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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

A very happy New Year, and welcome to 2026. A long time ago, when we were all gainfully employed by VicRoads or one of its predecessors, many of us would have enjoyed the benefits of half-staff leave in that wonderfully relaxed period between Christmas and New Year's Day. One of the few kindnesses bestowed by the Board on its staff was to allow them to leave work early on New Year's Eve.

Those of us with young kids might have headed off for a joyful two weeks or so at a beach with a camping ground, like Rye or Wilson's Promontory. Sylvia and I would pack our four littlies into our ageing Ford station wagon, with loaded roof racks extending from windscreen to tailgate and, despite having overload springs, the rear mud flaps would drag on the ground until we got up a bit of speed. My kids, who are now in their 50's and 60's, all remember those wonderful January beach holidays with great affection.

The New Year hasn't always begun in January. In ancient Babylon New Year's Day was celebrated in what is now March and April, and in Egypt it was linked with the annual flooding of the Nile. In the Middle Ages it was set at the vernal equinox in the northern hemisphere, usually on March 25. Finally, on 1 January 1622, England and Scotland adopted the Gregorian calendar and declared January 1 as the first day of the New Year.

The Romans appear to have gotten the New Year timing right a long time ago because the name "January" has its origin in Latin, reflecting the Roman influence on the naming of months. It is closely connected to the god Janus, the god of beginnings and transitions, and is often interpreted as "the month of Janus" or "Janus's month."

The beginning of January is linked with many major events. The following landmark events occurred here:

- On January 1, 1856, that large island to our south ceased being called Van Diemen's Land and officially became known as Tasmania, after its Dutch discoverer. I am sure its residents, who were informally known as *Vandemonians* would have been very pleased.
- On January 1, 1901, we ceased being a collection of self-governing British colonies when federation was achieved and the Commonwealth of Australia was proclaimed. While this event did not mark independence from Great Britain, it did give Australia the right to govern itself. We only became truly independent on 3 March 1986, when the *Australia Acts* were jointly proclaimed by the Commonwealth and the United Kingdom.
- On January 1, 1911, the Northern Territory was separated from South Australia and transferred to Commonwealth control. The then Prime Minister Alfred Deakin commented '*Either we must accomplish the peopling of the Northern Territory or submit to its transfer to some other nation.*'

Not all of the events that happened here on 1 January were good. On 1 January 1915 a train pulled out of the Broken Hill railway station at Sulphide Street, carrying 1200 men, women and children in 40 open trucks fitted with wooden seats. They were on their way to a Manchester Unity Lodge picnic and were unaware that they were about to become involved in the only act of war<sup>1</sup> involving casualties on Australian soil during World War 1.

Just a few kilometres out of Broken Hill the train passed an ice-cream cart bearing a Turkish flag. At the time, our troops were fighting the Turks at Gallipoli. Two Turks lying in wait started shooting at the train, killing two picnickers immediately. A pipeline inspector cycling alongside the train was also killed, whilst a man chopping wood in the yard of a local hotel was killed by a ricocheting bullet from the Turks. Police and locals quickly descended on the scene and a gun battle ensued, during which the snipers were killed.

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This edition includes the first instalment of Australia's road transport history, which I have included to show how heavy vehicles shaped the roles of VicRoads, its predecessors and major road research and transport reform organisations like NAASRA, ARRB, Austroads, the NTC and the NHVR.

While trucks and buses comprise only 4% - 5% of the national vehicle fleet, much of the road infrastructure has been designed, within affordable limits, to accommodate their physical size and mass. Breaches of these limits by heavy vehicles impact on the infrastructure and on the safety of other road users, and in the case of breaches of environmental laws, on the health and well-being of the whole community.

We also acknowledge the contribution and achievements of John Gaffney, who was recently honoured by ITS Australia with the *Max Lay Lifetime Achievement Award*. I had the pleasure of working with John when he was the Austroads Road Use Management Program Assistant and later in 1991, when he was appointed Assistant Director of Austroads.

John Wright

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<sup>1</sup> In 1915 the Broken Hill incident was widely considered to be an act of war and it is still recorded as such on a memorial plaque at the site. However, in today's world it would probably be seen as a religiously motivated terror attack.

## **What's coming up - Our 2026 AGM – by Jill Earnshaw**

Our 2026 Annual General Meeting will take place on Monday 2 March at the Waverley RSL. All Members are invited to attend. The meeting will commence upstairs at 11.30 am. The meeting will be followed by lunch in the RSL's dining room.

It is 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 and, in accordance with best practice for incorporated associations, a change to voting at this and future AGMs.

All Members will be sent an email explaining these new rules and their implications including the need for a quorum of 10% of the members needing to vote at the AGM. We are aware many of our Members are unable to attend our AGMs. We will therefore be introducing a Proxy nomination form which members can complete and return to the Secretary before 23 February. This will assist us to ensure a voting quorum to ratify the recommendations being put to members. Please keep an eye out for that email which will include detailed explanations; consider whether or not you can come to the AGM and, if not, complete the Proxy nomination form to ensure we have a quorum for approval of the motions put to the AGM

Members are welcome to email the Secretary ([jillmearnshaw@gmail.com](mailto:jillmearnshaw@gmail.com)) and submit items of business for consideration at the AGM.

Important matters to be dealt with at the AGM are:

### **2025 Annual Report**

Our current President, John Wright, will present the annual report to Members.

### **2026 Committee**

Any member interested in joining the Association's Committee for 2026 or in the future should contact the Secretary, Jill Earnshaw ([jillmearnshaw@gmail.com](mailto:jillmearnshaw@gmail.com)) who can email you a nomination form which would need to be completed and returned to Jill before 19 January 2026.

The existing Committee 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 exceed the number of Committee positions available, an election may be required. Members will be asked to vote to approve the Committee for 2026.

### **Other matters**

Having been reviewed by the Committee, the annual accounts will be presented, the Honorary Auditor will be appointed for 2026 and a motion will be put to members to fix the joining fee and membership subscription (currently and recommended to continue to remain at \$50 once only) for the upcoming year.

The draft 2026 Program of Events will be presented at the meeting so get those pens and diaries out.

The 2026 program will kick off on 2 February with an Occasional Lunch at Doncaster Shoppingtown Hotel (12 noon for 12.30 pm). All events will continue to be advertised in our regular newsletters and emails to members and continue to be open to Members, family, friends and former colleagues.

The March AGM will be followed by what is always a very pleasant lunch at the Waverley RSL so we hope to see you there.

## Vale David Miles – by John Wright

David Miles, one of the Association's liveliest and most well-travelled members, sadly passed away on 10 January 2026 after a short illness. He was aged 80.

After early schooling at Scotch College and later at Caulfield Institute of Technology, where he studied Civil Engineering, David joined the CRB as a draftsman in 1966, commencing in Plans and Surveys on the 3<sup>rd</sup> floor at Kew Head Office.



David married Jill Kerr in 1970, setting off on their honeymoon in Jill's venerable Austin A40.

In the following year Jill and David purchased a property in Bengal Crescent Mount Waverley, where they commenced building what would become their 'forever home'. They later toured Europe in a campervan, bravely travelling with their first child Fiona, then aged about two. Sons Simon and Andrew followed.

David was already a motor sports fanatic when he met Jill. She told me one of the first places he took her – in the dark on the way home from a Sunday night church meeting, was to the Templestowe Hill Climb circuit.

Joining the CRB Car Club, David participated in car rallies (with Jill navigating for him) and gymkhanas in the then open fields of Altona. At David's memorial service one of his close friends from Caulfield IT, Geoff Beaumont, described his consuming passion for motor sports and produced a trophy David had won, competing at the Templestowe Hill Climb.

In 1974 David moved to Dandenong Division's Design Office in Nunawading, where he became a supervising draftsman working with fellow designers Norm Bettess, Enzo Calvi, Rita Banhidi, David Rowland, Dennis Maxwell, Bruce Arnot, Wally Van Veen, Paul Noisette, Peter Kotsanis and others.

During his 26-year tenure with Dandenong Division, David's interest in motor sport progressed to racing his cars, including a Simca; a Fiat sedan and a Fiat sports coupe; an Austin A30; a Mini-Minor and a Holden Astra at places like Winton against people like Peter Brock, whom he idolised, and Peter Ransom, who raced under Nubrick sponsorship.



At the Nunawading design office. From L to R. Dennis Maxwell, David Miles and David Rowland.

Norm Bettess, who was a close friend of David and Jill, paid the following tribute:

*I first met Dave in early 1966 when we both joined the CRB in Plans & Survey Division (third floor, 60 Denmark St, Kew). David sat at the desk in front of me. Our Supervising Draughtsman was Noel Anderson. We became lifelong friends with our career paths crossing several times.*

*David loved driving cars and had experienced driving both on our state roads as well as the racetracks including Winton and hill climbs at Templestowe.*

*I remember one time when we worked at Nunawading office and David Rowland was our Design Engineer. The three of us headed out Maroondah Highway in a CRB vehicle and David Miles was driving (of course), David Rowland in the front passenger seat and I was in the back seat. We needed to take a couple of levels on a project and the level and staff were in the boot. I realised we had forgotten the level book and no sooner had I told the others when Dave did a handbrake turn in the middle of Lilydale and headed back towards Nunawading stating, "Oh well, we will go back and get it!" The look on David Rowland's face was priceless and I could be heard in the back seat laughing.*

*The office at Nunawading included a beautiful garden next to the building and someone decided we should have a brick barbeque in the gardens. David very quickly drew up a plan and arranged a bricklayer to build it. He included a brass bridge plaque ordered from Syndal which included the year it was built. I'm not sure the Divisional Engineer at the time knew about this project until it was completed.*

*David was a terrific person to work and socialise with – always fun and a great organiser of events (so many lunches where the aim was to bring the cheapest bottle of red wine you could find).*

In 1999 David returned to Kew to work with Bill Collins and Phil Symons on a project to prepare VicRoads for the introduction of the Goods and Services Tax. In July 2001 David took a 54/11 retirement package from VicRoads and later joined the staff recruitment company, Armstrong Personnel. Over the next five years, David placed many skilled, recently retired VicRoads staff with a range of companies and authorities, including VicRoads, and travelled widely around Australia.



Around 2006, David joined the Greater City of Dandenong with his ex-VicRoads colleagues Bill Collins and Roy McCartney, working four days a week on a project to design bicycle paths for EastLink.

David and Jill were already seasoned travellers, and over the years they had visited and participated in Outback Challenges in many out-of-the-way locations in Australia such as the Simpson Desert, the Gibb River Road and the Canning Stock Route.

After finally 'pulling the plug' on consultancy work, David and Jill commenced a major overseas odyssey that included fabulous tours in Europe, North America, Africa and Asia.

On a personal level, I have known David since I rejoined the CRB in 1967, when we were both draftsmen in Plans and Surveys, and I still have vivid memories of David demonstrating the capabilities of the CRB's new, all-wheel drive Subaru in a terrifying ride through the paddocks of what is now a posh Donvale housing estate. It was David who convinced me to join the VicRoads Association in 2017.

David and Jill had been married 56 years to the day when he passed away. His funeral, which attracted nearly 250 people, was notable for the eloquent and loving testimonies of his wife Jill, his children, Simon and Fiona, and some of his seven grandchildren.

## **A short history of Australian road transport – by John Wright**

When I was a 9-year old, living in Bairnsdale in the late 1940's, the Orbost railway line was clearly visible from my bedroom window and I often saw clanking steam engines hauling long trains with giant eucalypt logs, agricultural produce, livestock wagons, fuel tanks and tarpaulined general goods. Bairnsdale's railway station, which I often visited, was then a busy freight hub.



I was unaware that those were the dying days of rail's long-held role as the dominant, land-based freight carrier because road transport was beginning to replace it. State Governments had long viewed road transport as a threat to their rail systems and believed road hauliers were not paying their fair share of infrastructure costs. In 1933 the Victorian government felt so strongly about this that it passed legislation to discourage truck owners from competing with rail. Other States progressively followed.

The NSW legislation was typical of most States and required public and commercial vehicle owners to obtain an expensive licence. Those carting freight beyond 20 miles on a route that competed with rail incurred a ton-mile levy, based on the suitability of it being delivered by rail. Charges were levied on the aggregate tare weight plus load capacity and were payable whether loaded or not. Some goods were simply prohibited<sup>2</sup> from being carried by road transport.

The combination of State road levies; cheap coastal shipping, which once carried the bulk of interstate freight; the Great Financial Depression; poor roads and wartime petrol rationing kept longer haul road transport at bay. However, by the time World War 2 had ended, rail and sea transport systems were unable to cope with the post-war trade boom due to the prolonged neglect of rail infrastructure and equipment, and wartime shipping losses. At the same time, new vehicle technology was improving the economics of long distance road transport.

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<sup>2</sup> Even in the 1990's, commercial road transport of grain grown within 200 km of Melbourne was still prohibited.

One of the many factors that may have assisted the growth of long distance road transport was the abolition of fuel rationing, which was still in operation four years after the war had ended. In December 1949 my parents, formerly strong supporters of Ben Chiefly's Labor Government, reluctantly voted for Robert Menzies because he'd promised to repeal petrol rationing – which he did, two months later.



As the fifties began, the change to road freight quickened and I became aware of a new sound on the Princes Highway on my walks to school - the high-pitched howl of English Commer truck transmissions.

Thousands of new trucks including Macks from the USA, were being imported to handle the rapidly increasing freight task. Our new refrigerator and Dad's new English car probably arrived on one of them.

Prolonged railway strikes hammered further nails into the

rail freight coffin. In 1946, Queensland rail workers went on strike for nine weeks, followed in 1950 by Victorian rail workers who remained out for 53 days. The rusting tracks in Bairnsdale's station yard eventually disappeared under a sea of long grass. Both States suspended their transport levies during the strikes to allow the road transport industry to accommodate the displaced demand, and this exposed many businesses to the convenience of door-to-door haulier service. After the strikes, the road taxes were reimposed but things would never be the same.



A container train at Avenel. 2011

In 1952, in a more positive response to interstate road haulier competition, State railways entered into the *Forwarding Agents Scheme* with major road operators, in which rail would undertake the line haul movement of interstate goods at rates less than those which existed on road, and the road operators would be responsible for pick-up and delivery of the freight.

It was a successful system that was later enhanced by

the advent of shipping containers and continues to this day.

While the growing truck fleet was rapidly stealing rail's freight customers, it was also taking a heavy toll on road pavements that had been designed for lesser loads and starved of maintenance funding since the beginning of the Depression in 1929. With the only other dedicated source of road maintenance funding being the Federal fuel levy, the States increasingly relied on the repressive ton-mile road taxes to fund this work. Road haulier organisations of the day believed that these taxes had also become an important source of general State revenue.

In 1954, the Privy Council responded to an appeal<sup>3</sup> by interstate hauliers against the States' road taxes by finding that NSW regulations (and effectively *all* States' regulations on interstate transport) were unconstitutional. The Council ruled that the only charge that could be levied had to be related to road use and that no other form of control over interstate freight movements by the States was valid. The ruling also stipulated that the proceeds must be expended only upon the maintenance of highways.

The ruling led to a significant increase in interstate road transport operations and an even higher level of competition between individual operators. Thanks to better vehicle technology, including air brakes and diesel engines, there was a big increase in the number of prime mover and semi-trailer combinations, which offered much greater efficiency than rigid trucks.

In response, State Governments introduced new road maintenance charges involving a tonne-mile levy to be paid by operators of vehicles with load capacities exceeding the tonnages set by each State. Needless to say, these maximum tonnages differed between States.

The new road charges were a bureaucratic nightmare, with truck owners being required to submit a declaration in each state for every month of their trips including the date, start and end point, and the distances covered. They needed to calculate total miles travelled each month in each state, tally and pay the amount owed to each state government and pay any fines for overloading. Incorrect or non-submissions would result in fines and further audits. Non-payment of fines could result in gaol time, and for many, it did.

The road charges were strongly enforced and were an enormous source of angst for the mostly owner-driven road transport industry. In January 1959 I was 18 and hitch-hiking between Port Macquarie and Surfers' Paradise when I managed to score a ride with a friendly truck driver who was carting a load of tomatoes from Griffith to Brisbane. Completely unaware of the forgoing road tax issues, I blithely mentioned that I worked for the Country Roads Board. His demeanour changed instantly and for a moment I thought he was going to eject me from the truck while it was still going. He calmed down somewhat after I told him I was a draftsman and had nothing to do with Victoria's on-road transport regulation enforcement.

He told me hair-raising stories of encounters with road enforcement officers, including one



An early example of overloading (or, more likely if the drums were empty - questionable load restraint)

particularly zealous guy in southern NSW who was known for making 'surprise' speed checks at night without using his headlights. My host told me that one night he had spotted the officer's unlit car pulling in behind him near Kyeamba.

While still travelling at 60 mph he had flicked his logbook out the window<sup>4</sup> and slammed on his airbrakes, causing the officer's car to crash behind him. I very much doubt that this was a true story but it illustrates the siege mentality that was then current with many interstate transport drivers.

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<sup>3</sup> This was a judgement given by the Judicial Committee of the Privy Council to which Hughes and Vale Pty Ltd had appealed against a majority decision of the Australian High Court. It declared invalid the NSW State Transport (Coordination) Act, under which interstate transport was licensed and taxed, and overturned 21 years of High Court decisions against road transport hauliers.

<sup>4</sup> He said that the logbook 'slipping out of his hands and causing him to brake after seeing nothing behind him' was going to be his excuse – if he was to need one.

I recall hearing around this time that a fairly new weighbridge building on the Hume Highway in Victoria was heavily damaged by unknown persons suspected of repeatedly backing into it with a semi-trailer loaded with heavy steel beams.

While all of the eastern States were levying the ton-mile tax, owner-drivers' angst was particularly focussed on New South Wales, which had actually doubled its charges in one year, and in 1965-1966 made over 7,000 convictions, collecting \$7.5 million in fines from hauliers. By 1974-1975 the number of haulier convictions had risen to over 10,000 with fines totalling nearly \$14.5 million.

Under this charging regime, the only way interstate operators could legally operate was to adhere to the lowest mass and dimension limits of the States they were driving through – which often barely covered costs. Not surprisingly, many operators deliberately breached these limits – either to remain solvent or to gain an unfair advantage over their competitors. However, because our road infrastructure had been designed for 'standard' trucks with acceptable axle masses, overloaded trucks threatened many older bridges and greatly accelerated road pavement wear.

All States and Territories protected their road infrastructure by strictly regulating the maximum mass that could be carried by individual axles and groups of axles of trucks and truck-trailer combinations without a permit. These were known as General Mass Limits (GML). Vehicle operators needing to operate at higher axle masses were required to apply for a permit with specific route, speed and other conditions.

With the most common interstate truck-trailer combination being six axles - a single steer axle, tandem (twin) driving axles on the prime mover and a three-axle (triauxle) group on the semi-trailer, all road authorities were concerned that grouped



axles using the (then) common steel leaf spring suspensions, did not equally share the load to each axle. To overcome the potential for road and bridge damage, they tended to set lower mass limits for axle groups. And of course, the GML varied between States but was generally around 36 tonnes Gross Vehicle Mass (GVM) for six-axle combinations in the Eastern States, which had the greatest number of older, more vulnerable bridges.



The EoRVL Study Team. Back Row: CRB Members Hedley Potter (Draftsman), Lynn Kennedy (Typist), Bob Stewart (Admin) Front Row: Ian Ker (ARRB), Jim Webber, Tony Fry (Leader), Graham Easton (DMR NSW), Jim Stevenson (DMR NSW)

In 1973, in an attempt to find some middle ground, the National Association of Australian Road Authorities (NAASRA)<sup>5</sup> commenced a study chaired by Tom Russell entitled the *Economics of Road Vehicle Limits* (EoRVL) to determine the most appropriate mass and dimension limits that should apply nationally or in particular regions in Australia. The study was completed in 1976 but the limits remained unchanged.

In 1977 it was estimated that about 75% of the interstate road transport industry was comprised of independent contractors. Mostly family men, they'd often mortgaged their homes to buy their vehicles and were never far away from

<sup>5</sup> NAASRA began in 1933 as COSRA - the Conference of State Road Authorities, which was renamed in 1959. Amongst its many notable achievements was the establishment of the Australian Road Research Board (ARRB) in 1960.

bankruptcy. Many relied on freight companies for continuous work, and because they were competing against each other, they were often forced to accept uneconomic cartage rates, along with delivery schedules that made no allowance for rest.



The original Mount Razorback blockade, with Ted Stephens

By April 1979, after unsuccessful anti-road tax protests in Sydney and Canberra by hundreds of truckies, a group of five owner-drivers led by haulier Ted ‘Greenback’ Stevens, used their trucks to block the Hume Highway at Mount Razorback, about 50 km south of Sydney in an effort to have the road maintenance charges dropped, and to have other pressing issues concerning

industry exploitation of owner drivers, addressed.

Despite the only form of communication available being landline telephone and 27 megahertz CB radio, the blockades quickly became national with the support of John Laws on his popular, syndicated radio show. Soon, some 4,000 trucks were blocking 40 key routes around Australia. Interestingly the blockades were not organised by any formal association and were certainly not endorsed by the Transport Workers’ Union, whose Federal Secretary actually threatened to use their members to break them<sup>6</sup>.

The national consequences of a prolonged blockade would have been horrendous in terms of food and fuel supplies alone. Some commentators compared the seriousness of the blockade with the national coal miners’ strike of 1949, when 23,000 miners downed tools for 7 weeks. It only ended after Ben Chifley’s Government sent in troops to man the coal mines.

While the NSW Rann Government was openly hostile to the drivers, Malcolm Frazer’s Federal Government was keen to avert a national crisis and urged the State Governments to drop the inequitable road maintenance tax. The nine-day blockade ended after all State Transport Ministers agreed to remove the road maintenance charges, increase the General Mass Limit to 38 tonnes and establish a national licensing body to regulate the industry<sup>7</sup>. To replace the revenue lost from the abolition of road maintenance charges, most States introduced business franchise fees on the sale of fuel.

The increase in the GML to 38 tonnes for 6-axle vehicle combinations in the Eastern States<sup>8</sup> took place in 1981, finally implementing the axle mass recommendations of the 1975 EoRVL Study, following their adoption by the Australian Transport Advisory Council (ATAC).

To be continued...

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<sup>6</sup> There was no love lost between the transport unions and owner-drivers. In February 1991, chemical manufacturer Hoechst in Melbourne sacked a union shop steward. The Transport Workers Union promptly blockaded the Hoechst plant. The union blockade was repeatedly breached by owner-drivers, mainly from Shepparton, Victoria. One of them, Fred’s Transport, had been reportedly on the verge of bankruptcy, and along with other Shepparton transport companies, never looked back.

<sup>7</sup> The creation of a national licensing body – in the form of the National Heavy Vehicle Regulator (NHVR), would remain an unfulfilled dream until its formation in 2013.

<sup>8</sup> The Western States already had a GML of 42 tonnes.

## MEMBER COMMENT AND NEWS

### John Gaffney honoured with Max Lay Lifetime Achievement Award

[Editor's note: This article is based on a report by ITS Australia that was published on its website [www.its-australia.com.au](http://www.its-australia.com.au)]



On 12 December 2025, John Gaffney, one of Australia's most respected transport innovators and a global authority in Managed Motorways, was awarded the *Max Lay Lifetime Achievement Award* - ITS Australia's highest honour, recognising outstanding and enduring contributions to the advancement of intelligent transport systems (ITS).

Over a distinguished career spanning more than 30 years, John has transformed how Australia designs, manages, and operates its urban motorway networks. His pioneering vision for Managed Motorways has reshaped traffic operations not only in Victoria but across Australia and internationally, improving safety, efficiency, and reliability for millions of road users.

A visionary in Managed Motorways, John's groundbreaking work began with the Monash–CityLink–West Gate (M1) Upgrade Project, where he conceived and championed a holistic approach to freeway management that integrated coordinated ramp metering, traveller information, and advanced data analytics.

This “Melbourne Model” for Managed Motorways has since become the foundation for all Victorian urban motorway operations and the benchmark adopted by transport agencies nationwide.

Recognising the potential of data-driven operations early on, Mr Gaffney led the development of the HERO coordinated ramp metering system in partnership with the Technical University of Crete and Queensland-based developer Transmax. The system's exceptional performance has been recognised globally for its ability to optimise traffic flow, minimise congestion, and extend the life of existing infrastructure.

In 2016, John was awarded a Churchill Fellowship, acknowledging his pioneering contributions to traffic science and operational optimisation. His influence extends beyond Australia, with managed motorway frameworks and operational principles inspired by his work now being applied in Colorado, Utah, and California.

#### **Leadership, Mentorship, and Lasting Impact**

Throughout his career with VicRoads, the Victorian Department of Transport, Austroads, ARRB, and partner organisations, John has been instrumental in translating complex traffic concepts into clear, practical guidance for practitioners. His co-authored publications - including the VicRoads Managed Motorways Framework, *Managed Freeways: Freeway Ramp*

Signals Handbook, and VicRoads Motorway Design Volume Guide - continue to shape the standards and policies that underpin Australia's motorway operations today.

Beyond his technical achievements, John is renowned as a mentor and communicator. His clarity of vision, collaborative approach, and passion for innovation have inspired generations of engineers and transport professionals in Australia and abroad.

ITS Australia CEO Susan Harris commended John's extraordinary contribution:

*"John Gaffney has been the driving force behind Australia's world-leading Managed Motorways program. His technical leadership and commitment to knowledge sharing have set new standards for how we plan and operate complex transport systems.*

*John's legacy can be seen every day on our freeways - in safer journeys, reduced congestion, and smarter road management. He is an exceptional and most deserving recipient of the Max Lay Lifetime Achievement Award."*

### **About the Award**

The Max Lay Lifetime Achievement Award - named in honour of Dr Maxwell Lay AM, a pioneer of Australia's transport technology sector - recognises individuals whose leadership, vision, and innovation have profoundly advanced ITS in Australia and internationally.

John will be formally presented with the Max Lay Lifetime Achievement Award at the 16th ITS Australia Awards, to be held at The Sofitel in Melbourne on Thursday, 12 February 2026.

For more information about ITS Australia and the ITS Australia Awards, visit [www.its-australia.com.au](http://www.its-australia.com.au).

### **Follow-up on the 5 December 2025 NTRO Heritage event**



From L to R. Richard Yeo, Lance Midgley and Anatoly Shulkin

Lance Midgley has advised that the photo of him includes Dr Richard Yeo (NTRO Chief Operating Officer, in the white shirt).

Richard worked in the pavements group at Materials Research Division for a few years in the 1990s before moving to ARRB in 1996 as a pavement researcher. As part of that role, he acted as Secretary for the Austroads Pavement Research Group (APRG) under Lance's chairmanship.

Lance also advised on the reason he was invited to the event was because of his 30 year association with ARRB.

Lance's association with ARRB (now called the National Transport Research Organisation (NTRO)) commenced following his appointment back into the Materials Technology Department in 1992 as their Manager Pavement Technology Group. Part of his duties were to represent VicRoads on the Austroads Pavement Research Group (APRG). After one meeting of that group, he took on the role as Chair of the group which he held for the next 5 years.

In 2023, he was presented with a Lifetime Achievement Award by the NTRO recognising his dedication and extensive pavement contribution during his career with the CRB, RCA and VicRoads.

While in the Chair of APRG he was intimately involved with ARRB staff in the management of the Austroads \$0.5M Accelerated Loading Facility Program (ALF) where a variety of pavements were tested in Queensland and New South Wales. In 1996, Lance led the task of relocating ALF to a VicRoads unused freeway reserve site next to the VicRoads Dandenong Fowler Road Patrol depot where it continues to reside today.

In addition, his paper on “Best Practice for the Preparation of New Granular Pavements for Thin Bituminous Surfacing” published by VicRoads as Technical Report (TR209) in 2010 is one of the references quoted by NTRO staff when conducting pavement training courses.

## Vale Alan Muir



Alan Muir. Circa 1960's

Kelvin York has advised that Alan Muir passed away on December 16, about three months short of a hundred. He wasn't a member of the Association, but he would be remembered by many of our older members.

Alan joined the CRB in 1960 as a geologist, and a few years later he was appointed as Head of the Geology Section, a position he held until his retirement in the mid-1980's.

During WW2, aged 18, Alan enlisted in the RAAF and served in Darwin as a radar operator. Post-war, he completed a science degree, majoring in Geology. Prior to joining the CRB, he had worked in goldmines in Canada.

David Jellie has provided the following, additional information about Alan.

Alan was born in Flemington in 1926 and enlisted in the RAAF at Essendon in March 1944 when he was 18. At discharge in June 1946, he was a Leading Aircraftman posted at Air Defence Headquarters in Darwin.



Alan's enlistment photo. He was 18

His service record in the National Australian Archives noted that he was suitable to train as a radar operator because his maths and speech were deemed to be 'OK'.

The daily pay applicable to his mustering was six shillings and sixpence (6/6) per day. If he were married, he would have received an extra 4/6 – and for children, 3/6, 2/6 and 1/6 for each child thereafter. He attended Radar School at Richmond in NSW and was posted to Darwin where he served until his discharge.

After the war, Alan completed a Science Degree, majoring in Geology. He was appointed head of the Geology Section in Materials Research Division of the CRB, a position he held until his retirement in the mid-1980s. In 1950, he married Elizabeth Loder.

I had a few dealings with Alan when I supervised the construction of the bridges across the Snowy River floodplain at Orbost in East Gippsland. He was very quietly spoken and a thorough gentleman. He was renowned for his hospitality to CRB staff members prior to Christmas each year.

David Jellie

## Vale Peter Wells



Peter passed away on New Year's Eve 2025, after a short illness. He was 74. Peter wasn't a member of the Association but was widely liked and respected by his colleagues.

Peter worked in R&L Information Services, HR Training & Development team and Land Information & Survey.

After Peter retired, he moved to Mollymook on the NSW South Coast with his wife Faye. He is survived by Faye and their two daughters.

Thanks to Angelo Herft for letting us know.

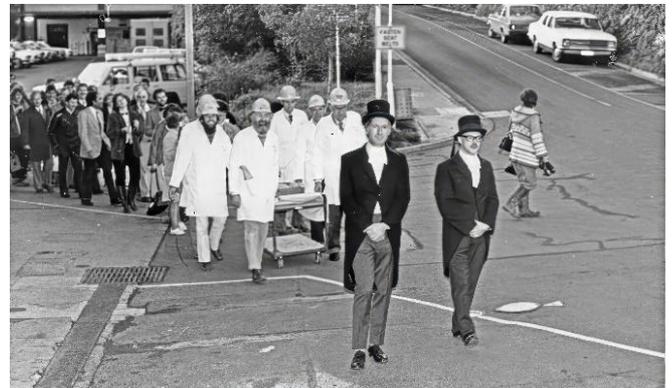
## CRB Laid to Rest – from Lance Midgley

[Editor's note: In preparing his separate story on the history of the Materials Research Division, Lance came across these photos of an event back in 1983 which mourned the end of the CRB. I'm sure you will enjoy the memory.]

On 30<sup>th</sup> June 1983, the CRB was laid to rest and a new organization known as the RCA was born. In recognition of the event, staff from the Materials Division (MD) held a service honouring the 70-year-old organization that we all loved led by the manager of the division and his assistant at that time:



Leading the mourner's procession was Peter Lowe and Roy Gilmour assisted by Pall Bearers Barry Bromham and John Hanks at the head carrying the



Mourners leaving the MD carpark on their way to the burial place.



Pall Bearers L2R – Barry Bromham, Bill Sherwin, John Hanks, Geoff Jameson (hidden) and Bob Barron (observer)

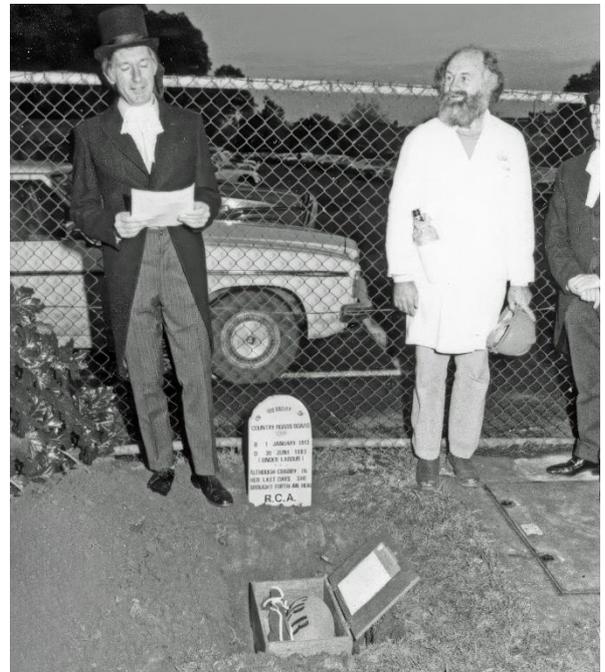


Preparing to bury the coffin

Prayers for the body



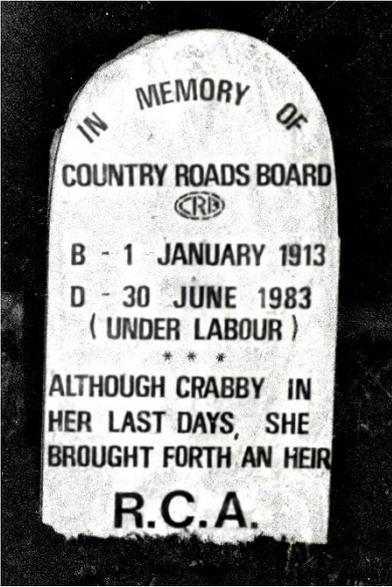
Preparing to read the obituary



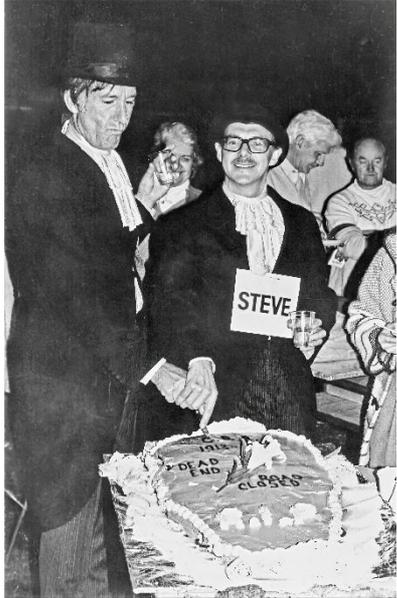
Peter reading the obituary



The Wake Cake



The Headstone



Cutting the Cake



Parishioners enjoying the wake L2R: Harry Kruize, Alan Bowman, Ivan Haustorfer, Ted Vincent, David Veith



A parishioner enjoying the wake



The Dearly Departed



The Heir Apparent

Photos courtesy of Dom Meadley

## **Lest We Forget – by David Jellie**

This is an extract from Roads to War. I will continue it in later newsletters.

*Flowers are symbols of beauty sublime  
Moments of love pressed in pages of time.  
The daisy however so simple and pure  
Reminds us of hardships men had to endure.  
It's statement is merely that "daisies" won't tell,  
Neither did the soldiers who lived through the hell.  
Name, rank and number was all they would give,  
In silence they'd suffer, in anguish they'd live.  
Month after month turned to year after year  
Of bitter imprisonment of pain and fear.  
And when it was over soldiers came home to stay,  
People took it for granted that they were okay.  
Now they were safe and their wounds could be tended  
But the pain in their souls can never be mended.  
Memories of horrors that torment the mind  
Leave scars on a man of a different kind.  
How quickly forgotten are prisoners of war,  
Once peace is achieved no one cares anymore.  
Please remember the daisy and think of the men  
who suffer today for what happened back then.*

Dedicated to her father, John M. Prochak, and all POWs

Cathy Evanovitz

There were many CRB staff members who were prisoners of war of the Japanese. When I first started at the CRB in the early 1960s, Frank Jackson worked in an office fairly close to me. Occasionally, Ian (Paddy) O'Donnell, who was the Chairman at the time, would appear out of the blue to see Frank – a Pipe Testing Officer.

Together, they entered the specifications office and closed the door behind them for half an hour. Someone explained to me that they were both prisoners of the Japanese in Changi.

It is impossible for anyone who didn't experience the horror of the Japanese POW camps to fully appreciate the bond that developed between men who experienced this sort of Hell and that bond extended well beyond their time in camp. I came to realise that Paddy was providing support to Frank – and perhaps, vice versa.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

ART24480

Painting by Murray Griffin in 1942 entitled 'Changi Prison Camp, early days'.



<sup>A</sup> Troops de-bugging their beds, Changi, by Murray Griffin, 1942-43: Lice, rashes, 'happy feet' resulting from malnutrition, hunger and trips to the bore-hole latrines constantly disrupted sleep.

Over 22,000 Australian men and women became prisoners of war (POWs) of the Japanese. Most were Army personnel - about 21,000. There were about 350 Royal Australian Navy men and about 370 Royal Australian Air Force aircrew. There were also 40 nurses and hundreds of Australian civilians.

The Army prisoners were largely from the 8th Division captured in the fall of Singapore. Australian troops were also captured on Java, Timor, Ambon and New Britain. Prisoners of war were formed into work parties to provide forced labour for the Japanese army. Throughout the war, Changi in Singapore was the main camp from which working parties were sent to other destinations and through which prisoners of war captured in other areas were staged.

Australian prisoners of war were sent from Singapore to Burma, Thailand, Japan, Borneo, Manchuria, Indochina, Formosa and Korea.

According to the Australian War Memorial, of the 22,376 Australian prisoners of war captured by the Japanese, 8,031 died while in captivity. The Japanese indifference and brutality to their captives was palpable and after the end of the war, War Crimes Trials were held to investigate reports of atrocities, massacres and other causes of death.



AUSTRALIAN WAR MEMORIAL

ART24477

Action at Parit Sulong, January 1942 - 2/15th Australian Field Regiment - by Murray Griffin.

While pondering this history over the last two years or so, I can't help feeling that the fate of all these men and women who became prisoners of war of the Japanese was partially caused by the Australian Government and its military leaders. Australia wasn't prepared for war - nor were our Allies - and there is no evidence that we stepped back and analysed our options based on solid, reliable intelligence.

We were caught unawares without any appreciation of Japanese military capability and strategy. The Japanese, on the other hand, already had strong underground networks within

South East Asia. Their fifth columnists had infiltrated all levels of business and society – even high levels in government circles.

Australian military leaders used guesswork in assessing the numbers and disposition of Japanese forces and armour. Pity the fate of Lieutenant Colonel Robertson, Commander of the 2/29th Battalion at the Battle of Muar. A highly respected leader of his men and a decorated veteran of the First World War, he doubted that tanks would be used in the Malayan theatre.

He rejected the use of anti-tank guns to protect the perimeter around the battalion and, in the end, paid a heavy price. In order to accurately report the dire situation to Brigade Headquarters (all wireless communication had been lost, and runners were being ambushed by snipers), Robertson decided to go himself. Riding pillion on a motorcycle, he and his despatch rider raced down the road and as they approached a Japanese roadblock, they were gunned down by the waiting force. The despatch rider managed to turn the bike around and return with Robertson severely wounded clinging onto the back of the bike. Before he died, Robertson apologised to his command for the way he handled the battle.

Australia's army was ill-equipped and, initially, undermanned. Its military technology was outdated or non-existent. They knew little of modern military tactics and equipment – and in the end, Australia's first foray into the Pacific War was an unmitigated disaster. All of the 8th Division was lost to overwhelming Japanese forces by the end of February 1942. Most members of the division became prisoners of war – over a third of them died in captivity and the survivors had to wait until late 1945 to be liberated. These poor souls were sent off to war by their military commanders who knew that they had little chance of success. Many were captured without firing a shot.

The British, too, must bear some responsibility. Such was their hubris; they thought that the battles ahead of them would be over in weeks. The British had 20 years to strengthen their positions and plan their strategy. Their colonial attitude led to overconfidence which, together with their bad planning and ignorance of modern warfare, resulted in catastrophe. The final outcome led to a rift between Australia and Britain, the effects of which still exist today. The humiliating defeat was regarded as a turning point in Australia's relationship with its colonial relationship with Britain.

Following the First World War, Australia reviewed its strategic position in the world and concluded, correctly, that the greatest threat to its security was Japan. Australia's conservative governments during the 1920s and 1930s continued to rely on Britain to protect Australia along with other British colonies in Asia - India, Burma, Malaya and Hong Kong.

In 1919, Britain chose Singapore, strategically located in the Strait of Malacca between the Pacific and Indian oceans, as the site of a major British naval base. Some called it Fortress Singapore. The strategy was that if war broke out in the Pacific, the British would relocate a large fleet of Royal Navy vessels from Britain to Singapore. In 1923 construction began on the massive 54-square-kilometre base. Australia and New Zealand both invested in the construction of the facility.

However, when war broke out with Germany it was realised that the Fortress Singapore strategy was in jeopardy. Britain needed to concentrate on its own preservation. The fleet of aircraft carriers and battleships that had been promised for the defence of the Empire's eastern possessions was reduced to a single squadron centred around one battleship, HMS *Prince of Wales*, and one battlecruiser, HMS *Repulse*. Japanese aircraft sunk both ships north of Singapore on 10 December 1941. This left the base without significant naval protection.

But the strategy was flawed in any case. The Japanese invasion came from the north. The Imperial Japanese Army invaded the Malay Peninsula on 8 December 1941, landing in the north at Kota Bharu in Malaya and Pattani and Songkhla in Thailand. The Japanese were battle-hardened, well-organised and well-supported by air and armour; the inexperienced Allied forces could offer little resistance and the Japanese moved with incredible speed south along the peninsula. Kuala Lumpur was taken on 11 January 1942 and Johore, capital of Malaya's southern state, fell three days later. The Japanese had fought the 700 kilometres from their northern landings to the southern tip of the peninsula in less than two months.

On 31 January 1942 Allied forces withdrew across the causeway linking Malaya and Singapore. The defence of the island was poorly planned and executed. Allied forces were spread too thin to resist the Japanese when they landed on the north-west of the island on 8 February 1942. Allied air cover had been almost completely destroyed in the opening days of the campaign and so the city was being bombed at will.

Despite being heavily outnumbered, the Japanese moved quickly across the island. With one million citizens trapped in the city and water supplies at critical levels British commander Lieutenant General Arthur Percival surrendered on 15 February 1942. More than 130,000 Allied troops were taken prisoner. A quarter of Australia's army was captured. The Japanese general Tomoyuki Yamashita had achieved a remarkable feat of arms.

In London, Prime Minister Winston Churchill announced that the fall of Singapore was the 'worst disaster and largest capitulation in British history'. For Australia too, the fall of Singapore was a disaster. From 1942, the Australian government under Prime Minister John Curtin looked increasingly towards the US for its future protection. Mr Curtin had signalled the change in a new year radio address to Australians weeks before Singapore fell. He said:

*"Without any inhibitions of any kind, I make it clear that Australia looks to America, free of any pangs as to our traditional links or kinship with the United Kingdom ... we shall exert all our energies towards the shaping of a plan, with the United States as its keystone, which will give our country some confidence of being able to hold out until the tide of battle swings against the enemy."*

And so it was.

A different sort of war had begun for those who were captured. The words of one survivor, Paddy O'Toole, pricked my conscience. He seemed to sum it up when he said:

*"We were just gun-fodder. It was a political stunt, that's all. They sent the cream of Australian youth into a battle where they had no possible chance in the wide world of winning. That's about all it was, a political stunt."*<sup>9</sup>

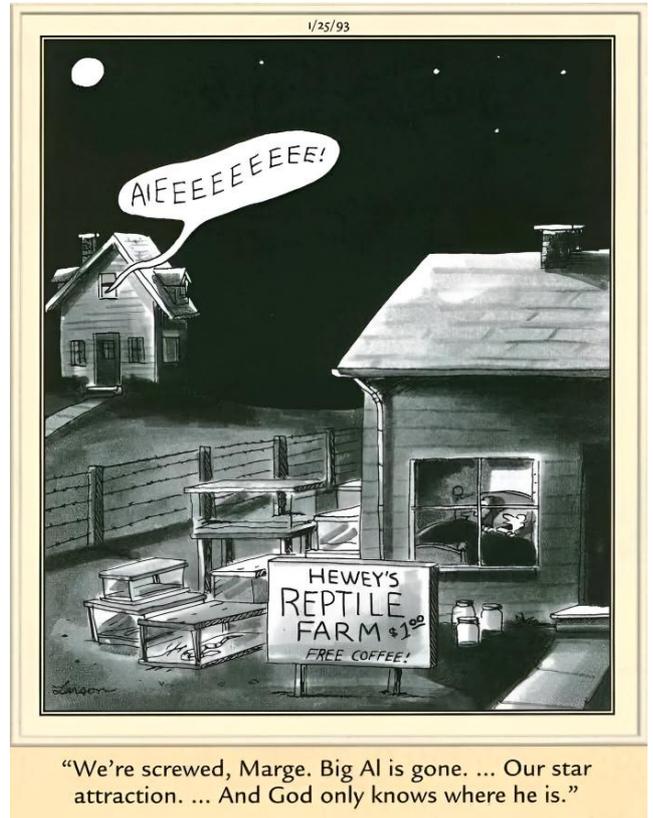
David Jellie

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<sup>9</sup> Peter Ewer, *The Long Road to Changi*.

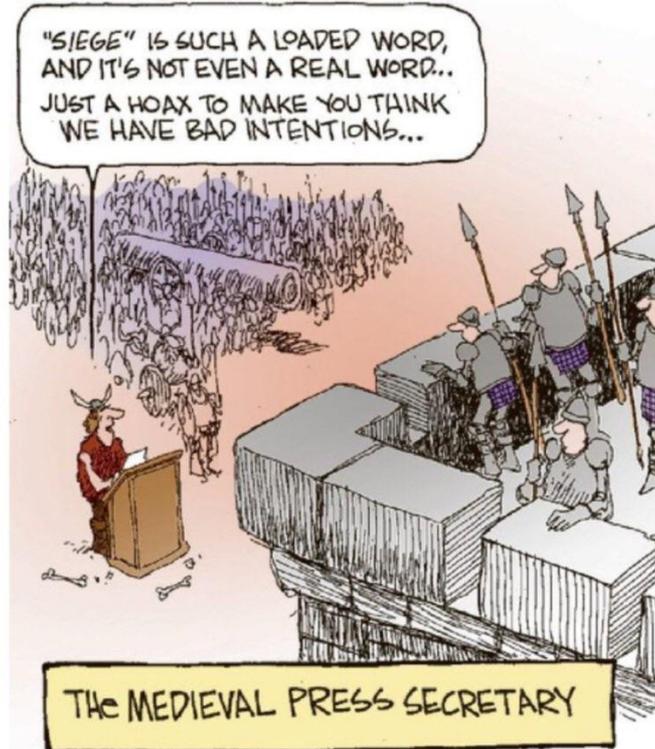


"Well, so much for the unicorns . . . But from now on, all carnivores will be confined to 'C' deck."

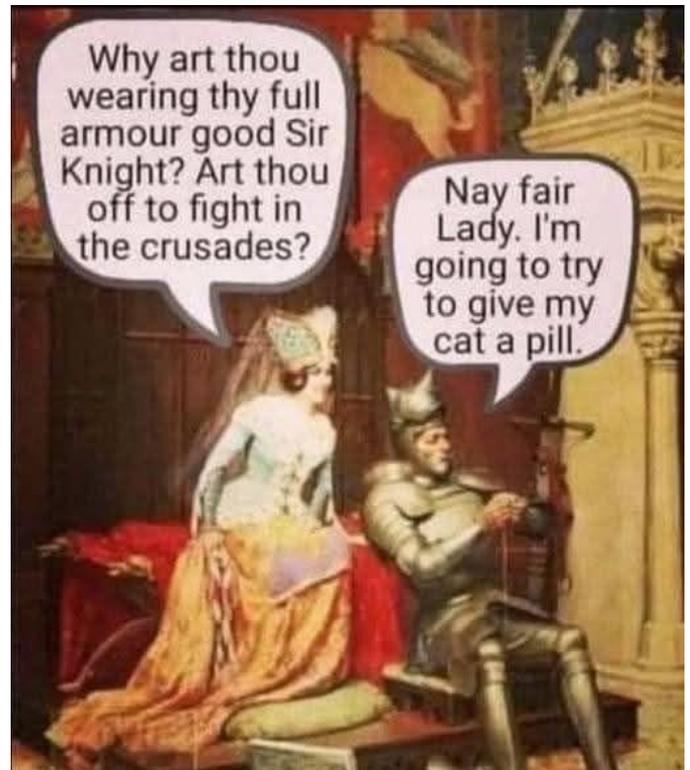


"We're screwed, Marge. Big Al is gone. . . Our star attraction. . . And God only knows where he is."

**NON SEQUITUR** Wiley Miller



**THE MEDIEVAL PRESS SECRETARY**



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Telephone Number  Mobile Number

E-mail address  *Nominate an email address if you don't personally have your own*

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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)