to 'witch's brooms'.

The Victorian *Country Roads Act* of 1912 was based upon United States models. McKenzie claimed that 22 American States operated a system along the lines proposed in Victoria. Each State had a Highway Board as an overseeing authority, and the counties and towns in each State contributed according to their abilities. In Victoria, the decision about what proportion was to be provided locally was to be left to the independent Board.

One important difference was that the American model had a Federal Highway Board that confined its activities to road research and education, and in Victoria, the State body took over that responsibility. It wasn't until 1960, when that the Australian Road Research Board (ARRB) was formed, that Australian States aligned fully with the American model.

For decades railways had provided the answer to rural arterial transport problems, in an economy dependent on primary production. Vast sums had been expended on this response to the 'tyranny of distance'. Main roads were viewed as extensions to the railway system and many years were to pass before highway traffic was to compete with railways. Few politicians were concerned about arterial roads.

Rural members of Parliament were concerned that the new 'expensive bureaucracy' would devour road funds, and they urged that the Board be selected from public service staff to operate within a Ministerial context. Exponents of the new Bill argued that such a framework would perpetuate problems current at the time. Only an independent board could slice through self-interest to achieve a fair selection of main roads eligible for government funds. Advocates of the Bill were adamant that no Minister of State could cope, because of the expert knowledge required and because of his constant exposure to lobbying.

The Board commenced its work in March 1913 and at the end of the month they commenced their epic journey of the State's shires, studying road conditions and taking detailed notes on prospective main roads. The three board members – William Calder, W.T.B. McCormack and F.W. Fricke – reflected credit on those responsible, given the major aims of bringing roads into rural area and making primary production profitable in sparsely populated districts. Calder later stated that the only instruction he ever received was that CRB funds were to be distributed across Victoria.

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<sup>12</sup> Macadam roads are a type of road construction developed by Scottish engineer John Loudon McAdam in the early 19th century, using layers of crushed stone to create a durable and well-drained surface.

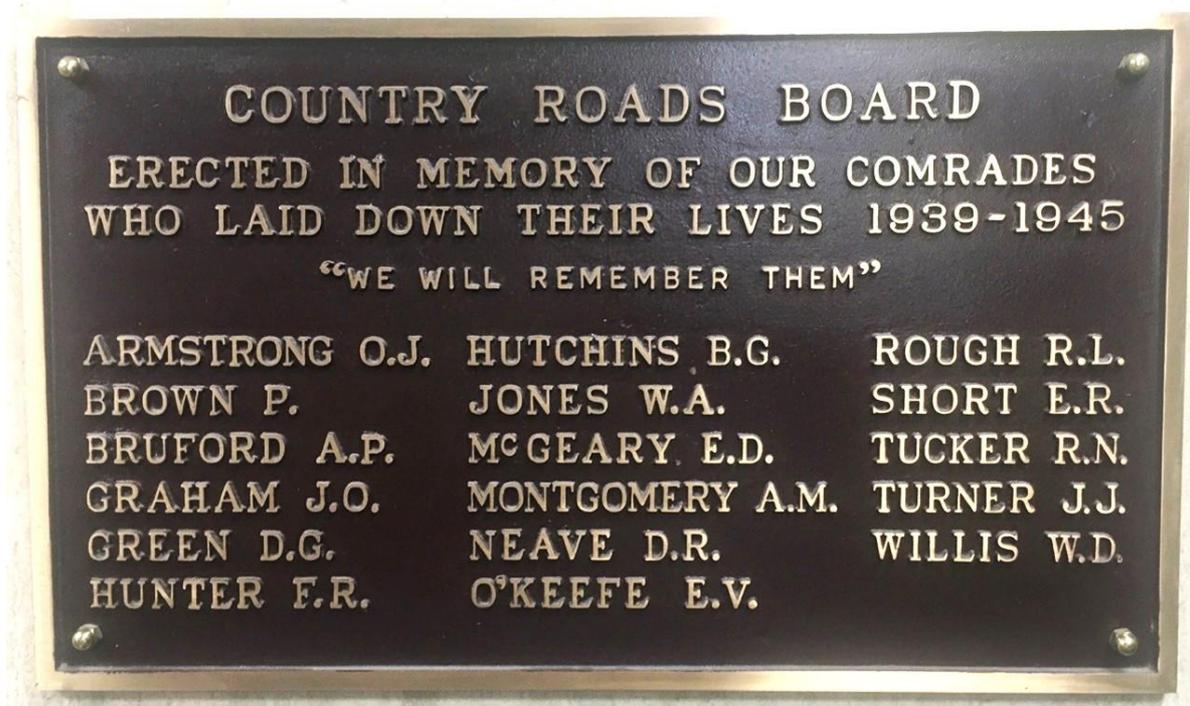
The CRB was the first State Road Authority in Australia. It was created at a time of intense political lobbying and interference and its independence served Victoria well. It developed world-recognised technology, corporate knowledge and expertise that has blown away so quickly with the demise of VicRoads in 2019. Woe is me!

David Jellie

## Lest We Forget

The Honour Roll for the CRB was located on the wall to the right of the door leading in to the lift foyer at Head Office in Kew. For the Second World War, 17 names are shown indicating those who were killed on active service. During my research for *Roads to War*, I found another name – Ernest Lingenberg – who also died, but his name was overlooked on the Honour Roll. Ernest was from Foxhow in Western Victoria and he was 32 years old when he was killed on the Kokoda Track in August 1942.

So, there were 18 staff and employees of the CRB who never returned. It is heartbreaking to think that all these young men lost their lives, far from home and far from the people who loved them. Those who loved them would have carried their remorse to their graves and after them, they are largely forgotten.



None of us now living would have known any of these men so it is appropriate that we remember them and record our gratitude for their sacrifice. Over the next few newsletters, I will provide their stories. Here are the first three.

### Lance Sergeant Oliver John Armstrong, VX 29137

Oliver was nearly 32 when he enlisted at Sale in June 1940. He came from Johnsonville (in Gippsland) and he gave his vocation as 'Bridge construction'. He was born in Swan Reach in East Gippsland in September 1908.

He did his initial training in Bendigo and Seymour and then transferred to Sydney where he embarked on 2 February 1941 on a ship, identified in the archive as '2 M', for Singapore. He was hospitalised with malaria – three times - and pyrexia (fever).



Oliver Armstrong's enlistment photograph - 1940

He was appointed Lance Sergeant while serving in Malaya with the 2nd/10th Field Company and was killed in action on 14 February 1942.

His Burial Return certificate indicates he was killed in the Cathay Buildings in Singapore and he was temporarily buried with a sealed bottle containing his particulars. He is now buried at the Kranji War Cemetery in Singapore.

Oliver's death was conveyed to his sister in Wantirna because the record said that his mother, Una, was not in good enough health to receive the news. Poor Una. She lost Oliver's older brother, Arthur, in the First World War in France in July 1916. Another younger brother, Alfred, tried to enlist but was rejected as medically unfit for service, but he died two years later when a tree fell on him.

In his will Oliver said, 'I give all my property to Una May Armstrong to be divided as she thinks best'. On Anzac Day 2019, Oliver was mentioned in a broadcast on the ABC as having a keen sense of humour, despite contracting malaria while serving in Singapore. Apparently, Oliver had always dreamed of settling down in Gippsland with his sweetheart, Hilda.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL P12496.001



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Two brothers, two wars, two deaths and one broken family. Lance Sergeant Oliver John Armstrong (ex-CRB) and his brother (on the right), Sergeant Arthur William Armstrong.



Oliver John Armstrong and his burial place, Kranji War Cemetery, Singapore.

## Private Patrick (Paddy) Brown, VX26172

The only Patrick Brown that I could find on the Commonwealth War Graves database who enlisted in Victoria and who was killed in action was Private Patrick Brown VX26172. He was born in Londonderry in Northern Ireland in 1902. He was a Special Constable in the Ulster Special Constabulary during the Troubles in the 1920s in Londonderry and emigrated to Australia in the mid-1920s. I can't be certain that he is the one on the Roll of Honour as he gave his occupation as 'miner'.



Paddy Brown (marked with x) on the emigration ship to Australia. From the collection of his great nephew – Peter McCandless

Paddy lived in Carlton but enlisted in Caulfield in June 1940. He commenced in No. 8 Training Depot in Albury and in August he joined 2nd/23rd Australian Infantry Battalion. He arrived in the Middle East in December 1940 and was killed in action (machine-gunned by a German aircraft) on the Derna Road in Libya on 5 April 1941. At this time, the 2nd/23rd was proceeding towards Tobruk. He was 39 years old. He is buried near the place where he fell.

Patrick Brown – portrait migrated from key photograph.



His file in the National Archives of Australia contains a sealed envelope which I was unable to view. I have no ideas about its contents. He is commemorated at the Alamein Memorial in Egypt.



The Alamein Memorial where Patrick Brown is buried.

I have no information about his employment with the CRB so there is some doubt about the authenticity of this man being the one on the CRB Honour Roll.

His niece, Agnes Long, of Londonderry in Northern Ireland wrote to the Australian Army in 2000 seeking details of his war service and custody of his service medals. She explained that Patrick was unmarried and the only relatives he had were in Northern Ireland.

### **Lance Corporal Alexander Peter Romilly Bruford, VX 60359**

Alexander was engaged by the Board as a junior draftsman in February 1939 and he enlisted with the AIF in August 1941.

He was born in Hawthorn in 1922 and became a Lance Corporal in the 2nd/5th Independent Company – later to become the 2nd/5th Commando Squadron. This company was intensively trained in irregular warfare for use in sabotage and reconnaissance roles. It was formed in 1942 after Japan had entered the war.

No. 7 Infantry Training Centre was established at Wilsons Promontory in Victoria. The terrain surrounding the centre consisted of high rugged mountains, swift streams and swamps making it ideal for training soldiers in the art of guerrilla warfare.



Alexander Bruford's  
enlistment photograph –  
1941.



No.7 Infantry Training Centre in Victoria at Wilson's promontory. Mount Oberon in the background was used by the company as part of its physical training course.

The company departed Townsville in Queensland, in April 1942 on the SS *Taroona* bound for Port Moresby in New Guinea. They arrived in the middle of an air raid. They were deployed a month later to Wau, in a valley inland from Lae and Salamaua. They were part of Kanga Force that consisted of the 2nd/5th, the New Guinea Volunteer Rifles and a platoon from the 1st Independent Company. Their task was to observe and harass the Japanese at Lae and Salamaua.

They were the first Allied force in the Second World War to be flown into action as a complete unit. Despite appalling conditions, enduring soaking and tropical conditions – and with scant food supplies and medication - they continually harassed the Japanese in the area.

At the end of June 1942, the company launched a raid on a Japanese aerodrome at Salamaua. This was the first Allied attack on Japanese land forces anywhere. The raiders formed into several parties each with mortar support. Heavy rain fell throughout their approach during the night, but it later cleared and early the following morning, the Australians attacked various areas between the Francisco River and Kela Point, destroying buildings, vehicles and a bridge.

The Japanese lost 100 men while only three Australians were wounded. During the raid, a Japanese pilot, attempting to reach his aircraft, ran into the commandos and was killed. Important documents were found in a satchel carried by the pilot and these were sent to Kanga Force headquarters for analysis.

An attack on Heath's Plantation, the following night was not as successful as the element of surprise had been lost. Following the raids, the Japanese heavily shelled Kela Point and attacked the tracks leading away from Salamaua by air in an effort to cut off the raiders' withdrawal routes. The Australians withdrew from Butu to their main camp, as the Japanese sent patrols of up to 90 men into the foothills; they subsequently found the camp at Butu and destroyed it.

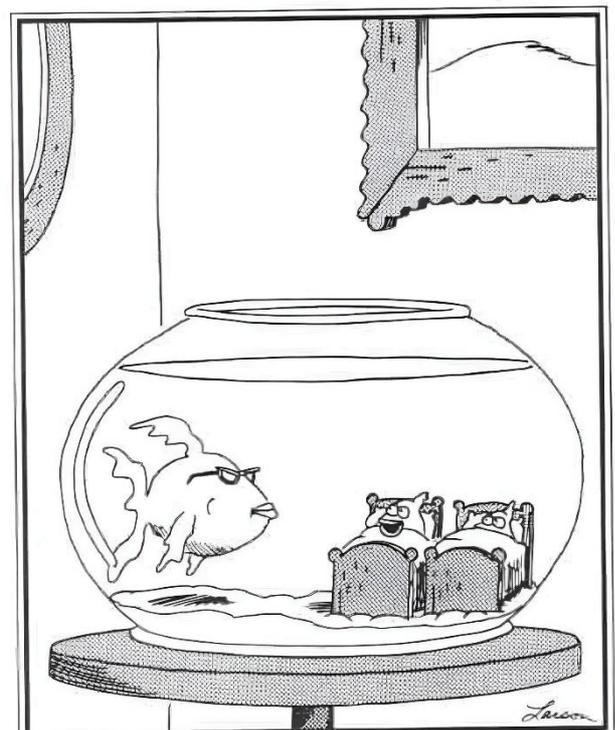
Alexander died on 24 July 1942 of injuries sustained during the campaign. He was 19. He is buried in the Lae War Cemetery in Papua New Guinea.

Alexander was the son of Captain Alexander Romilly Bruford, MC (1889 – 1934). Alexander Senior was born in Hawthorn and was a civil engineer and building surveyor. At the time of his death, he was the City Engineer at Hawthorn where he served for 14 years. Previous appointments were in the Shire of Warracknabeal and the City of Fitzroy. He served in the 14th Battalion as a lieutenant and was awarded the Military Cross at Bois de Vaires east of Corbie on 18 June 1918. On his return from the war, he was closely associated with the formation of the Returned Soldiers League. He died in 1936 of influenza. His early death relieved him of the pain of losing his son eight years later.



Lae War Cemetery where Alexander (Junior) is buried.

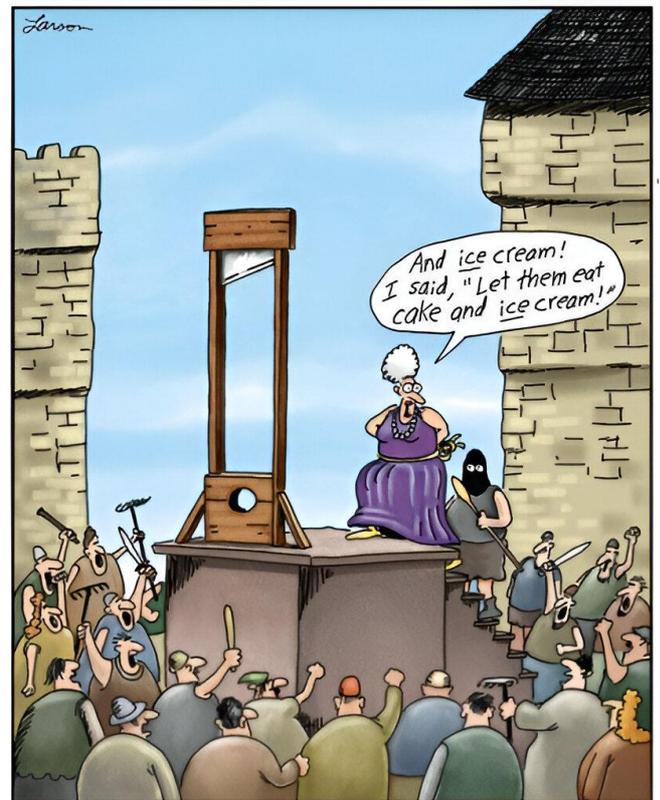
David Jellie. November 2025



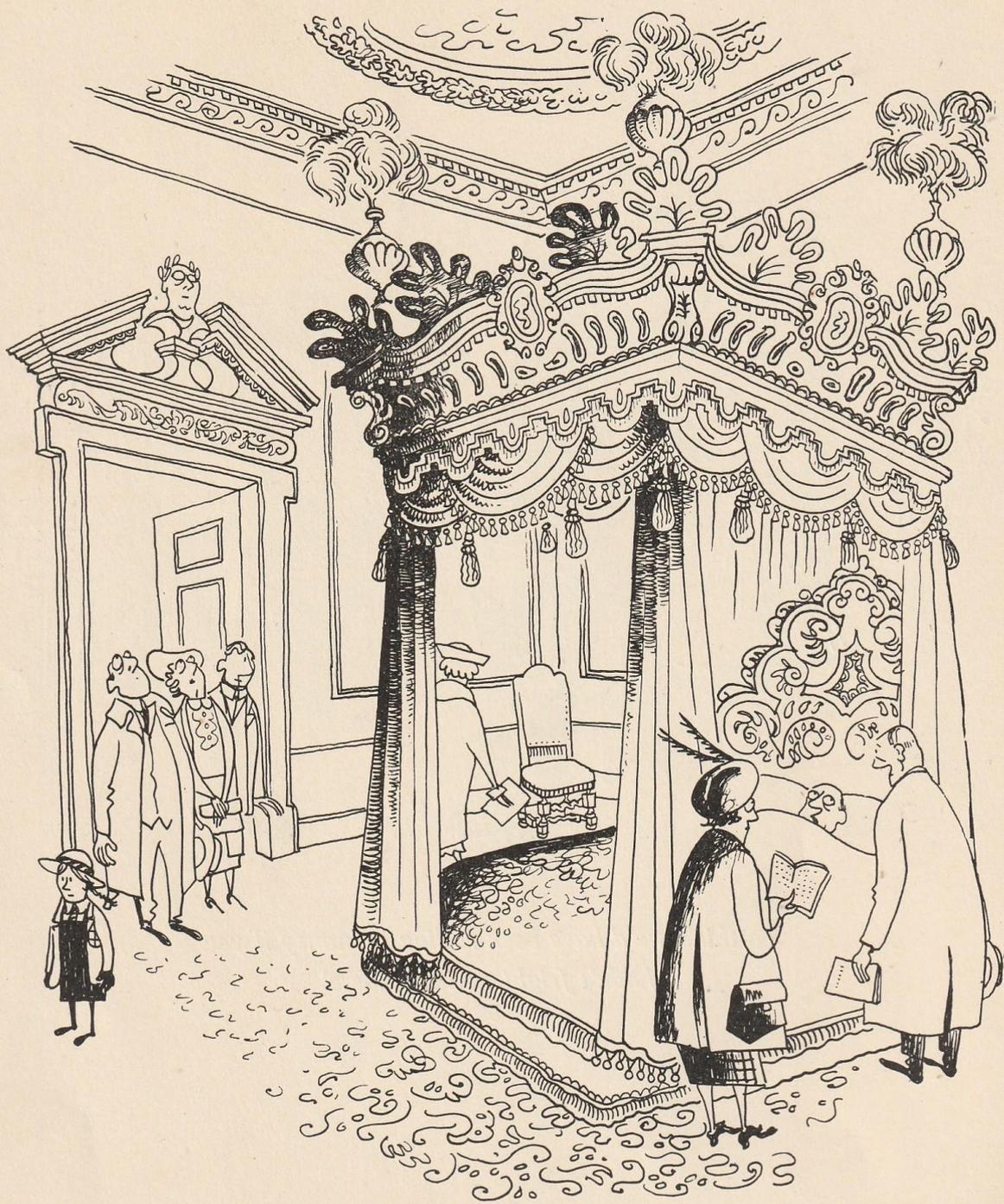
"Mom! Theron's dried his bed again."



“Well, well, well—what do we have here?  
... I do believe it's a broken taillight.”



Marie Antoinette's last-ditch effort to save her head.



*'Heavens no. I'm only the caretaker'*

# VicRoads Association Inc

Registration No A0022250S

## Membership Application Form

Email completed form to:

**Membership Secretary, VicRoads Association Inc**

**Email Address:** [irisw25@bigpond.com](mailto:irisw25@bigpond.com)

<b>First Name</b>	<input type="text"/>	<b>Surname</b>	<input type="text"/>
<b>Address</b>	<input type="text"/>		
<input type="text"/>	<b>Postcode</b>	<input type="text"/>	
<b>Telephone Number</b>	<input type="text"/>	<b>Mobile Number</b>	<input type="text"/>
<b>E-mail address</b>	<input type="text"/>	<i>Nominate an email address if you don't personally have your own</i>	
<b>Emergency Contact Name</b>	<input type="text"/>		
<b>Emergency Contact Number</b>	<input type="text"/>		

### Employment in VicRoads and antecedent/previous organisations:

<b>Date From</b>	<input type="text"/>	<b>Until To</b>	<input type="text"/>
<b>Organisation/s</b>	<input type="text"/>		
	<input type="text"/>		
	<input type="text"/>		

**Paid Direct Transfer.**

Your payment of **\$50.00** by electronic transfer should be made into the Association's NAB bank account, details as follow:

**VICROADS ASSOCIATION  
BSB 083-323  
ACC 170934017**

**Reference** - Please ensure that you include your name in the "online" transaction details so that the subscription can be attributed to you.

The information collected from members will be used solely for the purposes of managing the Association and its activities.

I agree to support the purposes of the Association and comply with its rules of the association.

**Signed**

**Date**

For more information on VicRoads Association see our website [vicroadsassociation.org](http://vicroadsassociation.org)