VICROADS ASSOCIATION NEWSLETTER NO. 285 October 2026

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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



Melbourne Airport just after it was built, July 13, 1970. (Photo courtesy of The Age)

Dear Members

When governments keep promising things and failing to deliver, the natives can get very restless. When Port Moresby was first bombed in World War 2, the town only had anti-aircraft guns to defend itself. The Australian Government promised a squadron of Curtis P40 *Warhawk* fighters, but as the weeks went by, nothing appeared. The defenders started calling the missing fighters' *Neverhawks*'. When the fighters finally turned up a month late, the town's disbelieving defenders reportedly fired on them.

I think Melbourne's long-suffering airport commuters must be entertaining similar feelings about the long-promised airport rail link. While it was recently heartening to have the Prime Minister, the Premier *and* the Leader of the State Opposition all singing from the same hymnbook (that it is definitely going to happen) there is still no clear date upon which hopeful passengers will step off the train at the Airport's new station.

I recently had the pleasure of reading an interesting account of the non-progress of this epic connection, prepared by Age journalist Timna Jacks in 2020 and an earlier article from 2012 by Age journalist Shane Green. Both are worth reading, as they provide a fascinating glimpse into changing political and community mindsets.

Even before construction of the new airport commenced in November 1964, the Premier, Sir Henry Bolte boldly proposed an airport rail link from Jacana. However,

this was the era in which America's growing network of urban freeways looked to be the way of our future, and after Labor and the Country Party combined to defeat Bolte's rail option in 1965, the future Tullamarine Freeway became the favoured[1] means of accessing the airport. Former Labor member for Broadmeadows John Wilton accused Bolte of building a *'glamour project" for a "selected few who travel by air'*.

Over its long history, the inclusion of intermediate stations on the Melbourne Airport Rail Link (MARL) has always been a concern. Early proposals, including a tunnel and a monorail, were predicated on providing a fast, non-stop service from the city to the airport. It was thought that any delays arising from intermediate stations could discourage patronage in favour of faster road-based services. Even today, some comments in newspaper and online forums support the view that the current Skybus service from Southern Cross is probably as good as any competing rail option.

As it turned out, MARL *did* include a stop at Sunshine for the very sensible reason of allowing regional travellers access to the Airport line instead of forcing them to firstly travel into the city centre. The Keilor East station, which was added following eleventh hour parliamentary lobbying by the current Premier Ben Carroll, is considered in some circles to be 'over-egging the cake'. The original business case considered, but didn't recommend, building this station. It concluded the additional costs and travel time between the airport and city were not justified by the projected 'low initial usage' of the station in the years to 2051.



Proposed East Keilor Station

Whether or not the additional station will adversely affect the economics and operation of MARL remains to be seen.

The case for having it is that it will connect more than 150,000 residents in the City of Moonee Valley to Melbourne's train network for the first time and provide them with a 6-minute trip to the airport. The additional patronage from East Keilor should also benefit the economics of MARL.

MARL invites comparisons with Sydney's airport line, which also has two stops between the city and the airport. However, Sydney's airport line is 7 kilometres long, with the journey taking ten minutes versus MARL's 27 kilometre trip taking 27 to 30 minutes. The major difference between the lines is that Sydney's airport line forms part of a greater network extending far beyond the airport. MARL, like Brisbane's problematic airport rail link, will terminate at the airport. Given the reluctance[2] of airport patrons to use the Brisbane Airport line, the biggest factor in whether or not MARL is a financial success might be trip pricing.

[1] The Age even cautioned against rail replacing the need for the "north-western" freeway, stating that the rail service could not be a substitute for "fast access by road when all experience shows that the majority of travellers prefer to make their own way to and from airports, either by private car or taxi"

[2] The Brisbane Airport line was built and is operated privately (owned by the Universities Superannuation Scheme since 2013) rather than run directly by Queensland Rail. Because it operates outside the standard Translink public network model, the private operators rely heavily on ticket sales to recoup investments and generate returns. As a result, its high fares have discouraged many airport patrons from using it.

WHATS COMING UP?

In this edition

In this edition we invite Members and friends to attend our three final events in 2026; and present Kieran Sharpe's (ex. ARRB) article about The Great Ocean Road.

We also provide a brief history of telematics and look at how this technology is changing our driving experience (and many other things). David Jellie provided his next instalment in the history of the Lower Yarra Crossing and the events surrounding its opening in 1970. In his *Lest We Forget* series, David has also provided the last stories of CRB staff - Frank Watts and Andy Wilson, who were prisoners of war to the Japanese. Future stories in this series will be about our WW2 POWs with the Germans.

Our 2026 event calendar

Date	Event	Contact Person
Friday 30 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
Tuesday 8 December (Note date change)	11.30 am for 12.15 pm Christmas lunch. We have secured a great (and new) venue at the Matthew Flinders Hotel in Chadstone.	Ken Vickery kenvickery@tpg.com.au

UPCOMING EVENTS AND NOTICES

The following events are open to Members, friends and family. All you need to do is register.

Annual Golf Day

Day/Date: **Friday 30 October 2026**

Venue: Green Acres Golf Club, 51 Elm Grove, Kew East

Why not come along, get some added exercise and share a few laughs and stories. Don't forget you are 'competing' for the Jim Webber Trophy and potential bragging rights over Roy Gilmour, who has had a considerable number of wins on this annual day out. Golfers of all standards welcome as are friends and family. The golf is often followed by a drink at the on-site bar.

Please register with: Jim Webber, jameswebber1717@gmail.com

Christmas Lunch

Day/Date: **Tuesday 8 December** 2026

Venue: The Matthew Flinders Hotel, 667 Warrigal Road, Chadstone

This is always our most popular event so booking early is suggested. Our 2026 venue is easily accessed, has plenty of parking and is close to the Holmesglen railway station. Similar arrangements and cost to last year; just a **new venue**.

We hope to see lots of Members and potential new Members there.

Please register with: Ken Vickery, kenvickery@tpg.com.au

We are always keen for former colleagues to join us at one or all of these events so if you are, or have been, in contact with former regional or head office staff, or others who may not be Association Members but may be interested in joining us, please forward this information on to them.

Do not hesitate to email Jill Earnshaw (jillmearnshaw@gmail.com) with any queries about these functions and any other VicRoads Association matters. We are also always interested in Member's suggestions for future visits and presentations. For example, as a result of a very popular and well attended visit to the North East Link Project in 2025, a further visit to that project is being arranged for the first quarter of 2027.

VicRoads Association Committee Nominations for 2027

Enjoy hearing from the VicRoads Association and/or participating in its events? Have a bit of time to ensure its ongoing success? We are seeking nominations to join the Committee.

The Committee meets six times a year with meetings lasting just over an hour. Being a Committee Member is not an onerous role but it is a very important one to the future of the Association and its ongoing activities.

Any member interested in joining the Association's Committee for 2027, or in the future, should contact the Secretary, Jill Earnshaw (jillmearnshaw@gmail.com), who can chat with you about what is involved. Jill can also email you a nomination form or please complete the form on our website and email it to her.

MEMBER COMMENTS AND NEWS

From Norm Butler

Hi John

Thank you again for another newsy newsletter. As often happens, this edition brought back memories of interesting people past, in this case Ernie Renz and Bill Miles (who was the subject of David Jellie's story).

I remember Ernie Renz as Specification Engineer with his office on the 2nd floor just down from the municipal Bridge Section where I was working under Phil Reid. Ernie would appear with the morning tea trolley and would be on for a chat, usually 20 minutes or so (half an hour maybe).

I did not know then that he was one of the Dunera Boys who were treated so poorly at the start of WW2. (I learned about the Dunera Boys at the old prison at South West Rocks New South Wales where many were interned for the duration of the War). Ernie often referred to "The Inflation" - hyperinflation which happened in Germany in the 1920s or 1930s. As a youngster, I had no idea what it was about until years later. When I moved from Bridge Sub Branch to Bairnsdale Division, Ernie, very kindly, made up a thick folder of Bridge Division standard drawings some dating back into the 1930s which

I used regularly for many years when trying to sort out and modify old bridges, especially the timber ones.

Bill Miles was a legend in his time. In the 1960s and 1970s he was Traffic Officer in Bairnsdale, ranging from Rosedale to the NSW border and through the East Gippsland Ranges. He was tough and the truckies knew it. Stories of Bill's tussles with the logging industry abounded. He even threatened to book the Board's low loader because we had loaded a Double Stanley hut onto the float at Cobbennah[3] to take to Ensay. Bill insisted that this was a divisible load.

Fortunately, the Assistant Divisional Engineer, Ron Angus, got wind of this and called up Bill on the two-way radio and asked him to come in for an important matter, during which time we moved the hut to Ensay. Bill was a very big bloke, such that the springs on his Board's Car developed a permanent set to the right. No doubt other have stories of Bill's exploits

Well done again

Cheers, Norm

From Nick Szwed

Thanks to Nick Swed for this wonderful sneak peek at Victoria's upcoming arterial road maintenance strategy, which is expected to save heaps of money as members of the public pitch in on a DIY basis, using conveniently located tubs of filling material - probably while they are waiting for a tow truck to come to remove their crippled vehicle...



[3] Norm explained: 'Cobbennah is located on the Dargo Rd about 50km out of Bairnsdale. (Reference VicRoads Country Directory Map 83 E4). I don't expect that there will be anything left of the camp now. It was also the location of the CRB Patrol Depot which I also expect to have been removed. From memory, the story is that Cobbennah township was destroyed in the 1939 fires when the inhabitants survived by sheltering in Iguana Creek'.

From David Jellie - West Gate Freeway staff request

I am well advanced in my recording of the history of the West Gate Freeway and would like to compile a roll call of all those people who worked on it at any time and in any way. I would like the names and roles of as many people as possible so, if you were involved in even the slightest way or know someone who was, please provide me with your name and any names of colleagues and their roles as well.

I don't want to restrict this roll call to field staff who built the project. I'd like to include people involved in office/administration, planning, design, traffic management, property, materials/testing/research, surveying, clerks of works, etc. I'd also like the names and roles of people involved in the maintenance, widening, strengthening of West Gate Bridge, installing the safety fences and the flags – anything at all.

Any photos you have of these people, would also be appreciated. Please go to this page on our website to make a submission: https://vicroadsassociation.org/about-us/

Thank you for any contribution you can make towards recording the history of the West Gate Freeway.

David Jellie

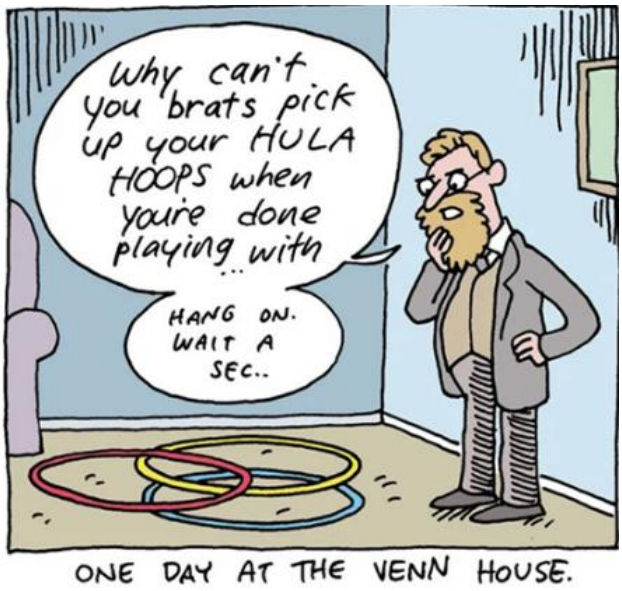
REMEMBER WHEN ...

We are introducing a new, regular feature allowing Members to share individual recollections of interesting and/or amusing happenings that occurred over the long history of our organisations. We are not seeking major articles – anything from a one-liner to a paragraph would be most welcome. Please send them to the Editor at ananiasw@gmail.com

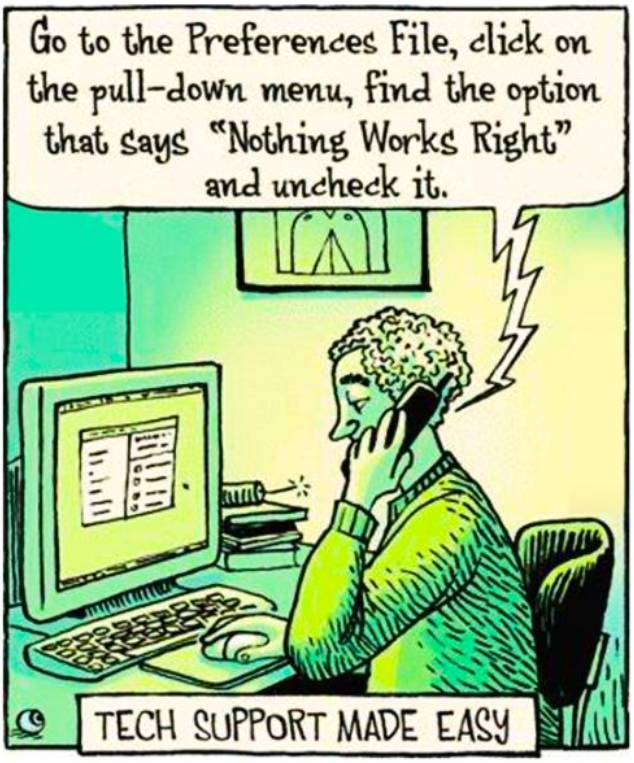
Jill Earnshaw and Joan Gilmer have come up with a few thought starters:

- Management once issued a directive that halter neck dresses were not to be worn in the office. This was at the same time as there was no such directive in relation to men wearing very short shorts!
- Women had to leave work when they married.
- The red carpet in the Chief Executive's area.
- The days of mainframe input punch cards and general staff not being allowed to go into the major computer room in the Kew South Building in case you caused static.
- Most of us having to learn to type when we got computers.
- Pay packets and then the saga when these ceased and staff had to provide bank account details.
- The typing pool and the power of those ladies as well as the mess of carbon copy paper and the smell of freshly roneoed sheets just off the machine.
- Having to submit a business case for buying a calculator.
- Having to hand back a *Melways* before you could get a more up to date one.

- Red Cross setting up its blood collection service in the Head Office Theatrette on a regular basis.
- The introduction and use of PARMS with all its complexities. It was certainly a powerful system - you just had to be good friends with a person or people who could draw out the information you were seeking.
- The rigours of the annual Business area Planning Process and the interrogations of Business Area and Business Support Managers by the Corporate Management Group around the Board tables.
- Staff could rent a Board house in a rural area.









The Great Ocean Road – By Keiran Sharp

[Editor's note: Lance Midgley provided this interesting article, which was prepared by his friend, Keiran Sharp (ex-ARRB) for the Probus Association of Victoria.]

The Great Ocean Road is an Australian National Heritage-listed 240 kilometre long road which runs along the south-eastern coast of Australia between the Victorian towns of Torquay and Allansford. Built by returned soldiers between 1919 and 1932, and dedicated to soldiers killed during World War I. It winds through varying terrain along the coast, providing access to several prominent landmarks, including the Twelve Apostles limestone stack formations. It is an important tourist attraction.



Twelve Apostles[4]



London Bridge[5]

The Great Ocean Road was first planned towards the end of World War I, when chairman of the Country Roads Board, William Calder (yes, Calder Highway), asked the State War Council for funds to be provided for returned soldiers to work on roads in sparsely populated areas in the Western District. At the time, the rugged south-west coast of Victoria was accessible only by sea or rough bush tracks. It was envisaged that the road would connect isolated settlements on the coast and become a vital transport link for the timber industry and tourism.

Surveying of the road, tentatively named the *South Coast Road*, commenced in 1918. It was suggested that it run from Barwon Heads in the east, follow the coast west around Cape Otway, and end near Warrnambool.

In 1918, the Great Ocean Road Trust was formed as a private company, under the helm of President Howard Hitchcock (no relation to Alfred). The company managed to secure £81,000 in capital from private subscriptions and borrowing, with Hitchcock himself contributing £3,000. The money was to be repaid by charging drivers a toll until the debt was cleared, with the road then be gifted to the state.

Construction commenced on 19 September 1919. Approximately 3,000 returned servicemen worked on the project. The advance survey team progressed through dense scrub at a rate of approximately 3 kilometres a month.

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[4] Although their name suggests only 12 stacks, there are in fact 30 different limestone masses stretched along the coast; however, the only visible ones from the viewing areas are the eight apostles left. Due to the continuation of the stack's erosion, eventually, the coastal shore will become non-existent – but not in our lifetime (maybe 10,000 years!)

[5] Originally a natural archway and tunnel in an impressive offshore rock formation, London Bridge collapsed in 1990 and became a bridge without a middle. Before the collapse, visitors to the site were able to walk across it. Some visitors were stranded on the far side of the bridge when it collapsed and they had to be rescued by helicopter. Fortunately, no one was on the cross-over when it collapsed.



Construction was mostly by hand, using explosives, pick and shovel, wheelbarrows, and some small machinery. At times it was perilous, and several workers were killed during the construction. The final sections, along steep coastal cliffs, were the most difficult to work on.

Anecdotal evidence from the ABC archives in 1982 suggested workers would rest detonators on their knees during travel, because it gave the explosives the softest ride.

Workers were paid 10 shillings and sixpence (10/6) for an eight-hour day, also working a half-day on Saturdays[6]. The workers were accommodated in tents and provided with meals in a communal dining marquee. Food cost up to 10 shillings a week. Despite the isolation of the camps, the workers had access to a piano, gramophone, games, newspapers and magazines.

In 1924, the coastal steamer *Casino* became stranded near Cape Patton, after hitting a reef at Point Hawdon, near the Grey River (never heard of it). Legend has it that 500 barrels of beer and 120 cases of spirits were jettisoned and that the road workers salvaged them, resulting in an unscheduled two-week-long drinking spree. However, Museums Victoria notes only that most of the cargo, largely composed of Christmas goods, was dumped into the sea.

It was reported in *The Age,* that, "The Great Ocean-road proved a boon to the passengers, who were enabled without much inconvenience to reach Wood's farm house, Apollo Bay. However, if the road were finished, the vessel's cargo could be safely conveyed to either Apollo Bay, Wye River, or Lorne." The section from Lorne to Apollo Bay was finished in November 1932. It was officially opened by Victoria's Lieutenant-Governor, Sir William Irvine, during a ceremony near the Grand Pacific Hotel at Lorne.



The road has subsequently been acknowledged as the world's longest war memorial. At the time, *The Age* commented, "In the face of almost insurmountable odds, the Great Ocean Road has materialised from a dream, or 'wild-cat scheme' as many dubbed it, into concrete reality".

Although Hitchcock had died of heart disease on 22 August 1932, before the road was completed, his car was driven behind the Governor's in the procession along the road during the opening ceremony. A memorial in his name was constructed on the road at Mount Defiance, near Lorne. Hitchcock is generally considered to be the 'Father of the Road'.

In its original state, the road was considered a formidable drive, fitting only a single vehicle comfortably at a time. Areas with sheer cliffs were the most hazardous, with

[6] In case you are interested, 10/6 is equivalent to about $1.05 (remember the jingle "One dollar equals exactly 10 shillings"? $1 in 1932 is equivalent in purchasing power to about $56.37 today, an increase of about $55 over 92 years. The average inflation rate of 4.48% per year between 1932 and today results in a cumulative price increase of 5,537.50%.

only a few places for drivers to pull over to allow others to proceed in the opposite direction. For £5 (a hell of a lot of money in 1932[7]), any 'public-spirited citizen' could request that a crossover be cut into the road.

The road was handed to the State Government on 2 October 1936, with the deed for the road being presented to the Victorian Premier at a ceremony at the Cathedral Rock toll gate. Tolls were also removed at that time.





In 1939, following the death of the then Chairman of the Country Roads Board, WTB McCormick, who was also honorary engineer for the Great Ocean Road Trust, it was decided to build a memorial arch across the road at Eastern View. The arch was opened on 4 November 1939. It consisted of timber logs on a stone base, with a tablet memorial to Mr McCormick on one side, and another to the returned servicemen on the other. The arch was rebuilt in 1973, and again in 1983, after being destroyed in the Ash Wednesday bushfires.

In 1962, the road was deemed by the Tourist Development Authority to be "one of the world's great scenic roads". Sections between the Lorne Hotel and the Pacific Hotel were widened to improve traffic (note the influence of the location of pubs on road design standards), while "aiming to preserve its character".

Despite improvements, the road was still considered a challenging drive; with the Victoria Police motor school even using it for training around 1966.

Over its life, the Great Ocean Road has always been susceptible to natural elements. In 1960, the section at Princetown was partially washed away during storms. There have been several local landslides, including one in 1971 which resulted in the closure of sections near Lorne. It was also closed due to bushfires in 1962, 1964 and 1983, particularly in areas with nearby campsites. In January 2011, a section of a cutting collapsed following heavy rain.

The Great Ocean Road was signed as State Route 100 between Torquay and Allansford in 1986; with Victoria's conversion to the newer alphanumeric system in the late 1990s, this was updated to route B100 in 1996.

In 2011, the road was added to the Australian National Heritage List. The passing of the *Road Management Act 2004* granted the responsibility of overall management and development of Victoria's major arterial roads to VicRoads, which then re-declared the road as Arterial #4890, beginning at the Surf Coast Road at Torquay and ending at the Princes Highway at Allansford. In December 2020, the *Great Ocean Road and Environs Protection Act 2020* came into effect, giving legal protection to the road.

[7] £5 ($10) in 1932 is equivalent in purchasing power to $563.75 today, an increase of over $550 over 92 years.

Telematics. A short History – by John Wright

The term *Telematics* originated in the 1990s when systems combining telecommunications and information technology began to be used in vehicles for collecting, transmitting and analysing data in real time. Telematics has since quietly transformed the way we use, monitor and manage vehicles ranging from cars to fishing fleets in ways that few of us are fully aware of.



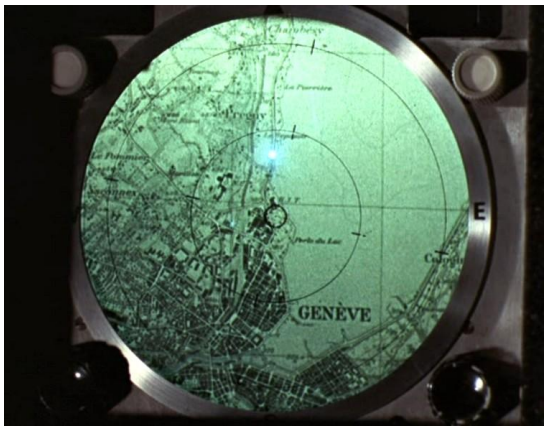
The separate inventions that made Telematics possible started to come into being when I was a teenager in 1957. Russia had launched the first satellite, *Sputnik 1* and I avidly listened to its faint beeps on the AM band of my parents' vacuum tube radio.

Vacuum tubes (or valves as they were then called) occupied valuable equipment space, needed lots of power, generated unwanted heat and were inherently fragile. Our physics lecturer told us that in the future, vacuum tubes would be replaced by vastly more efficient, solid-state transistors. In 1957, he couldn't have begun to comprehend the changes that would come from this seemingly obscure innovation.

One person who *was* able to visualise the future was British writer Arthur C Clarke, who later became famous for the movie of his book *2001- A Space Odyssey.* Clarke was credited with imagining the Internet, inventing the count-down process for launching rockets and postulating the use of communication satellites (that would eventually facilitate the use of GPS in telematics).



Arthur C Clarke



Bond's nifty dashboard car tracker

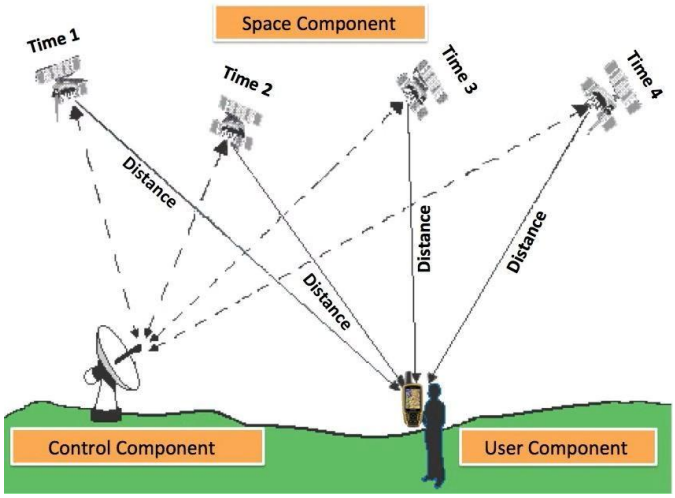
A tantalising glimpse of a future telematic device came in 1964, with the James Bond movie *Goldfinger*. It was a dashboard tracker on Bond's Aston Martin DB4 featuring a remarkably detailed, scrolling map with a flashing blue dot showing the location of a car Bond was tracking. At the time, that level of technology[8] simply didn't exist.

What did exist then was the *tachograph*, an automatic, vehicle-mounted device that was widely used for recording the speed and performance of large public vehicles such as trucks, buses and trains – and their drivers. While the tachograph was a valuable management tool, its main shortcoming was that, like aircraft black boxes, its data could only be viewed retrospectively.

[8] Bond's car tracker may have been a nod to *Transit*, the first satellite-based geopositioning system developed by the US Navy, which became operational in 1964. It needed heaps of complex equipment to make it work and only provided a position fix every hour or so.

In the mid 1960's, the US Defence Department established what would later become the technical foundation of the Internet - the *Arpanet* [9] project, which used packet switching[10] to enable dial-up resource sharing between computers in major research institutions across the USA. Variants of Arpanet were quickly adopted by research organisations around the world, including *AARNet* (Australian Academic and Research Network), which the VicRoads library used in 1989.

From the seventies onward, the US Defence Department made huge advances in communication and satellite technology. Using geodetic satellite systems, the US digitally mapped key features on the earth's surface and integrated this data into a multi-satellite system that became the *Global Positioning System* (GPS). Users equipped with a GPS receiver could obtain precise geolocation and time information anywhere on earth without needing to transmit any data or requiring access to telephone or Internet reception.



Initially, only military users could access GPS. However, in 1983 after a navigation error by the crew of the Korean jetliner KAL 117 resulted in Russia shooting it down over Sakhalin, President Regan ordered that GPS be made available to civilian users by 1988.

There was a catch, however. Civilian use was limited to an average accuracy of 100 meters by means of a deliberate error introduced into the GPS data, which military receivers were able to correct. It was not until 2000, when President Clinton ordered the removal of the deliberate error, that civilian users were able to enjoy a geolocation precision of about five metres, closer to that available to military users.

The remaining components needed for telematics started to come together in the early 1990's. Firstly, in 1989, a British scientist, Tim Berners-Lee, inspired by one of Arthur C Clarke's futurology novels[11], invented the World Wide Web. While the 1960s Arpanet technology allowed research institutions to exchange data, Berners-Lee's invention transformed the system by introducing HTML[12], URLs[13], and web browsers to make the Internet accessible to the public. It was a stunning development, comparable with the outcomes of replacing vacuum tubes with transistors.

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[9] The Advanced Research Projects Agency Network.

[10] Packet switching is a method of sending data across a digital network by breaking a message into small blocks called packets, sending them independently, and reassembling them at the destination.

[11] Sir Tim Berners-Lee was inspired by Arthur C. Clarke's 1965 short story "Dial F for Frankenstein," which helped shape his early fascination with interconnected systems.

[12] HTML (HyperText Markup Language) is the standard markup language used to create and structure web pages

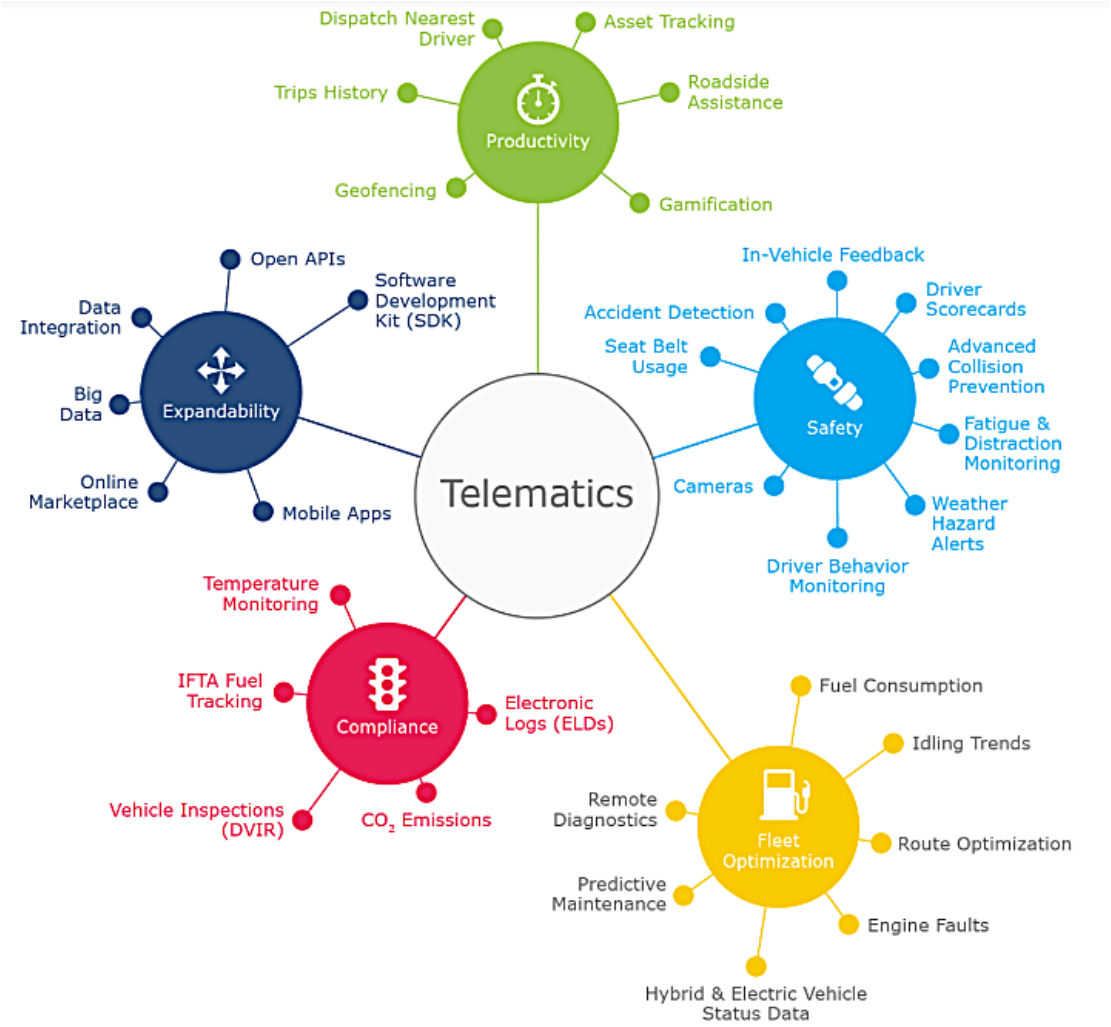
[13] A URL (Universal Resource Locator) is a specific reference or address used to locate a resource on the internet. When you type a web address into your browser, you use a URL to tell the computer where to find a specific page, file, image, or video.

To work effectively, telematic systems need a widely available communications system allowing vehicular devices to transmit and receive data in real time. This happened in the 1990s, when ageing, analogue mobile phone networks were replaced with high speed digital systems. In remote areas, this connectivity was provided by new satellite systems. At the same time, advanced onboard sensors and diagnostic systems were introduced, enabling deeper insights into vehicle performance and health.

With all the major pieces in place, large corporations quickly realised the potential of telematics systems. In 1996, the General Motors-owned *OnStar* Corporation introduced subscription-based telematics services, supplying emergency assistance, vehicle diagnostics, and navigation support through an embedded cellular system.

While *OnStar* was the major US provider, European and Asian vehicle makers offered similar services. By the early 2000s, advanced features such as stolen vehicle recovery, fleet management, and usage-based insurance had been introduced.

The diagram below came from a major fleet management company in 2026 and provides a small glimpse of the way in which telematics is currently being utilised by business.



Regulatory authorities also saw the benefits of using telematics. In the early 2000s, the Queensland Government used a telematic *Vessel Monitoring System* (VMS) to regulate its fleet of over 500 licensed trawlers. Its primary aim was to enforce environmental closures (marine National Parks) and combat illegal fishing.

The VMS required mandatory installation of marine-grade GPS transponders linked to satellite communication networks. The units automatically polled a vessel's position, speed, and heading at set time intervals, transmitting this raw spatial data back to land-based monitoring centres. Central to the integrity of the VMS were rigid rules requiring any vessel whose GPS unit had stopped working to immediately return to port or face forfeiture of licence.



In 2001, NSW ran a trial using GPS tracking as a live compliance and access tool for heavy special-purpose vehicles. Oversized mobile cranes were successfully allowed to travel through metropolitan Sydney during clearway times in exchange for being remotely tracked via GPS.

In 2005, the success of the Queensland and NSW telematics applications prompted Australia's transport ministers to create *Transport Certification Australia* (TCA) to provide a national, independent framework to manage transport telematics. Acting as a "safe harbour" for vehicle-generated data, the TCA keeps information management separate from regulators and enforcement entities. In 2007, the TCA began managing regulatory heavy vehicle schemes like the *Intelligent Access Program* (IAP).

The IAP is a national compliance framework that grants heavy vehicles improved access or higher mass limits on restricted road networks in exchange for continuous, certified telematics monitoring. Certified IAP Service Providers monitor authorised vehicles, cross-referencing vehicle data against the Intelligent Access Map[14] to verify compliance with approved access conditions. If a vehicle breaches an access condition (such as driving on an unauthorized route or exceeding mass/time limits), a Non-Compliance Report with legal evidentiary standing is issued to road managers.

In 2026, the onboard telematics of modern cars constantly log and transmit precise GPS coordinates, travel routes, vehicle speed and braking patterns. In-car microphone arrays, outward-facing cameras, and driver-assistance sensors capture ambient audio, visual surroundings, and paired smartphone contact lists. This data is often transmitted to the manufacturers, generating privacy concerns. More expensive models can allow remotely commanded slowdown or even engine disablement (subject to strict safeguards) to combat vehicle theft, raising fears about actions by malicious actors.

Telematics will further utilise road intelligence concerning locations or events that are dangerous for drivers and provide appropriate early warnings. Equally, a vehicle might automatically adjust to road conditions when its data tells it that rain is coming up ahead. Its brakes, wheel sensitivity and more can all be adjusted to suit rainy conditions just before arriving in the rainy location.

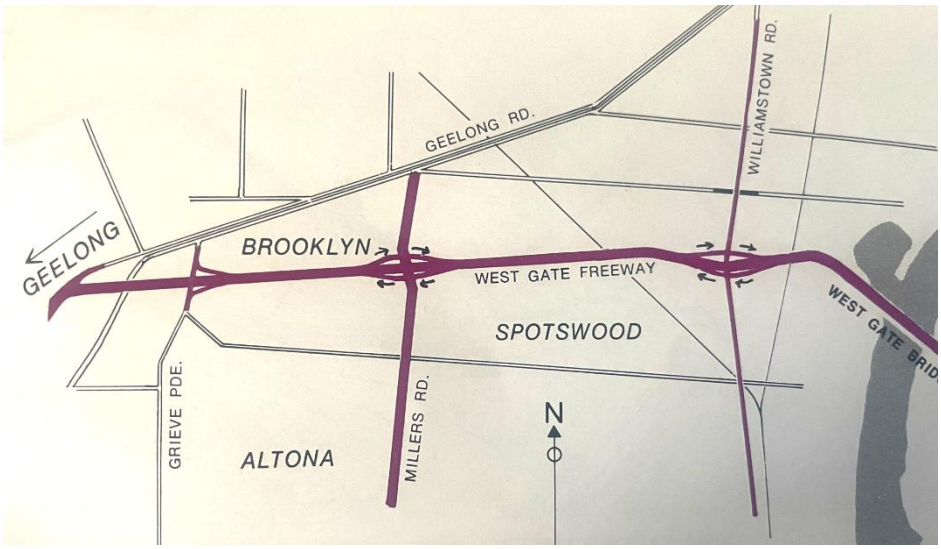
Telematics is estimated to become increasingly important to insurance providers as more users are expected to switch over to 'black box' insurance. The types of insurance premiums offered through telematics will become increasingly sophisticated and differentiated. We are going to be living in interesting times…

[14] The Intelligent Access Map (IAM) is an official electronic spatial dataset issued by Transport Certification Australia (TCA) that defines the national public road system for heavy vehicle monitoring.

Westgate Freeway Part 5. Opening the Bridge – by David Jellie

Access from the west

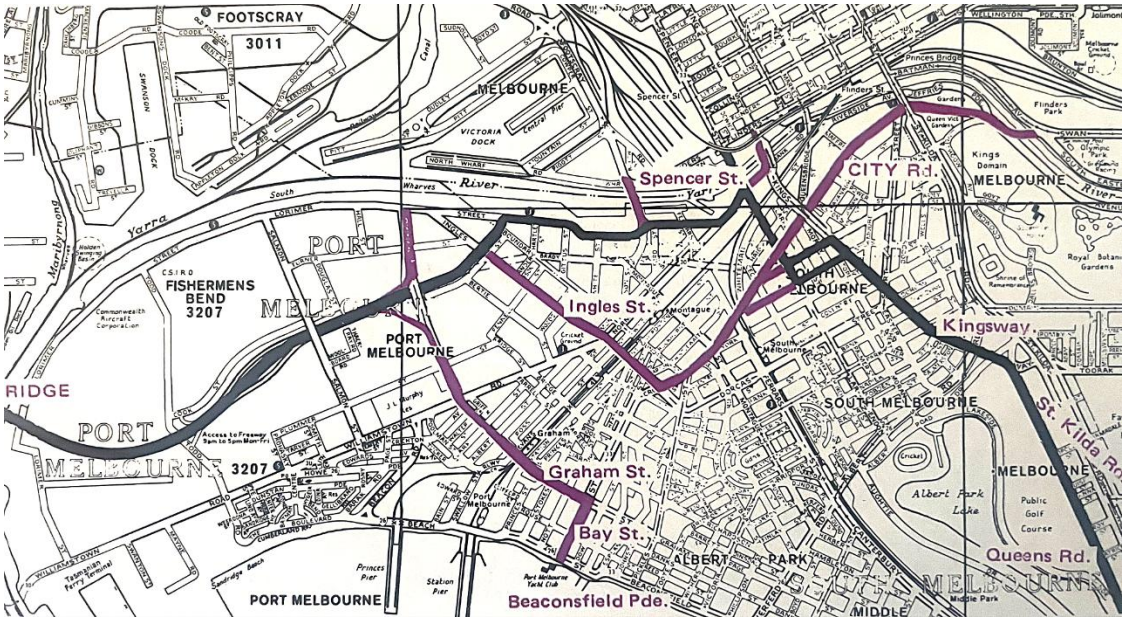
Access to the bridge from the Lower Yarra Freeway at the western end was straightforward. Vehicles could enter directly from the Princes Highway or from Grieve Parade (from the north) or from the interchanges at Millers Road and Williamstown Road as shown in the plan below.



From the West Gate Bridge Authority pamphlet, *Welcome to West Gate* – circa 1978.

Access from the east

It was far more complicated on the city side of the bridge. The East-bound Lower Yarra Freeway terminated abruptly at Graham Street and, via a temporary off-ramp at Rogers Street, it connected with Lorimer Street in Port Melbourne. Traffic descended from the bridge, cleared the toll plaza located near the current service station site, and emptied on to local industrial connector streets to reach Kings Way and the central city district. This is illustrated in the plan below.



From the West Gate Bridge Authority pamphlet, *Welcome to West Gate* – circa 1978.



Aerial image looking east towards the city. The toll booths are in the foreground, the Salmon Street Overpass is in mid-picture and the Graham Street Bridge is in the distance. The Administration Centre is on the left in the foreground. Johnston Street Bridge is under construction in the far distance. Date and photographer unknown. (image from Reddit)

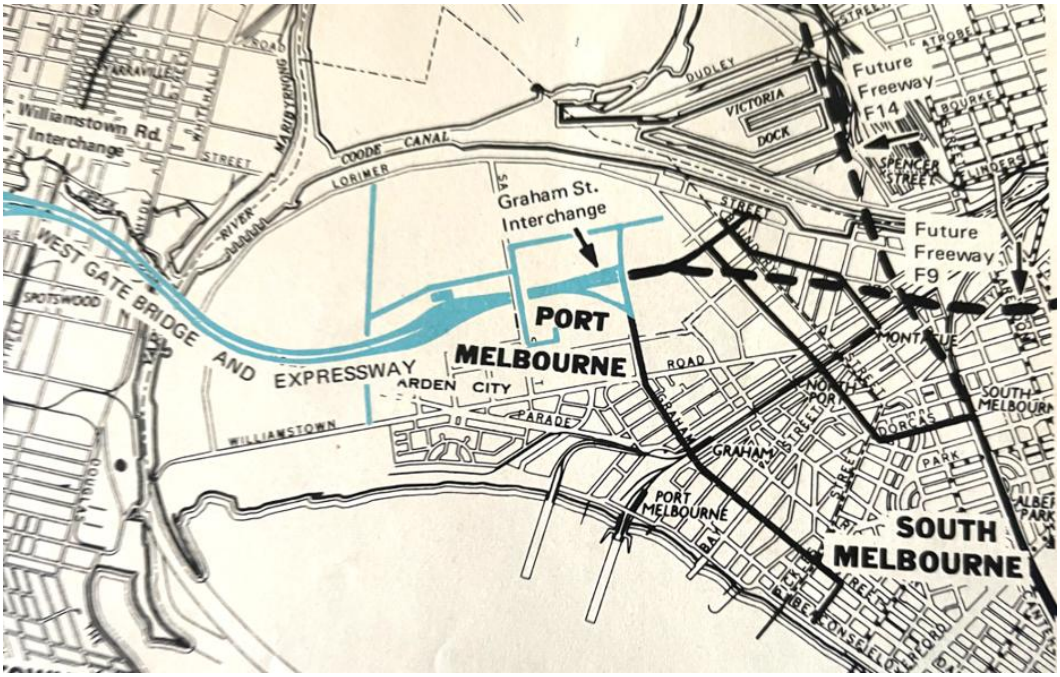
Access to the bridge from the city was via the Flinders Street Extension over the recently completed Johnson Street Bridge with a right turn on to either Lorimer Street or Brady Street. Access was also possible from King Street or Spencer Street to Lorimer Street.

Access from the east could be made from the South East Freeway or Swan Street to connect to Alexandra Avenue and City Road and then Ingles Street.

From the southern suburbs, traffic could use Queens Road, Kings Way and Clarendon Street. From Beach Road/Beaconsfield Parade, traffic could turn right into Bay Street then left on to Graham Street and hence to the bridge.

Access/egress on the city side was obviously a stop gap measure and was never intended to be permanent. A pamphlet issued by the Lower Yarra Crossing Authority in July 1970 tells the story. It contains the diagram shown on the next page. It shows the West Gate Bridge and expressway terminating at Graham Street (in blue) and the network of local roads accessing the bridge (in heavy black).

It also shows (in heavy black dotted lines) the proposed future freeway F9 extending eastward from Grahan Street towards St Kilda Road and, presumably, beyond. It also shows, ominously, the future F14 intersecting F9 cutting a swathe through South Melbourne. Thank goodness that the Hamer Government abandoned that plan not long after.



Photograph from Progress Bulletin No. 4 entitled West Gate Bridge – July 1970.

Opening of the bridge

After ten years of construction and at a cost of $200 million, the bridge was officially opened on 15 November 1978 by the Victorian Premier Rupert (Dick) Hamer and the West Gate Bridge Authority[15] Chairman Oscar Meyer. Traffic commenced to cross the bridge at 4 pm.



Premier Dick Hamer [R] with the chairman of the West Gate Authority, Mr O. Meyer, at the opening of the West Gate Bridge. (Image from the Fairfax Archives)

As can be seen in the image above, the tolls were set at 60 cents for cars and $2 for trucks. The main purpose of the tolls was to pay for the construction of the bridge. The

[15] The Lower Yarra Crossing Authority was replaced by the West Gate Bridge Authority in 1974 and later, in 1982, its operations transferred to government management via VicRoads.

intention at the outset of the project was to apply a user-pays toll for forty years after which the government was to take over the ownership and management of the bridge.

In his article in VicRoads Association's newsletter of November 2025, John Wright noted that, as an incentive to use the new bridge, a short toll-free period was declared so that potential users could truly appreciate the savings in costs and travel time the new bridge would offer them. However, many road users were not convinced, and after the toll-free period ended, they shunned the new bridge and, despite economic studies showing that using the bridge was cheaper, large numbers continued using congested alternative routes through Brooklyn and Footscray.

He compared Melbourne's experience to Sydney. Sydneysiders had been paying tolls on their Harbour Bridge since 1932, but Victorian motorists clearly viewed tolls in Melbourne as an alien concept – even though the West Gate tolls had been publicly discussed for the preceding ten years. Accustomed to the toll-free convenience of Melbourne's growing network of freeways, they were not prepared to pay for using the new bridge. It is very different now.

The unpopularity of the tolls led to persistent low usage.

On opening day, about 5,000 vehicles crossed in the first hour, with 10,000 more over the next five hours. On a few occasions, the tolls were reduced to 40 cents in an attempt to encourage increased use but there was no improvement in patronage. Within 12-months of opening, the bridge was carrying 22,000 vehicles per day. This was well short of official predictions which estimated traffic volumes of 40,000 daily.

Patronage on the opening day was also distorted by the curiosity of Melbourne's motoring public. I can only surmise that many motorists, wanting to tell their grandchildren that they drove over West Gate Bridge on the day it opened turned up, and as The Age reported, caused a traffic jam. I hazard a guess that the photograph below was taken about 10 or 11 pm.



Traffic jam on the night of the opening – 15 November 1978. Image from The Age – Photographer Peter Cox.

The toll booths were located at the eastern end of the bridge adjacent to the West Gate Bridge Authority's office. The office was quite spacious – on two floors - and there was a large depot attached to it to store vehicles, equipment, and material used to manage the bridge and respond to emergencies. The control booth was open 24 hours a day and a cafeteria provided sustenance for shift workers. The toll booth attendants accessed the booths via a tunnel under the pavement of the freeway.

There was also a sophisticated control centre overlooking the toll booths and the full length of the bridge was under constant surveillance using closed circuit television. A computer in the control room was linked with sensors built into the road pavement near the toll gates to count the number of axles and wheels on each vehicle to make sure the correct toll was paid. Vehicles that were involved in a crash, or had run out of fuel, or had broken down were immediately identified and towed away.

One story became legendary. A motorist was delivering a wedding cake and her car broke down. The car was removed and the motorist and the cake were delivered on time to the wedding venue.



West Gate Bridge toll booth. Date and photographer unknown. (Image from Facebook)



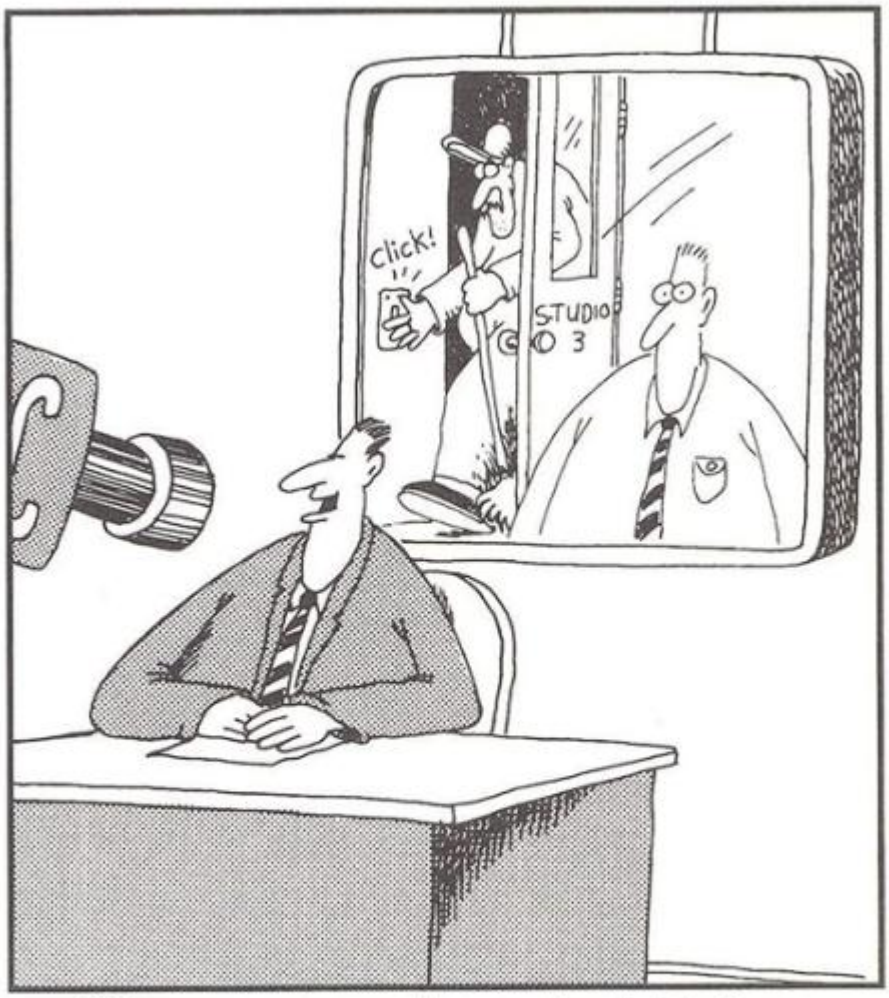
Early morning peak hour on the eastbound lanes. 1980. (Fairfax Archives)

Removal of the tolls

In November 1985, just six years after opening, the toll was abolished by the Cain Government to fulfill an election promise. The removal was aimed at reducing significant traffic congestion on local roads (such as Footscray Road) caused by motorists avoiding the toll. After tolls were removed, there was an immediate increase of 45% of traffic on the bridge.

The toll booths were immediately demolished and the administration centre was handed over to VicRoads. The office still operated as the centre for management of the bridge. Soon after the tolls were removed, the office was occupied by the West Gate Freeway (South Melbourne Section) project team – and later – by the VicRoads' Training Centre. The VicRoads' team responsible for maintenance of the bridge was also located there.

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



"My next guest, on the monitor behind me, is an organized crime informant. To protect his identity, we've placed him in a darkened studio—so let's go to him now."

LEST WE FORGET – by David Jellie

Lance Sergeant Frank Eric Watts, VX47550



Frank Watt's paybook photograph – 1940.

Frank was a Bridge Construction Overseer in the CRB. He was born in Bendigo in 1915 and enlisted in July 1940. In his Attestation Form it states his occupation as bridge carpenter and indicates that he was married to Phyllis. He was a Lance Sergeant in the 2nd/10th Field Company.

He did his military training at Seymour and Bonegilla. He embarked from Sydney on 2 February 1941 for Malaya and arrived in Singapore on 18 February.

In August 1941, he was hospitalised in the Australian General Hospital at Malacca with otitis media. This is a middle ear infection behind the eardrum caused by fluid in the ear which causes the eardrum to bulge. He was hospitalised again, a month later, with otitis externa – a similar condition causing swelling of the external ear canal.

But his archive is short, like all those poor souls who became prisoners of war of the Japanese. It abruptly states "Reported missing 16/2/42" followed by "Confirmed POW at Changi 13/9/43".

The next entry is embarkation from Singapore on the MV Duntroon on 5 September 1945 and his arrival in Sydney on 7 October 1945. He was discharged on 14 December 1945.

Stan Hodgson (ex-Divisional Engineer Dandenong) told me that Frank was a remarkable man and that Paddy O'Donnell gave great support to Frank and his family after his return.

Paddy was able to secure a job for Frank constructing the runways at East Sale Aerodrome.

He had a reputation as an excellent bridge overseer. Frank died in December 1990.



Members of the 2nd/10th Field Company, Royal Australian Engineers, on board a troopship en-route to Malaya.

Gunner Andrew (Andy) James Wilson, VX47352

Andy was born in Bairnsdale and enlisted in Sale in July 1940. He was a labourer. He joined up at Sale when he was 20 and arrived in Singapore in August 1941. He fought as a Gunner in the 4th Tank Attack Regiment in Malaya. This regiment was an anti-tank regiment formed in November 1940.

In early 1942 the regiment took part in the Malayan Campaign and the Battle of Singapore before being captured when Singapore fell to the Japanese. Most of its personnel became prisoners of war and 170 of them died in captivity.



2-pounder anti-tank gun in action in Malaya, 1942.

Andy's archive indicates he went missing in action in February 1942. During the period leading up to his capture, he was hospitalised with appendicitis. In June 1943 his record was stamped PRISONER OF WAR. On 15 September 1944 his family received a message which said;

'Safe and well, also Dave. Send parcel and mail. Love to all at home and friends, Andy'.

I don't know how he got this message out.

There is another entry in the file relating to the identity of Dave, written by Andy's father. It said: *'The "Dave" referred to would be, in all probability, Gnr. D.F. Potter VX 47359 4th Anti-Tank A.I.F.. Gunner Potter and my son have been together since enlistment and my son often mentions Dave in his letters previous to him being taken prisoner*".



Gunner Andy Wilson

Andy was repatriated in 1945 but Dave didn't make it home. Dave was a farm labourer in Bairnsdale and he joined up with Andy in Sale on the same day. He was eight years older than Andy.

Their files are almost identical with the ubiquitous PRISONER OF WAR stamp but, in Dave's file, it said underneath 'Died of illness (Cholera) whist P.W. Thailand'.



Gunner Dave Potter



Hazel Josephine McCoy with her maternal uncle, Thomas Chalker, on her wedding day.

This must have been a shock to Dave's family because the following message was heard over shortwave radio from Singapore on 28/10/43. It was sent to his mother:

'*Am safe and well but miss good Australian tucker. John is also safe. Mail and comforts would be very welcome. Love to all, from David'.*

Andy was incarcerated in Changi but was relocated to Japan at the time of the dropping of the atom bomb on Hiroshima.

Andy married Hazel McCoy at Shepparton on 22 December 1947. Hazel died at the age of 39 in 1966 and Andy did not remarry.

Most of Andy's early career in the CRB was gained as a Grader Driver in Bairnsdale Division and after progressing through the various supervisory classifications became an Overseer Grade A some seven years before his retirement in 1973.

He was by all accounts a very outgoing character. After he left the CRB, he became the doorman at the Windsor Hotel in Melbourne, complete with a bell topper hat. Andy died in Bairnsdale in January 2005.

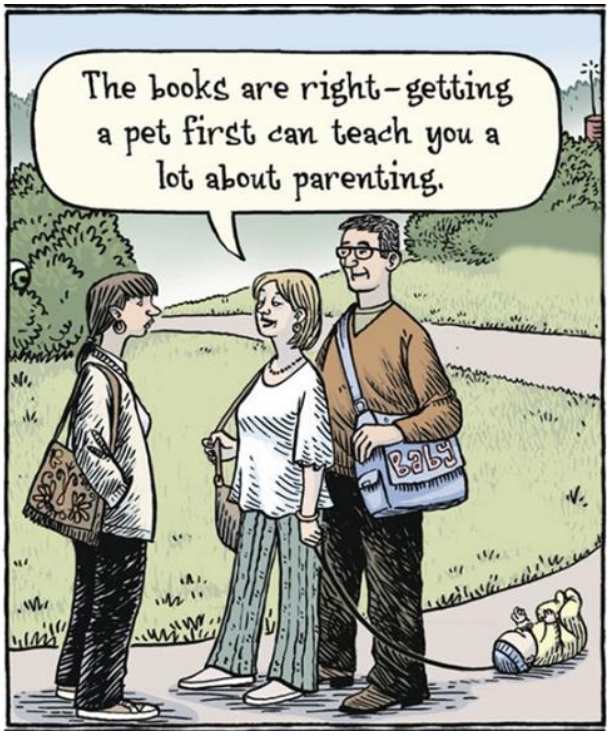


Andy Wilson (left) being congratulated on his retirement in 1973 by Bairnsdale Divisional Engineer, Bill Dolamore


It's a thank you note from my doctor's kids. Apparently I'm sending them to Disney World.


We have to relieve the pressure on his skull. So I'm going to go in and take out about two dozen passwords.


He had over 2000 Facebook friends. I was expecting a bigger turnout.


The books are right-getting a pet first can teach you a lot about parenting.
BABY