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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

Ever since the State Government announced on June 12 that our former 'home' would be completely demolished by mid-July, many of its previous occupants have been conducting regular checks.



Roula Christopoulos took this photo on 25 July. The building is still intact but the southern car park appears to have been cleared.



Iris Whittaker took this photo on 11 August. Work is obviously proceeding but apart from a few more open windows, nothing much appears to have changed.

Potholes

The very heavy rains on Monday 10 August resulted in further potholes on the Princes Highway at Bunyip, where up to 35 cars were reportedly damaged in the early hours of the morning. Knight's cartoon below adequately describes the situation...



Follow-up on Clive Mottram's pothole incident

[Editor: Further to the item in our last issue regarding member Clive Mottram's issues arising from hitting a pothole with his electric vehicle, which destroyed his tyre, and the unfortunate chain of events which followed that, Clive has advised of what happened subsequently.]

I booked my car in for an inspection at Melbourne City Kia. They were able to place the car on a hoist and determine that there was no underbody damage to the car, which was one concern I had in relation to the battery. They were unable to undertake the 'High Voltage Battery Diagnostic Test' and suggested that I monitor the performance of the battery myself. Charging the car at home has shown that the battery range is returning to what I expect.

My theory is that country driving results in much less efficient use of the battery than city driving because much more energy is expended when the car travels at higher speed. There is also much less opportunity for regenerative braking to generate electric power to return to the battery because there is less stopping at traffic lights and other intersections.

One of the Kia staff suggested that on future country drives, I turn off the regenerative braking function when driving on the flat and up hills, because otherwise the car battery and electric motor are working against the regenerative braking. There is a paddle on the steering wheel to enable this adjustment, so I will not need to fiddle with icons on my dashboard screen. I will therefore try turning off regenerative braking on future country drives. I also have determined that purchasing a spare wheel is not feasible, as it will not fit in the well area under the boot, and there is no anchorage point to secure a spare wheel.

WHATS COMING UP?

In this edition

In this edition we farewell Jack Waters and Warren Smith. We provide a final reminder of our September visit to Shepparton; report on Lance Midgley's 80th birthday celebration; provide John Rebecchi's comments on level crossing removals; present Clive Mottram's photos of construction on the Eastern Freeway – 50 years apart; reveal some of the regulatory and business hurdles facing older drivers and publish another instalment of David Jellie's great story of the West Gate Bridge and its approaches.

Our 2026 event calendar

Date	Event	Contact Person
Monday 7 – Tuesday 8 September	Visit to the Shepparton Art Museum (SAM) to see the <i>Facing Modernity: Degas to Picasso</i> visiting exhibition and the Archibald Prize Exhibition. Starts 12 noon with lunch at the SAM Café and dinner in Shepparton. There will be further optional activities on Tuesday including a winery lunch.	Jim Webber jameswebber1717@gmail.com
Monday 5 October	12 noon for 12.30 pm Occasional Lunch, Doncaster Shoppingtown Hotel	Just turn up
Wednesday 29 October	Annual Golf Day at Green Acres Golf Club, Kew East	Jim Webber jameswebber1717@gmail.com
Monday 9 November	12 noon for 12.30 pm Occasional Lunch, Doncaster Shoppingtown Hotel	Just turn up
Wednesday 9 December (Note date change)	11.45 am for 12.30 pm Christmas lunch. Venue to be determined.	Ken Vickery kenvickery@tpg.com.au

Shepparton Art Museum visit

Monday 7 September 2026 (& Tuesday 8 September if staying overnight for other activities)

You could do it as a day trip but you may also be interested in planning a night or two away in Shepparton in September.

We are planning the following during our trip to Shepparton:

- Lunch at the Shepparton Art Museum (SAM)
- Talk at the SAM on the *Facing Modernity: Degas to Picasso* exhibition
- View the Archibald Prize Exhibition
- Dinner in Shepparton
- Guided tour of the Tatura Irrigation and Wartime Camps Museum

- Lunch at Fowles Wine Restaurant, Avenel
- Plus a visit to the Museum of Vehicle Evolution, Kialla, which you may want to visit in your own time if you are staying in the area



The Shepparton Art Gallery

On 7 September the Association will be visiting the Shepparton Art Museum for the *Facing Modernity: Degas to Picasso* visiting exhibition as well as the Archibald Prize exhibition. If you intend to stay overnight in the Shepparton area, some attendees are staying at the Paradise Lakes Motel in Kialla, 7 km south of Shepparton but there is a wide range of accommodation options in and around Shepparton.

In late August, Jim Webber will be in contact with those who register their expression of interest with jameswebber1717@gmail.com. We currently have 30 attendees.

As the exhibition tickets (\$43.00) need to be pre-paid, we will require those wishing to attend to pay for the event in advance. Payment should be made by electronic transfer into the Association's NAB bank account, details as follows:

VICROADS ASSOCIATION BSB 083-323 ACC 170934017

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

Please note that refunds may be able to be arranged if there is someone able to take your place(s) once the tickets have been purchased. If not, a refund cannot be provided as moneys will have already been provided to the venue.

Please advise Jim Webber jameswebber1717@gmail.com prior to the deadline noted below, if you wish to attend any, or all, of the various events listed in the table below.

Further details of the visit will be available in the August newsletter and sent to all who express an interest in the visit.

WHAT'S BEEN HAPPENING

Lance Midgley's 80th birthday celebration

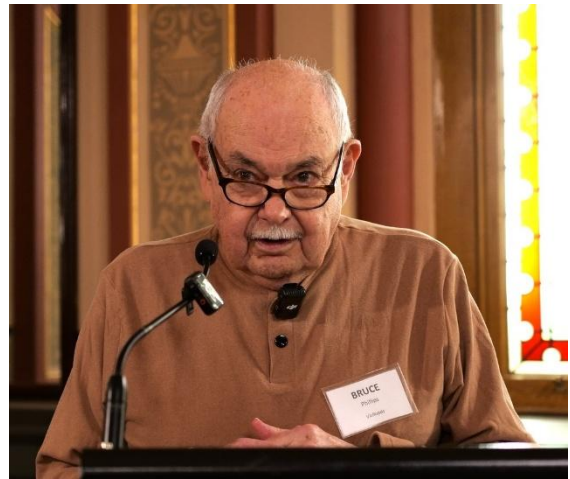
[Editor's note: Bruce Phillips, who attended and was one of the many speakers who honoured Lance, has provided this account of the celebration. On behalf of our Members I would like to wish Lance a belated 80th birthday greeting.]

'On 18th July, I attended an event to celebrate the 80th birthday of Lance Midgley at the Windsor Hotel in Melbourne. The tribute function was attended by, circa, 80 friends and associates from many parts of Australia.

My partner and I travelled from Bendigo for the event, spent the night at the Windsor and mingled with some of the other attendees in the Cricketer's Bar prior to dinner.



Lance



Bruce Phillips

Lance oversaw the dinner from his wheelchair, which took place in the impressive Grand Ballroom with guests (Lance paid for everything) seated at 10 large tables - each of which were allied to an aspect of his life.

There was representation of Lance's football, cricket, golf exploits, family life, time in Darwin, leadership of government association with asphalt industry and, of course, VicRoads. There were eight speakers altogether and I was honoured to speak about Lance's contribution to Victoria's roads, together with his private activities.

I need to say that Lance and I shared many interests (except barracking for Collingwood) and that we worked together in many locations and enjoyed each other's hospitality often over the past 50 years. We were at his wedding, visited each other at our various homes throughout the State and we have, variously, dined together, played cricket and golf, walked around Bendigo's centre sampling wine, smashed plates in a Richmond, Greek restaurant and scaling the escarpments along the Great Ocean Road.

Bruce Phillips



At the party. David Rolland, Jan & Richard Warwick. John & Jan Baldock

Geelong Lunch and TAC presentation

Unfortunately, it became necessary to cancel our proposed visit to Geelong on Tuesday 18 August due to the small number of Members and guests able to attend. We hope to include a similar visit in our 2027 Event Calendar.

MEMBER COMMENTS AND NEWS

Vale Jack Waters



Jack as a young man

Graham Gilpin has been advised by Jack Water's grandson Chris, that Jack had died peacefully in the morning of 30 July in Taupo, New Zealand.

Jack was born in England in December 1925 and grew up in Brighton, East Sussex. After spending two years compulsory service with the Army he obtained a BSc in engineering at London University in 1950. In 1957, after being interviewed in London by Gerry Masterton, he arrived in Melbourne as a 'ten pound pom' to start work with the CRB.

Jack spent his entire CRB/RCA career of 29 years in Metropolitan Division, largely as a senior construction engineer, and retired in 1986. Having no family in Australia and with

his only son married to a New Zealander and living in NZ, Jack and his wife decided to migrate for a second time, settling at Lake Taupo, North Island.

Jack was a committee member of the Bicycle Institute of Victoria and remained an active cyclist in New Zealand until well into his 90s. He was aged 100 when he passed away.

Vale Warren Smith

David Nash has advised that Warren Smith, who started in Bridge section at the Road Construction Authority in the mid-1980s, passed away on 31st July 2026 after complications with Parkinson's Disease. He was aged 64.

After working with VicRoads traffic signals in 1990, Warren left VicRoads in about 2001-2002 to join John Piper Traffic. He returned for another stint with VicRoads as a contractor for about 2 years around 2011-2012.

It should be pointed out that even when Warren was working with various consultant firms, he was still working in the traffic signals area for councils, building contractors and especially VicRoads. His great interest was controller programming and he was excellent at this work with the logical and technical brain power to ensure reliable and bug-free signal operations.

Warren is survived by his wife, Jennie. David Nash commented that the last few years have been very hard for both of them.

From John Rebecchi

Congratulations on another excellent Newsletter.

I read your Melbourne's Level Crossing saga in the July Newsletter with great interest, particularly the reference to the 1950s and 60s. While it is correct to say that the initiatives from the 1954 Level Crossings Act petered out in the 1960s due to the scale of the task and other more attractive funding needs, there were further factors at play in the background that influenced the circumstances leading to that decision.



The Swan Street railway bridges

In that era, the Victorian Railways organisation was one of the most conservative and intractable organisations imaginable. I am constantly reminded of one example of its engineering conservatism every time I take the train to the city via Richmond Station.

The bridge over Swan Street, built in the 1950s, is a riveted truss system reminiscent of something from the 1930s, as they did not believe that welded steel or reinforced concrete structures were adequate for rail bridges.

In terms of level crossing removals, Victorian Railways demanded that the rail system was not to be disrupted or modified. The CRB was compelled to adopt solutions that left the rail infrastructure largely untouched. The only alternative was to put the road over the top. Heidelberg Road at Clifton Hill, as described in the newsletter, is a shining example of that thinking, which persisted into the 1970s with the North Road overpass at Huntingdale. These projects, along with others constructed in that era, were compelled to adopt solutions that could not avoid significant disruption to adjacent community businesses and infrastructure. Rural crossing removals similarly required solutions that did not affect rail operations.

When the program was abandoned in the 1960s, I recall draft proposals for some even more horrendous projects such as an overpass in Union Road, Surrey Hills that suggested creating a direct link from Warrigal Road to Union Road, taking a swathe of properties and largely destroying the strip shopping centre in Union Road. 60 years later, in a later more enlightened age that takes much more account of community expectations, the level crossing at Union Road has now been removed with minimal change to the local infrastructure.

The second item was Peter Balfe's story on the West Gate Bridge. I was also closely involved in the West Gate Bridge rebuild in the 1970s. As Peter states, Bruce Phillips had recommended the use of epoxy asphalt surfacing, but I was handed the delivery side of it when I returned to Asphalt Division in 1974.

I was seconded from the CRB to the West Gate Bridge Authority on a part-time basis through to the completion of the project in 1978. The epoxy asphalt surfacing of West Gate is a story in itself. Now that I am reminded of it, I should prepare something for the newsletter as it was certainly a significant undertaking and an important part of my life in that era. It also led to my involvement in other bridge surfacing projects and consultation on later resurfacing options.

John Rebecchi

From Clive Mottram

[Editor: Clive has been photographing Victoria's engineering works for many years, which has allowed him to provide some interesting comparison shots. In this edition, Clive looks at construction works at the Burke Road interchange with Eastern Freeway in photographs he took 50 years apart.]



Taken in late 1973, this picture shows construction of the Burke Road overpass and, in the background to the right, one of the piers for the westbound on ramp from Burke Road.



This picture, taken on 30 July 2026, shows the main freeway carriageways being widened and also repositioned to accommodate a new busway along the northern side.

The eastbound off ramp (where this picture was taken from) is being rebuilt to enable it to pass over the busway.

From Patrick Maher

[Editor: Patrick, who is not a Member, recently contacted us seeking information about the closure of our R&L office at Blackburn. We believe this happened between 1997 and 1998 but would be grateful if anyone could provide a more definitive date.]

Dear VicRoads Association,

My name is Patrick, I run a small YouTube channel centred around the history of transport in Melbourne, called "Melbourne Transport Chronicles".

I am writing with a question surrounding the old VicRoads office in Blackburn. Would you or any members know when it closed?

I went so far as to submit an FOI request to the Department of Transport and Planning but they could not find any documentation whatsoever.

I would very much appreciate your help!

Thank you! - Patrick

New Members

At our 3 August Committee meeting we were pleased to welcome the following new members:

Bill Hooker

Kenneth Adams

Peter Leyden

Elizabeth Hovenden

Greg Aplin

Sam Bisagnano

Occasional Lunch at the Doncaster Shoppingtown Hotel

On Monday 3 August about 24 Members attended our regular occasional lunch.





Dandenong Alstom visit follow-up

Alstom Dandenong has kindly sent us this group photograph from our July visit. While I have split it into two parts for clarity, identifying members in full safety gear was a challenge. Feel free to let me know if I have gotten it wrong:



From L to R. Ian Thiele, Warren Blandy, Nick Szwed, Jutta Szwed, Clive Mottram, Joan Gilmer, Jim Webber, Patsy Kennedy, David Jellie, Ken Ogden, Geoff Lawrence, Graeme Stone



From L to R. Alan Mackinlay, Geoff Symons, Ross Paul, Roger Thorp, John Wright, Rosslyn Wright, Noel Osborne, Alan Perry, Iris Whittaker, Bruce Thompson, Elizabeth Hovendon, John Fitz, John Rebecchi, Troy Donis (Alstom), Graham Gilpin, Colin Bates, Jill Earnshaw, Brian Head, Laurie Watson, Rob Aitken, Alstom guide, Joe Black

Hurdles for Older drivers – by John Wright

Increasing numbers of us are now living ‘normal’ lives well into our eighties and beyond. As we age, most of us sensibly adjust the way we drive so that we can safely continue to make the most of our lives. While studies show that many licence holders begin to step away from driving after age 75, increasing numbers of people in their 70s and 80s are continuing to drive.

Most older drivers adopt sensible strategies to reduce their risk, including avoiding driving at night or in bad weather, travelling shorter distances, avoiding peak-hour traffic and urban freeways, and taking frequent rest breaks on longer journeys. Some of our oldest Members (in their 90s) have told me they now only use their cars to visit their local shops during the day.

In response to well documented age-related driving deficiencies, all driver licensing authorities impose some form of licence control for drivers aged 75 years or older. If you are contemplating moving to another State or Territory you might do well to firstly consider how well they treat their senior drivers.

Northern Territory, Victoria and Tasmania

The Northern Territory is probably the kindest jurisdiction for senior drivers, with no age-related licence rules at all. However, all NT drivers *are* required to undertake a vision test every five years. In Victoria and Tasmania, the only age-related requirements are shorter licence renewal periods. In Victoria, after you turn 75 you can only renew your licence every 3 years. In Tasmania, after you turn 65 you can only renew your licence every 5 years. All three jurisdictions base their practices on the premise that most older drivers already self-assess and sensibly limit their driving risk.

New South Wales

NSW has the most rigorous licencing regime for seniors. Between the ages of 75 and 84 you must undergo an annual medical assessment for *Fitness to Drive* with your doctor, who may or may not recommend a driving test. Possibly as a consequence of this requirement, about 10% more NSW drivers aged over 75 surrender their driving licences, compared to Victorian drivers in the same age group¹.

Once you reach 85, in addition to the annual medical assessment, you must pass an on-road driving test or assessment every two years to keep a full, unrestricted licence. However, you can opt for a *Modified Licence*², which allows you to drive with certain conditions (e.g. within a restricted radius of your home or during daylight hours).

While not a licence issue, it is also worth noting that NSW is the only State that requires an annual roadworthiness test - for vehicles that are older than five years.

Queensland

From 75 onwards, you must pass an annual medical assessment, carry a valid medical certificate while driving and follow any specific driving limits set by your doctor.

South Australia

Drivers aged 75 and over must submit a compulsory, annual self-assessment form regarding their fitness to drive. If you answer "yes" to having one of the many, common

¹ <https://chartingtransport.com/2015/03/09/trends-in-drivers-license-ownership-in-australia/>

² Choosing a modified licence means you generally do not need to take the practical driving test.

medical conditions listed, you must see a medical doctor for a formal health check. South Australian medical practitioners are legally required to report any patient who is subsequently found to be unfit to drive.

Western Australia

Drivers aged 80 and older must complete an annual medical assessment, which includes a medical exam certificate, vision check, and general health review with a doctor to renew their driver's license.

Australian Capital Territory

If you're aged 50, 60, 65 or 70 you'll need to do an eye test when you're renewing your licence. Drivers aged 75 or older must complete an annual medical examination with their doctor to maintain their driver licence.

Hire car company policies

While driver licensing authorities are concerned with maintaining driver and community road safety, car hire companies are arguably more concerned with balancing their vehicle fleet insurance costs against accommodating the needs of their riskier younger and older customers.

Insurers are aware of many studies indicating that drivers aged 75 years and over are more at risk of crash involvement than the average driver, and that older occupants of vehicles are much more likely to be severely injured or killed than middle-aged occupants in crashes of equal severity.

While there is no legally enforceable age limit for driving in Australia, the public position of Australia's major car hire companies is that if you are 75 or older you will need to provide a medical certificate proving you are fit to drive. However, there is anecdotal evidence that some Australian franchised operators of the major companies are reluctant to hire vehicles to drivers aged 80 or older – which may explain something that happened to me last year.

My car dealership had always provided a 'loan' car when my vehicle was being serviced. In 2025, they told me this service had been outsourced to a separate hire business. After installing the hire company's phone app, my membership application was refused without explanation. I suspect I was rejected because I was 85 at the time. I cancelled my scheduled car service at the dealership and engaged a mobile mechanic to service my car in our driveway - which turned out to be a much cheaper arrangement.

Overseas, some car hire firms overtly apply maximum age limits. In Italy and Ireland, for example, quite a number of car rental companies have upper age limits of 75³. There are cautionary tales⁴ of older overseas travellers who have had their online car hire bookings summarily cancelled before or when they arrived to pick up the hire car.

If you are an older traveller wishing to hire a car - either here or overseas, you might be better off using a reputable travel agent to make sure your hire car will be waiting for you when you step off the plane.

John Wright

³ Source: [Is 79-years-old too old to hire a car? | escape.com.au](https://www.escape.com.au/news/79-years-old-too-old-to-hire-a-car/)

⁴ [No country for old men trying to hire cars | Older people | The Guardian](https://www.theguardian.com/travel/2018/jun/14/no-country-for-old-men-trying-to-hire-cars)

West Gate Freeway Part 4 – by David Jellie

Planning for the approach roads to West Gate Bridge

In the early stages of planning, four feasible routes were investigated before adoption of the final line, which involved provision for future freeway-to-freeway connections at Princes Highway West and Williamstown Road.

The 1969 Melbourne Transportation Plan, introduced by the Bolte Government, recommended the provision of an extensive freeway network. The plan was over-ambitious (to be polite) and, in 1976, the Hamer Government cancelled all the road reservations for the unbuilt urban freeways although some parts of the plan were eventually built by later governments. These include CityLink (by the Kennett Government), EastLink (by the Bracks Government), Peninsula Link (by the Brumby and Bailleau Governments) and the Mordialloc Bypass (by the Andrews Government).

The alignment of the West Gate Freeway was designated F9 West in the plan. Traffic modelling predicted that traffic crossing the bridge in year 1972 – the scheduled year of opening - would be 33,000 vehicles per day and that peak hour volumes would be in the order of 3,500 vehicles per hour.

As mentioned earlier, the CRB was responsible for the design and construction of the Lower Yarra Freeway⁵ on the western side of the river as well as the connecting road on the eastern side. Roadworks design was carried out by Plans and Survey Division and the bridges were designed by Bridge Division.

Description of the works for the Lower Yarra Freeway (the western approach)

The western approach comprised a divided freeway which connected to the Princes Highway West at Kororoit Creek Road, Brooklyn. Connections between the freeway and the existing road system were provided at the Princes Highway West, Grieve Parade, Millers Road and Williamstown Road. At these locations, interchanges were provided allowing traffic using the local street system to pass over or under the freeway. There were no at-grade intersections or traffic signals on the freeway. The freeway initially provided four lanes west of Millers Road, six lanes to Williamstown Road, and eight lanes on to the bridge.⁶

There were fourteen bridges on the western approach – Doherty's Road over the freeway, the Princes Highway on-ramp carrying Geelong-bound traffic over the freeway, three bridges at Kororoit Creek (two for the freeway and one at Grieve Parade for the Blackshaw's – Doherty's Road link), an overpass across the freeway at Blackshaw's Road, dual bridges overpassing Millers Road, dual freeway bridges over the Newport-Sunshine railway line, dual bridges crossing Williamstown Road and pedestrian bridges at Rosala and Wembley Avenues.

Description of the works for the eastern approach

On the eastern approach, the Metropolitan Planning Scheme provided an ultimate connection between the east end of the bridge to an interchange at Graham Street and the planned metropolitan freeway system. This system had not been planned for construction for a number of years after the opening of the bridge. Traffic studies at the

⁵ The freeway was later renamed the West Gate Freeway.

⁶ The freeway was later widened to ten lanes.

time predicted that traffic generated by the bridge could, for a similar period, be accommodated without the freeway system.

So, on the eastern approach, the planned improvements to meet initial traffic demands were:

- The improvement of Graham Street between Lorimer Street and Foote Street to provide four through lanes of traffic. This required overpass structures over the freeway and over the Port Melbourne railway at Graham Street.
- Construction of Roger Street through to Lorimer Street, and reconstruction, to 46 ft (14 m) width of portions of Boundary, Brady and Montague Streets.
- Development of Ingles, Dorcas and Ferrars Streets to four through-lane capacity, and the installation of duplicated boom gates to improve the existing Ingles Street rail crossing.
- Improvement of a number of intersections along these streets.

Construction of the Lower Yarra Freeway

Work commenced on construction of West Gate Bridge in April 1968 and it was scheduled for completion early in 1971. This timetable automatically set the programme for construction of the Lower Yarra Freeway. It too, was scheduled for completion early in 1971.

Because of the scope of the task and the tight time scale, the CRB appointed Stan Hodgson, the Assistant Divisional Engineer Metropolitan to manage the Lower Yarra Crossing Freeway. The project was given the highest Government priority and Stan was fully dedicated to the project. He was appointed Engineer for the roadworks contracts while the separate contracts for the associated bridgeworks were undertaken with the Chief Bridge Engineer as the Engineer for the contracts. Stan's appointment was unusual in that the CRB's *modus operandi* was always to appoint the Divisional Engineer to the position of Engineer for the contract.

Stan was located in the then Metropolitan Division office (located at Head Office in Kew) while a Resident Project Engineer, Bob Morison, was located on site. David Nicholson managed all the pre-planning aspects and co-ordinated and prepared the roadworks contracts assisted by Barry Munce and John Liddell.

A Critical Path Method (CPM) programme was developed containing 500 activities enabling resource scheduling, programme control and a reporting cycle every 14 days. Budgets of monthly expenditure for the 3 ½ years of the programme were prepared and contracts were staggered to reduce workloads on contractors and project staff. They were also influenced by restraints such as service relocation works and right-of-way clearance.

Bob Morison was a memorable character. He was born in England and spent many years in Yemen working for the Colonial Office on irrigation projects. When he joined the CRB he led the design team for the Lower Yarra Freeway and when the position for Resident Project Engineer was advertised, he applied and was successful. He had previous road construction experience in England. When he started in the position, he was chided by Stan Hodgson that he had to build his own mistakes and translate his two-dimensional plans into three dimensions.

Another story about Bob arose from a site visit of African and Asian engineers under the auspices of the Federal Government. Wanting to demonstrate generous Australian

hospitality, he ordered cream cakes for morning tea. The visitors thoroughly enjoyed them, and all went well until the Auditor of the day (Harold Eicke), when going through the bills, said, 'Cream cakes, cream cakes! The Board doesn't buy cream cakes; tea and biscuits are quite adequate', to which Bob replied, 'Well, look, we won't call them cream cakes, we will call them miscellaneous tarts'.

A Project Office was established in a house in Beevers Street, Altona North, just off Millers Road. Engineering staff involved in the roadworks were Fred Davenport, Maurice Johnson, Garnett Gibbs, Alastair Robinson, Gary Veith and others. Kelvin York and Anthony Rees ran the on-site materials laboratory. Mal Sanders was in charge of the surveying team, and Gary Martin carried out drafting and roadworks redesign. Fred Smith managed the team of Clerks of Works.

When Bob Morison shifted into the site office, he decided that there should be a swear box. If anyone swore, they had to put a dollar into the box. By far the largest contributor was Bob himself and the staff reckoned that Bob's contribution for the year was enough to pay for the Christmas party.

Bridgeworks were supervised by Brian Kemp, David Jellie, Thomas Yee and others. David Jellie had been working with Colin Roy on bridge construction on the Tullamarine Freeway at Strathmore and, in 1968, he commenced supervision of the bridge at Grieve Parade, while still operating out of the Tullamarine office. This was the first bridge to be built on the Lower Yarra Freeway.

Work commenced in 1968 on the western side with a number of contracts awarded to a total value of \$3.6 million. These were followed by the main contract, valued at around \$4 million. It was awarded to a French firm called Citra Constructions. It was the first project that company had undertaken in Australia⁷. The contract consisted of the construction of the main carriageways from Williamstown Road to Kororoit Creek.

A separate roadworks contract at the Western Interchange west of Kororoit Creek was awarded to Withers Constructions managed by its Resident Engineer, Stan Chesney. Alastair Robinson recalled one incident during these works. A CRB clerk of works endeavoured to slow down the speed of traffic travelling through the worksite. He was exasperated at many vehicles refusing to slow down to the posted speed limit. He stood by the road waving his arms and his stop slow baton and for a particularly aggressive motorist, he whacked the car with his baton. Suffice to say, Fred Smith had some interesting counselling sessions with the culprit.

Separate contracts were also awarded also for bridges at Grieve Parade, Kororoit Creek, Miller's Road and the Newport-Sunshine Railway Line – as well as the two pedestrian overpasses. The pedestrian bridges were built by a small-scale contractor called Mick McCarthy from Geelong. Other contracts were also awarded for ancillary road works, main outfall drainage works, fencing and materials supply.

Citra's contract comprised the construction of 6.5 km of freeway with connections to Grieve Parade, Millers Road and Williamstown Road. The generally shallow depth of basalt rock along the alignment precluded the use of depressed grade lines, so the freeway was designed to be elevated on fill for much of its length.

⁷ They were later to become the contractor for the elevated section of West Gate Freeway over South Melbourne on the eastern side of the bridge. This was its last project in Australia.

The embankment material used was the natural basaltic clay prevalent in the area. Most of it was imported and trucked in from local councils. The pavement consisted of 4 inches (10 cm) of bituminous concrete over 15 inches (37.5 cm) of wet-mix crushed rock base and 15 inches (37.5 cm) of sub-base. Shoulders were constructed in crushed rock only and they were flush sealed with light coloured aggregate. Lester Watt from Materials Division supervised the sealing works and was often seen operating the broom sweeper himself.

Relocation of services was carried out by the authorities responsible for water mains, sewers, trunk telephone cables, high pressure gas mains, overhead power lines, and underground power cables. The total cost of relocating services was \$2 million, of which the major item was the relocation/replacement of the SEC high voltage towers and electricity transmission lines running the entire length of the freeway alignment. It is interesting to think what the cost of relocating these services would be today.

Several cross-freeway culverts were constructed to accommodate connection of various utility services including those to provide for continual operation of the Brooklyn sewer pumping station near Millers Road.

There were also numerous smaller contracts for landscaping, tower lighting, traffic signals, and other ancillary features.

Local access roads formerly across the freeway alignment were severed by construction of the freeway, and new access roads, namely Fogarty Avenue adjacent to the Newport-Sunshine railway and Grieve Parade were constructed as a charge against the main project.

There was a contractual dispute between the CRB and Citra at the end of the project. The contract was a lump sum but Citra contended that it was a Schedule of Rates. There was considerable negotiation between the parties until a settlement sum was mutually agreed.

The total expenditure on the Lower Yarra Freeway was nearly \$14 million which included \$2.8 million for half the cost of the Williamstown Road interchange which was built by the Lower Yarra Crossing Authority. Despite the collapse of West Gate Bridge, the western approaches were completed within the original works programme, and the freeway opened to traffic on 7 April 1971.

There was little benefit to the travelling public at the time of the opening of the Lower Yarra Freeway. Prior to the opening, most eastbound traffic used the Princes Highway West through Brooklyn and Kingsville to either Dynon Road or Racecourse Road. The delay caused by the collapse and reconstruction of West Gate Bridge meant that the new freeway terminated at Williamstown Road with traffic funnelled through Yarraville and Seddon. It would have eased congestion along the Princes Highway route but increased congestion in the more sedentary suburbs of Yarraville and Seddon – a situation which was to last many years.



Looking west along the Lower Yarra Freeway from the Graham Street overpass (now the M2 Citylink interchange bridge), late October 1970. (Image courtesy of Rob Morgan ARPS)



The Lower Yarra Freeway under construction in August 1970 looking east from the Wembley Avenue pedestrian overpass towards West Gate Bridge. (Image courtesy of Rob Morgan ARPS)



Looking west on the Lower Yarra Freeway towards Millers Road, August 1971 – four months after the opening of the freeway. (Image courtesy of Rob Morgan ARPS)



Looking west on the Lower Yarra Freeway from the Rosala Avenue footbridge (west of Millers Road), August 1971. (Image courtesy of Rob Morgan ARPS)



The Lower Yarra Freeway at the twin bridges over the Newport-Sunshine railway.



The Lower Yarra Freeway at the Princes Highway intersection.
Both photographs from the 58th Annual Report of the CRB – 1971.

Construction of the eastern approaches

At the same time as works were proceeding on the Lower Yarra Freeway, a number of small-scale contracts were awarded for the road upgrade works on the eastern approaches. These included upgrading of Bertie, Cook, Rogers, Graham, Ingles, Lorimer, Dorcas, Boundary, Ferrars, Brady and Montague Streets. They were administered by Metropolitan Division. This work involved aspects such as road widening, kerb and channelling, surface treatment, traffic management infrastructure and the like.

After he transferred from Tullamarine to the Altona office, David Jellie also supervised the construction of the Graham Street railway overpass on the eastern side. The bridge was constructed using Ted Malcolmson's CRB direct labour gang under David's supervision, but David is the first to admit that it was really Ted Malcolmson who supervised him. Ted was the doyen of the CRB's bridge fraternity at the time and was a great mentor to many people.

Before starting construction of the Graham Street bridge, David and Ted met on site and planned where they would establish a works compound to store tools and equipment and to establish a site office and crib huts for the workers. They found a convenient location within the road reserve and David arranged for a contractor to erect a 2.2 m high wire mesh fence (with a gate) the following day. The posts were set in concrete. The fencing contractor rang David at the Beevers Street office on the other side of the river to say that the work was complete and, on his way home that night, he diverted to Port Melbourne to have a look at the job. When he arrived at the site, there was no sign of the fence. It had been stolen. He found some of the post holes where the concrete had semi-hardened but no sign of the posts.

He rang the contractor and requested that a new fence be erected the following day. He reported to the Port Melbourne Police Station what had happened on the previous night and told them that another fence was to be erected the next afternoon. They said that they would send a patrol car round to keep an eye on it. The second fence was duly erected and, when David called in the following morning, he found the second fence had also been stolen. He went back to the police station and they said that when the patrol car called at the site the fence was not there. They thought it hadn't been erected.

To remove the fence, the thieves would have had to have heavy lifting equipment and a number of trucks as well as a considerable work force. A third fence was built but this time a watchman's hut was installed to make sure the fence wasn't nicked again.



Graham Street railway overpass – now converted to a skate park.
The graffiti and skateboard ramps were not included in the project.

The works on the eastern approaches were completed within the scheduled time and opened to traffic progressively but, as for the Lower Yarra Freeway, they were under-utilized and only local traffic used them.

David Jellie

