



Boring road causes crashes

VicRoads is targeting driver fatigue and boredom in an innovative safety program on the Stratford to Bairnsdale stretch of the Princes Highway.

“We’ve found fatigue and boredom are major factors in the exceptionally high rate of serious and often fatal crashes on this 45 km stretch of the Highway,” said Vic-Roads Wayne Moon.

“We want to engage with drivers to try to eliminate this ‘highway hypnosis’, as some people call it.”

Mr Moon told SEATS delegates at Lakes Entrance last month this section has one of the region’s highest rate of Run Off Road (ROR) crashes, with a surprising 78% being to the right resulting in a high percentage of head-ons. Usually RORs are to the left; this discrepancy has not been explained. Almost 80% of crashes occurred in dry conditions.

This stretch of the Highway is of a high standard and mainly straight, but is widely recognised anecdotally as a ‘boring’ drive.

Another interesting fact is that 70% of drivers in crashes here were east bound. Stratford is about three hours drive east of Melbourne and on the way to many key holiday destinations.

The \$4.3 million funding for this program was announced last month. “Initially we’ll trial one large variable message sign and an electronic speed display, with a highly technical evaluation by Dr Phillip Swann,” Mr Moon said. “If that all looks good, we’ll roll out the full program which should be completed by the end of next year.”



Roadside signs like this are just one of a number of measures VicRoads will install along a 45km stretch of the Princes Highway east of Stratford to reduce ‘highway hypnosis’ and increase road safety. Photo courtesy VicRoads.

- The interactive measures include:
- six large strategically placed electronic variable message signs designed to engage drivers, through a variety of messages, maybe questions, changed regularly.
- signs asking drivers to put on headlights;
- an electronic speed indicator system;
- short lengths of variable road surfacing for audio effects;
- coloured posts at variable spacing;
- signs indicating the number of overtaking lanes ahead;
- upgrading Providence Ponds rest area to encourage weary drivers to take a break;
- The program will also include:
- a wire rope barrier at high risk locations;
- enhanced line marking;
- other devices to make driving safer.
- This presentation is on SEATS website.

Minister rejects Princes' call

Federal Infrastructure Minister Anthony Albanese has rejected the NSW Government's call to extend the National Highway Network by 80 km on the Princes Highway from Wollongong to Jervis Bay.

He said that section of the Princes Highway should continue to be NSW's responsibility, not the Federal Government's.

NSW Roads and Ports Minister Duncan Gay wrote to Minister Albanese on 15 August saying the extension was warranted because that stretch of the Highway is an increasingly busy freight route. He said the Illawarra and South Coast regions were major contributors to the national economy.

Mr Gay highlighted Port Kembla's expansion as well as the National Freight Strategy which gave preference to access to ports and major centres of industrial activity.

SEATS member councils and the Southern Councils Group had welcomed Minister Gay's move, but were disappointed with Minister Albanese's response.

Last month's SEATS meeting decided its Chairman, Deputy and Executive Officer should seek a meeting with Mr Albanese and Federal Regional Development Minister Simon Crean to discuss the Federal Government's position. No date has yet been set.

Cross border HV study advances

SEATS will approach both the NSW and Victorian Governments this month for funding assistance for the much needed Cross Border Heavy Vehicles Roads Study.

This study will:

- identify limitations to transportation of timber and other freight between Victoria and NSW which is impeding regional economic development;
- determine how to overcome these limitations;
- identify what regionally sustainable infrastructure projects could improve both intrastate and interstate route problems.

Member councils have also been asked to contribute cash as well as their in principle support for the project. Murray Goulburn Cooperative is also contributing.

The Federal Government recognises the need for this study but believes it a state responsibility.



SEATS Chairman speaks...

Our August meeting, hosted by East Gippsland Shire Council at Lakes Entrance, was most encouraging and productive.

The AGM saw one change in SEATS' Executive; Cr Jeanette Harding was elected Deputy Chairman. The previous Deputy, Cr Graeme Middlemiss remains an Executive member and our Public Officer. I greatly appreciate Graeme's past work as deputy chairman, and look forward to working with all the Executive team in the year ahead.

The Annual Report 2010-11 highlighted the immense amount of work we have done and the considerable successes during the last 12 months. In that time, the Federal, NSW and Victorian Governments have provided over \$700 million for Princes Highway projects and over \$200 million for the Strzelecki, Bass and South Gippsland Highway, all projects on SEATS' priority list. We have also been very active in promoting our region in partnership with council, industry and other organisation members.

The Executive and the Executive Officer know that there is still much to be done. We welcome any suggestions you may have on how we might advance our priority projects. We believe these projects form the basis of a well thought out regional transport infrastructure plan that would both stimulate employment opportunities and make our region more liveable.

I commend to you VicRoads' innovative safety program (page 1) and the recommendations SEATS has taken up as a result of Warren Sharpe's presentation on the NSW Roads Congress (see page 3).

Cr Sue Whelan



Work continues on Princes

The contract for the 6.3 km four-lane upgrade of the Princes Highway at South Nowra was awarded to Nace Civil Engineering in July. It is expected to be completed in late 2013.

Meanwhile, the RTA is currently assessing tenders for the design and construction of the Gerringong upgrade from Mount Pleasant to Foxground. The Foxground and Berry Bypass is almost at the environmental assessment stage, while planning continues to finalise the concept design for the Berry to Bomaderry section.

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Road funding model is shot



How far have we really come with funding our regional and local road infrastructure, asks Eurobodalla Shire Council's Roads and Recreation Director Warren Sharpe. Photos courtesy of NSW Roads & Transport Directorate.

Funding local and regional roads in Australia is in crisis with the current funding model 'broke'.

That was Eurobodalla Shire Council Roads and Recreation Director Warren Sharpe's blunt message to last month's SEATS' meeting from the recent NSW Roads Congress.

Mr Sharpe said a NSW Roads and Transport Directorate study showed that current funding sources only funded to about 50% of the cost of maintaining local and regional road infrastructure; it's less in shires with small populations.

"This funding shortfall is very significant across all States, and given local government owns about 85% of all roads in NSW, this makes it a key issue," he said.

"It means roads cannot be properly maintained which impacts on the economic wellbeing and social connectiveness of rural communities."

The SEATS meeting supported the Roads Congress' call for the Federal Government's Roads to Recovery (R2R) funding to be made permanent after 2014, substantially increased and indexed in line with the construction index rather than the CPI.

Mr Sharpe also covered many aspects of

local and regional road infrastructure, particularly first-last mile issue, such as from farm gate to market, or forest to timber mills. "If we are going to drive up transport productivity on main roads through higher productivity vehicles, we have to address the first mile issue on local and regional roads," he said.

"Most of that work relates to bridge strength, the geometry of intersections, and the strength of road pavements to stand up to higher loads. While local government supports higher productivity vehicles on local and regional roads, the benefits achieved for the transport industry should not come at ratepayers' expense.

"We suggest additional government funding is needed specifically targeting these upgrades to facilitate more efficient transport. These upgrades would be based on regional priorities which should in turn reduce costs and increase employment opportunities for our communities."

The Congress believed that while NSW Transport had developed Regional Transport Plans (RTP) for Sydney, Wollongong, Newcastle and the North Coast, RTPs are also needed for the whole state, including the south east.

SEATS supported the Congress' call for an RTP for the south east region.

Mr Sharpe said the recently formed South East Region of Councils (SEROC) is developing a case for such a study. He advised much of the work needed for that study has already been undertaken by SEATS and would be involved in the study process.

This presentation is on SEATS' website. Mr Sharpe, a SEATS executive member, was awarded the prestigious National Public Works Engineer Leader of the Year at the International Institute of Public Works Conference in Canberra last month.

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started construction of the 3.2km upgrade of the Princes Highway at Victoria Creek. The cost is \$45m with completion scheduled for mid 1913.

Further south, the RTA continues planning for the realignment of the Princes Highway at Dignams Creek with a concept plan expected next year. Tenders are expected to be called soon for the \$85m Bega Bypass with funding from both Federal and NSW Governments..

Gippsland Ports faces challenges



Gippsland Ports is responsible for 750 navigation aids in its five ports and two waterways, but maintenance costs are becoming challenging. Photo Gippsland Ports.

Gippsland Ports manages five ports and waterways along 720 km of south-east Victoria, from Anderson Inlet to Malla-coota. This supports recreational boating, charter and commercial vessels, professional fishing, marine and offshore industries.

Its ports are Anderson Inlet, Corner Inlet & Port Albert (Port Welshpool), Gippsland Lakes, Snowy River and Mallacoota.

"That's over 1,400 sq km of waterways, much bigger than Sydney Harbour and about 75% the size of Port Phillip Bay," said Gippsland Ports David Holding.

"We're a Committee of Management reporting to the Victorian Department of Transport Freight Logistics and Marine, and we employ 50 people."

East Gippsland facts

East Gippsland Shire has:

- a GDP \$1.72b;
- manufacturing, construction, agriculture, forestry & fishing, retail and property strongest industry sectors ;
- 44,000 residents, 28% 60+;
- Workforce 13,864;
- Growth rate 1.4 %.

Details of East Gippsland's Economy is on SEATS website.

Gippsland Ports' major issue is the lack of a sustainable funding model to support its statutory and regulatory responsibilities, its infrastructure and the services it provides.

The infrastructure it manages includes 750 navigation aids, 100 public jetties, 900 berths and moorings, boatyards and slipways, as well as sand management and dredging to maintain navigable access to the port of Gippsland Lakes.

But current asset management funding does not allow Gippsland Ports to meet the growing demands from commercial and recreational port and waterway users, nor does it allow for the strategic maintenance of existing infrastructure.

"We've had extensive discussions with Government and are hopeful of a more sustainable funding model," Mr Holding said. "At the moment we're constrained by legislation from generating fee for service income in areas where we have competitive strength, such as hydrographic surveys."

Obtaining new permits and consents to continue maintenance dredging and sand management at Lakes Entrance are emerging as considerable future challenges.

What is SEATS?

South East Transport Strategy (SEATS) aims to stimulate and facilitate investment in transport and infrastructure in south eastern NSW, eastern Victoria and the ACT. Its 45 members represent councils, industry and other organisations from Wollongong to Dandenong.

Freeway reopens

The Princes Freeway at Morwell in Victoria will reopen later this month after being closed almost seven months. Rain in February caused subsidence near the boundary of an adjoining mine. Extra safety and water works have been installed.

High Speed Rail report

First stage of the study for an east coast high speed rail network was completed last month. The study identified a potential corridor between Sydney-Canberra-Melbourne via Wollongong. Total cost for the east coast network is estimated between \$61b and \$108b.

SEATS meetings

24-25 November : Hosted Wollongong City Council at Wollongong. **2012**

16-17 February : Hosted by Wellington Shire Council at Sale, Vic.

17-18 May: Hosted by Yass Valley Council at Yass, NSW.

16-17 August: Hosted by VicRoads at Wantirna, Vic.

15-16 November: Hosted by Eurobodalla Shire Council at Batehaven, NSW.

SEATS Executive

Chairman Cr Sue Whelan (Queanbeyan City Council), Deputy Chairman Cr Jeanette Harding (South Gippsland) , Sec/ Treas David Byrne (Cooma-Monaro).

Victorian representatives: Gordon Charles (East Gippsland), Cr Graeme Middlemiss (Latrobe City), Cr John Duscher (Bass Coast)

NSW representatives: Cr Bob Stewart (Bombala Shire), Greg Pullen (Shoalhaven City) and Warren Sharpe (Eurobodalla).