



Max Lay

Maxwell Gordon Lay AM (born 14 October 1936) is an Australian civil engineer, transport researcher, author, and historian whose work has significantly influenced road engineering and transport planning in Australia. He studied civil engineering at the **University of Melbourne**, graduating with a Bachelor of Civil Engineering in 1958 and later a Master of Engineering Science in 1961. He went on to complete a PhD in civil engineering at **Lehigh University** in the United States in 1964, specialising in steel structures overloaded by forces such as those due to earthquakes and large bombs.

Lay began his professional career with the **State Electricity Commission of Victoria**, where he supervised major structural engineering works, particularly the Morwell Power Stations. He later joined **BHP** as Engineering Research Manager, gaining experience in industrial engineering, loads applied to practical structures and large-scale project management. His growing interest in transport systems led him to the **Australian Road Research Board (ARRB)**, where he was appointed Executive Director. In this role he helped strengthen Australia's road research capacity and encouraged the application of scientific research to road design, traffic engineering, pavement technology, and transport safety. He greatly increased contact with overseas bodies and served on OECD committees.

A particularly important phase of Lay's career was his work with **VicRoads**, the Victorian road authority. Joining the organisation in the late 1980s, he served as **Director of Major Projects**, where he played a key role in shaping the planning and delivery of major road infrastructure in Victoria. During this period Victoria was undertaking some of its largest modern transport projects, and Lay contributed both engineering expertise and strategic oversight. His work helped guide the development and evaluation of major road corridors and infrastructure planning across the state. He was also closely involved in reviewing and advising on large toll road projects, including **Melbourne CityLink**. After his time with VicRoads, he worked as a principal consultant with the international engineering firm **Sinclair Knight Merz**, advising governments and private organisations on transport infrastructure and road engineering and serving as the legally- specified independent reviewer assessing the Project's engineering design, construction standards, and long-term infrastructure performance. His work emphasised the integration of engineering, economics, and urban planning in major transport decisions.

Lay was also associated with major infrastructure projects such as **EastLink**, where he was part of the bid team served as a director of **ConnectEast**, the concession company responsible for bidding, building and operating the toll road.

In addition to his engineering and advisory roles, Lay became widely known as a writer and historian of roads and transport systems. Over the course of his career he authored **more than 700 publications**, including technical papers, reports, and books. His best-known works include *Handbook of Road Technology*, *History of Australian Roads*, and *Melbourne Miles*, a detailed study of the development of Melbourne's road network and street culture. His writing is notable for combining technical engineering knowledge with historical and cultural analysis, making the subject accessible to both specialists and the wider public. In 2000 ARRB named its library the MG Lay Library to honour his passion for the dissemination of high-quality professional information."

Lay has also had strong academic connections with the **University of Melbourne**, where he served as a Professorial Associate and contributed to teaching and research in civil engineering and transport studies. His expertise has been recognised internationally, and he has contributed to major reference works including articles for **Encyclopaedia Britannica** on roads and transport systems and the international roads organisation, PIARC, on recording road history.

For his contributions to engineering, transport research, and infrastructure development, Lay has received numerous honours. He was appointed a **Member of the Order of Australia (AM)** in recognition of his services to civil engineering and road transport. He has also received lifetime achievement awards from engineering and transport organisations. In particular, he was honoured by the **Institute of Transportation Engineers Australia and New Zealand (ITE-ANZ)** with a prestigious award recognising his lifetime contribution to transport engineering and research. This award reflects the lasting impact of his work on road design, traffic management, infrastructure planning, and the professional development of transport engineers in Australia and New Zealand. In 2014 he was awarded the Peter Nicol Russell medal, the highest award of Engineers Australia,

Through his long career in engineering practice, research leadership, major infrastructure planning, and historical scholarship, Maxwell Gordon Lay has made a lasting contribution to the understanding and development of modern road systems. . He sees the high quality of the EastLink motorway as a culmination of this work. He believes that in some small way his work has helped shape the way engineers, planners, and policymakers approach transport infrastructure, ensuring that technical innovation, historical awareness, and public benefit remain central to the development of Australia's transport networks.