



Ms Cheryl Vella
Coroners Registrar
Coroners Court of Victoria
Level 11, 222 Exhibition Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000

Dear Ms Vella

CORONERS INVESTIGATION: BURNLEY TUNNEL

I refer to your letter dated 30 January 2013, regarding the inquest finding (Report 1127/07, 1126/07, 1129/07, 1128/07) and recommendations made by the Coroner under the *Coroners Act 2008* (Vic).

In November 2010, Austroads released a three part document titled *Guide to Road Tunnels*, with input from VicRoads. The *Guide to Road Tunnels* provides national guidance on the planning, design, operation and maintenance of road tunnels, and include factors and advice regarding several recommendations made by the Coroner.

VicRoads responses to the Coroner's recommendations (Pursuant to section 72(2) of the Act) are outlined below for your consideration.

Recommendation 1: That VicRoads consider including in the next reprint of the New Drivers Handbook more advice and information about safety in tunnels, especially with regard to safe distances, lane changing, driver distraction, special dangers in tunnels, emergency behaviour, self rescue and emergency response.

Response: The Coroner's recommendation is supported and actions have already been completed.

Recommendation 2: That VicRoads reconsider and request Austroads to reconsider its position on banning lane changing in all future road tunnels to minimise the possibility of collisions as a result of lane changing in tunnels.

Response: An alternative to the Coroner's recommendation will be implemented.

VicRoads will request Austroads, through its representation on the Austroads Guide to Road Tunnels Committee, to consider the inclusion in future updates that tunnels should be designed so as to minimise the need for lane changing.

Recommendation 3: That VicRoads ensure that it maintain regular promotion and delivery of public safe driving in tunnels campaigns including the importance of keeping a safe distance in tunnels.

Response: The Coroner's recommendation is supported in principle and an alternative to the Coroner's recommendation will be implemented.

VicRoads implemented a campaign between 2007 and 2008 specifically on tunnel safety. Subsequent campaigns have focussed on road safety messages that are also relevant to tunnel safety.

VicRoads and its road safety partners will continue to develop public information and education initiatives that target safe driving behaviours, including behaviours applicable to tunnels.

Recommendation 4: That VicRoads ensure that at the design approval stage of all new tunnels, (i) promotion of consistency of vehicle speed is incorporated into the design and (ii) the proposed plan of operation of the tunnel promotes consistency of vehicle speed.

Response: VicRoads will implement the Coroner's recommendation to the degree to which it is involved in the design approval of new tunnels.

VicRoads will also request Austroads, through its representation on the Austroads Guide to Road Tunnels Committee, to consider greater emphasis on consistency of vehicle speed in the design and operation of new tunnels.

Recommendation 5: That VicRoads ensure that as far as is possible, approval for the construction, operation and management of road tunnels requires a design that incorporates an emergency lay-by or equivalent for stranded or disabled vehicles inside the tunnel.

Response: An alternative to the Coroner's recommendation will be implemented.

To the degree to which VicRoads is involved in the design approval of new tunnels it will request that the design of safety systems for tunnels ensure that stranded or disabled vehicles are actively and promptly managed.

Recommendation 6: That VicRoads ensure that in the design, construction, operation and management of road tunnels that the risks inherent in underground intersections both from diverging and converging traffic flows be actively managed.

Response: The Coroner's recommendation will be implemented.

Recommendation 7: That VicRoads ensure that in the design and construction of road tunnels the number of horizontal curves be minimised and/ or engineered so as to maximise the sight distances available to motorists.

Response: The Coroner's recommendation will be implemented to the extent that this is practicable when considered against other tunnel design objectives.

Recommendation 8: That VicRoads request Austroads to consider incorporating into its current Guide to Road Tunnels the best and most up to date information as to the design of road tunnels to assist drivers to maintain safe speeds and vehicle separation.

Response: The Coroner's recommendation will be implemented.

VicRoads will request Austroads, through its representation on the Austroads Guide to Road Tunnels Committee, to particularly consider the design of safe speeds and vehicle separation in tunnels.

Recommendation 9: That VicRoads ensure that in design of approved road tunnels, emphasis be placed on the design of emergency egress pathways to ensure that evacuees are assisted to make appropriate choices for emergency escape routes.

Response: The Coroner's recommendation will be implemented to the degree to which VicRoads is involved in the design approval of new tunnels.

Recommendation 10: That VicRoads ensure that in the design, construction and operation of tunnels the placement of driver information signs is done to ensure minimising the risk of driver distraction and maximising driver safety.

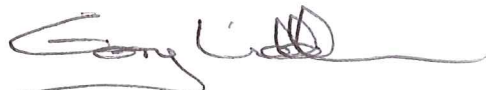
Response: The Coroner's recommendation will be implemented.

Recommendation 13: That CityLink and VicRoads review the current directions as to messages to be broadcast in the event of an emergency in the Tunnel to ensure clear and simple directions are given to minimise confusion and maximise safe and orderly evacuation.

Response: The Coroner's recommendation will be implemented.

Should you wish to discuss this matter further, Mr Robert Freemantle, VicRoads' Executive Director Policy and Programs (Tel: 9854 2600) would be pleased to assist.

Yours sincerely



**GARY LIDDLE
CHIEF EXECUTIVE**

26/5/2013