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Ms Alex Cottrell
Registry Manager
Coroners Court of Victoria
Level 11, 222 Exhibition Street
MELBOURNE VIC 3000



Dear Ms Cottrell

KERANG LEVEL CROSSING INCIDENT AND ASSOCIATED INQUESTS

I refer to Coroner Hendtlass' findings and recommendations in the above Inquest made on 21 October 2013.

Please find enclosed VicRoads' response in relation to the Coroner's recommendations that are relevant to VicRoads.

Yours sincerely


for **PETER TODD**
ACTING CHIEF EXECUTIVE

21 / 03 / 2014

Attach.

VICROADS' RESPONSE TO THE RECOMMENDATIONS BY CORONER HENDTLASS IN THE KERANG LEVEL CROSSING INCIDENT AND ASSOCIATED INQUESTS

Introduction:

In response to a tragic accident in Kerang, in June 2007, and other similar collisions between vehicles and trains in Victoria around the same time, a \$33.2 million program to improve level crossing safety in Victoria was implemented. The program included:

- \$11.1 million to implement automated advance warning signs at 53 sites on highways and major arterials across the State. These flashing signs were installed on the approaches to the rail crossing and are activated automatically when a train is approaching, to warn motorists well in advance of reaching the crossing;
- \$11.7 million to install rumble strips at 200 crossings in regional Victoria to physically alert motorists to upcoming level crossing signage. Rumble strips have been installed at all 200 sites;
- \$1.8 million for the trial of 'red light' camera technology at one metropolitan and one regional rail crossing. The trial has been completed and the Department of Justice put in place a process which lead to the enforcement of red light and speed offences;
- \$3 million to eliminate line of sight issues, such as overgrown vegetation at approximately 75 level crossings;
- In addition to the infrastructure investment, a \$2 million *Don't risk it!* advertising campaign was implemented during 2007 and 2008, to reinforce safe behaviour around level crossings; and
- Beginning in April 2008, a project to lower speed limits on the approach to level crossings across Victoria to give motorists greater reaction time and alert them of rail lines on some of the State's busiest freight routes, was initiated. The speed limit at 75 crossings on arterial roads was reduced to a maximum of 80km/h.

Recommendation 1

That Transport Safety Victoria, Public Transport Victoria, and VicRoads adopt a systematic approach to collecting routine detailed human factors information about level crossing collisions.

Response:

VicRoads' mass crash database, the Road Crash Information System (RCIS), contains data on crashes that meet the Australian Bureau of Statistics' criteria for a reportable crash (that is, on road¹, is not due to natural causes or deliberate intent, and is attributable to the movement of a road vehicle on a road).

Where a crash between a train and other road users occurs at a railway level crossing, Victoria Police routinely collects data on driver behaviour. This includes crash contributory factors such as speeding, the presence of alcohol or drugs and mobile phone use where known. VicRoads will work with Public Transport Victoria to investigate sharing relevant data held in RCIS on railway level crossing crashes.

¹ On road refers to a road that is devoted to public travel and is part of a surveyed road reserve. It includes freeways, arterial and local roads and DSE roads/tracks through forests and parks.

Recommendation 2

That Transport Safety Victoria and VicRoads investigate and implement new level crossing infrastructure which is designed to alert road vehicle drivers to an approaching train who are unresponsive to the current suite of level crossing warning signs.

Recommendation 3

That Transport Safety Victoria and VicRoads commit themselves to joint sophisticated human factors research and innovative technology to determine how best to alert drivers who will otherwise not notice an approaching train in the context of current level crossing warnings.

Recommendation 9

That Transport Safety Victoria, Public Transport Victoria and VicRoads extend their development and evaluation of new level crossing countermeasures with specific reference to the countermeasure's capacity to alert road vehicle drivers to the presence of an approaching train.

Recommendation 17

That VicTrack, VicRoads, Transport Safety Victoria and rail operators cooperate with each other to implement innovative in-vehicle systems as the next stage of warning road vehicle drivers who fail to respond to existing level crossing paraphernalia that a train is approaching.

Response:

VicRoads regularly investigates and implements initiatives to alert drivers on approach to level crossings, and (where appropriate) has and will continue to implement those initiatives. For example, VicRoads has:

- Undertaken a \$1.75m trial of rumble strips at level crossings;
- Evaluated active advance warning signs using existing installations, on behalf of Victorian Railway Crossings Safety Steering Committee;
- Conducted before and after evaluations of active advanced warning signs (installed at the Cressy railway level crossing, on behalf of the Victorian Railway Crossing Safety Steering Committee);
- In response to the active advance warning signs evaluations, updated its Railway Level Crossing Guidelines in 2010, in relation to signage, linemarking and associated treatments, for level crossings;
- Provision of in-kind support and input into a number of human factors research projects into driver behaviour at level crossings, conducted by Monash University Accident Research Centre;
- Commissioned the Monash University Accident Research Centre to evaluate driver behaviour in response to flashing red lights versus traffic lights at railway crossings.
- Commissioned ARRB Group to investigate compliance with traffic signals at railway level crossings; and
- In 2011, managed a "proof of concept" trial of a radio break-in system capable of providing in-vehicle safety warnings at level crossings. Public Transport Victoria subsequently managed a separate evaluation of an in-vehicle warning system using Dedicated Short Range Communications technology.

VicRoads is also following developments in vehicle technology to identify emerging solutions to a wide range of road safety issues (including level crossing safety) working closely with relevant Victorian and national agencies where necessary.

Recommendation 4

That VicRoads and Standards Australia amend their standards to require warning signs and visibility of the train must be at least 131 metres before the level crossing, more on B double and B-triple combination routes.

Response:

VicRoads will not be adopting the recommendation. This recommendation was based on assessment of the braking distance involving the vehicle involved in the Kerang crash, in the very particular circumstances of that crash. It is not a sound basis for setting signage requirements applicable across all rail level crossings. VicRoads will continue to adhere to, and participate in, examining (where appropriate) and updating the relevant standards designed by it, Austroads and Standards Australia.