

Peter Lowe's Story

Peter Lowe's career with the Country Roads Board began in 1958 in Bairnsdale Division where he was involved in the supervision of the maintenance and construction of roads and bridges. In 1968, he was promoted to replace John Bethune as the Class 3 construction engineer in Bendigo Division. Peter in 1970, was promoted to the ADE Bendigo position following appointment of Graeme Marshall as DE Geelong Division.

In 1973, Peter was selected to attend the University of Melbourne: Summer School of Business Administration to enhance his management and communication skills at a senior level.

In 1974, Peter was appointed as the Assistant MRE replacing John Bethune who had moved from that role to become the Boards Asphalt Engineer. For the next nine years Peter was involved in the management of the Materials Research Division, 6 years as its MRE. For more information on Peter's tenure as MRE – refer to Lance Midgley's History of Materials Research Division currently being prepared and will be filed under Materials Research Division in the History view of the Newsletter Website.



Peter Lowe Imbibing at CRB Wake - 1983

In 1983, Peter became General Manager Works under Laurie Jones as Chief General Manager - Operations and then in 1987, following a restructure by CEO Ian Stoney, Peter was appointed as Director - Technical Resources.

In 1988, VicRoads Chairman Ian Stoney proposed a six-month exchange between Max Lay, the then Executive Director of ARRB, and Peter, who at that time was Director of Technical Resources. Although Peter's term at ARRB actually lasted 15 months, Max had resolved to remain at VicRoads as Director of Technical Resources.

On his return to VicRoads in 1990, Peter was appointed to the position of Director of Road Safety. VicRoads is the lead agency in the State for the development of road safety initiatives, road safety strategies and legislation, and this appointment enabled him to participate in the implementation of new programs which resulted in greatly improved coordination between police and the responsible agencies and a halving of the road toll over the next three years. It saw the introduction of 'booze' buses, a large speed camera program, a significant road safety program funded by the Transport Accident

Commission (TAC), the TAC graphic advertisements, and the establishment of community road safety councils.

After retirement from VicRoads in 1992, Peter worked for the next 12 years on international road safety and institutional strengthening consultancy projects in Asia, Eastern Europe, Africa and the Pacific. Peter also served as Chair of an Austroads/AAPA established organization known as the Centre for Pavement Engineering Education. The Centre provides post-graduate courses in pavement engineering by distance learning in partnership with several universities. It also provides short courses supporting the road engineering industry.

Sadly, Peter passed away on 15 May 2023 – refer VicRoads Association Newsletter No. 247 for a list of condolences. An extract from that Newsletter was by David Jellie in his tribute address on Peter's life and is copied here for convenience:

“Peter had a stellar career with the Country Roads Board, the Road Construction Authority, VicRoads, the Australian Road Research Board and later, as a consultant on International Aid projects. Peter joined the CRB in 1958 and worked in Bairnsdale and Bendigo regions before moving to Melbourne where he became Materials Research Engineer in 1976, General Manager of Works in 1983 (looking after the State's road construction program), and Director of Technical Resources in 1987.

In 1988, Peter exchanged jobs with Max Lay – no doubt for the benefit of both of them. Max became Director of Technical Resources at VicRoads and Peter became the Director of the Australian Road Research Board in Vermont, implementing Australia-wide research programs.

He returned to VicRoads in 1989, to take up a newly formed position. He became the first Director of Road Safety in VicRoads and was a leader in road safety research, implementation of legislative change and vehicle standards, traffic management and road environment safety. He led the coordination of multi-disciplinary partners such as Victoria Police, the Traffic Accident Commission, Education Department, Department of Health – and others – and this co-ordination model became known world-wide as the VicRoads model. I wish it were still in place today.

After his retirement, Peter applied his knowledge and skills working on international aid projects on road safety and institutional strengthening. He worked in Samoa, Fiji, Papua New Guinea, South Africa, Nepal, Eastern Europe and Eritrea.

Peter had also spent some time – very early in his career – working in bridge design. When I started working there in 1961, I saw his name on many drawings and design files but I wasn't to meet him until he came down to Melbourne to commence working in Materials Research Division. I remember the day well as we seemed to get on easily. But I did not work with Peter until later in the 1980s when I worked on the West Gate

Freeway Project and I reported to Peter. They were hectic times and I greatly appreciated the support and mentorship that Peter provided to me.

Ironically, I became Peter's boss during his international career. I was seconded from VicRoads to join the Overseas Projects Corporation and in that position, I recruited Peter for most of his international work. Peter was ideally suited to this role. He was sympathetic to other cultures, kind and gentle to the people working with him, knew what pace change could be made in immature organisations, and astute about the real needs of those organisations. It was great too, that Ros was also interested in these sojourns, and between the two of them, they were excellent ambassadors for Australia.

These experiences reinforced our friendship and I became a regular caller at Harrison Crescent for a cup of tea and a chocolate coated biscuit. We solved every problem in the world including sudoku, nine letter word puzzles, and crosswords – excluding DA's Friday cryptic crossword. Perversely, Scott Morrison's government seemed to strengthen our relationship. You may not know it, but Ros was an excellent proofreader and a pedantic grammarian. She proof-read the VicRoads Association newsletter before it went to print so much so that I became a bit frightened to receive her comments.

VicRoads Association was also another area of joint interest. Peter was the Secretary and I was the President. He did all the work and I got all the praise. We had a lot of fun along the way.

Peter and Ros were an iconic couple in VicRoads. I have received many messages from VicRoads people describing the kindness and generosity they received from them. And this is true. They were hospitable and fun-loving hosts at Harrison Crescent and Cape Patterson and great company on our excursions.

When I wrote this, I was worried that I could not express adequately my appreciation for Peter and Ros' friendship. I spoke to Josie about grief. I know that the pain will disappear and we will be left with memories of good times.

They were lovely friends and I will miss them terribly.”