

3 December 2019

Merrijig Residents Action Group
PO Box 20
MANSFIELD VIC 3724

[Email: mrag3724@gmail.com](mailto:mrag3724@gmail.com)

Ms K. Craig
Regional Engagement Manager
VicRoads
50-52 Clarke Street
BENALLA VIC 3672

[By email: kerry.craig@roads.vic.gov.au](mailto:kerry.craig@roads.vic.gov.au)

Dear Ms. Craig

**Speed limit reduction request reconsideration by VicRoads
Intersection Mount Buller Road with Buttercup Road, Merrijig**

Further to our letter to the Mansfield Shire Councillors of 19 November 2018 referred to VicRoads on 4 December 2018 (refer – Appendix 1) and the response by VicRoads Mr. J. Lewis on 25 March 2019 (refer – Appendix 2), the Merrijig Residents Action Group (MRAG) is writing again and wishing to reiterate to you the ever present risk of accident at the intersection of Mount Buller Road and Buttercup Road, Merrijig.

Since our initial letter to the Shire and forwarded to VicRoads, another year has passed and MRAG has continued to collect evidence to support our claim that the speed limit needs to be reduced from 100kph to 80 kph at this intersection at the earliest opportunity.

Invitation

It has come to our attention that Regional Roads Victoria are discussing road standards and safety in the Mansfield Shire in the coming weeks.

MRAG would like to invite you personally to visit the intersection together with the Merrijig Residents Action Group (MRAG) and Mansfield Shire Mayor Councillor Marg Attley to see for yourself why we are so concerned about the current 100 kph speed limit at this intersection.

Background

1. Visual Reference and Line of Sight Data

Given VicRoads has advised MRAG that no officer has visited the site in question (Refer – Appendix 3 email advice from Jennifer Baldry to Louise Jacob [MRAG] – 16 January 2018), we provide two photographs and actual line of sight measurements for your further consideration.



Intersection of Buttercup Road and Mount Buller Road looking west towards Mansfield – 178 metres Safe Intersection Sight Distance



Intersection of Buttercup Road and Mount Buller Road looking east towards Merrijig – 213 metres Safe Intersection Sight Distance

Sight Distances measured five metres back from the give way line at a height of 1.25metres. (Ref: *Austrroads Guide to Road Design Part 3 Geometric Design Chapter 5 Site Distance specifications: Australian Guide to Road Design Part 4a Unsignalised and Signalised Intersections Chapter 3 Site Distance*).

MRAG notes that sight distances in both directions do not meet safe sight distances to comply with Austrroads standards which we note are adopted by VicRoads, bringing the awareness of the existing 100 kph speed limit across this intersection to be inappropriate and unsafe. This is further highlighted by the increasing traffic movements on Mount Buller Road, predominantly generated by

increasing tourism. VicPol is aware of the significant speeding in this area and has showed its concern by its sustained speeding blitzes during this last winter (2019).

MRAG also notes that introducing a permanent reduced speed limit over a section of road which has clearly identified road safety deficiencies is NOT setting a precedent and therefore should be considered as a standalone case.

2. Independent Traffix Group report commissioned by MRAG

In September 2018, MRAG was an objector at the VCAT case P486/2016 – Mansfield Shire versus Mr. T. Harris. The matter was seeking a retrospective permit for the use and development of land for earth and energy resources industry (stone extraction) at 401 Buttercup Road, Merrijig. VCAT found in favour of the Shire and declined the permit.

As part of our objector's evidence MRAG commissioned a traffic report by Traffix Group, Collingwood (refer Attachment - Traffix Group Report).

The reason MRAG has made available this report to VicRoads is that it is an independent expert evaluation of the intersection of Buttercup Road with Mount Buller Road regards sight lines and permitted road speed at this intersection, which remains current.

The Traffix Group report on page 4, under the heading of Safety, states that "If the sight distance is less than that specified for SISD (Safe Intersection Sight Distance)...this raises issues with the safety of the intersection, emphasising the limited sight distances and the fact that the speed limit is 100 km/h and therefore the consequences of an accident could be fatal."

The report states that "this intersection poses risks due to insufficient site distances for vehicles turning out of Buttercup Road and in particular for vehicles turning right towards Mansfield, with vehicles allowed to travel on Mount Buller Road at 100 km/h. "

The fact that this report raises the predication that this intersection is awaiting a fatal accident (and the word "fatal" is used in the report) it gives this prospective event a chilling reminder for all of us living and working in the area, given that anecdotally there are many spoken of near misses on this corner.

3. VicRoads response to MRAG – 25 March 2019, J. Lewis, Road Safety and Traffic Engineering

In VicRoads response letter of 25 March (refer – Appendix 2), it explained that support for lowering the speed limit was declined for amongst other things – difficulty for enforcing a lowering of the speed limit, no crash data at that site, and two truck movements not being a satisfactory catalyst for doing so.

It should be pointed out the misunderstanding of VicRoads:

- a. The quarry was declined and therefore there are no additional truck movements, however it was noted in the Traffix Group report that "it (Buttercup and Mount Buller Road intersection) is an existing intersection that accommodates traffic associated with farm vehicles.....if there is a safety issue it should be addressed irrespective of the

subject development (quarry application/approval) and that is a job for the road authority."

- b. Enforcing speed by VicPol would be difficult – surely not a valid reason for declining a speed drop, particularly given the ski season police road blitzes to enforce speed and the high numbers of speeding events recorded (refer point 4 below);
- c. No crash data – MRAG has knowledge of at least one serious crash at this corner (refer - Appendix Tragic Accident) and anecdotally there are many stories of near misses told by the community members.

4. Current Evidence of Speeding on Mount Buller Road in Merrijig – May/July 2019

Over the winter months Victoria Police have had occasion to step up highway patrols and even helicopter surveillance along the Mount Buller Road in the vicinity of Merrijig (refer – Appendix 7- numerous VicPol facebook accounts and Mansfield Courier articles of outrageous speeding, some with alcohol and drug related accessory issues).

MRAG notes that in the Municipal Emergency Management Planning Committee minutes of 24 June 2019, Senior Sergeant Damian Keegan tabled VicPol's concern for the speeding being encountered in the area including Merrijig.

All this evidence goes to the fact there is a known dangerous intersection at Mount Buller Road and Buttercup Road. It is dangerous at 100 kph given the reduced line of sight in both directions, but at some of the speeds noted in the police accounts, the risk is off the charts and the predicted fatal accident by Trafix Group, based purely on data and Austroad standards, is a very real threat.

5. Increasing tourism means more vehicles going to and from Mount Buller

In the year to March 2019 (pre 2019 ski season), The High Country experienced an economic increase of 20.3% according to Tourism Research Australia. (refer – Appendix 4 -Tourism Booming). This means more tourists in more vehicles (cars and buses, plus caravans and campers, motorbikes, bicycles, horse floats) and most High Country visitors visit Mount Buller or the national park environs at least once.

With increased traffic on Mount Buller Road it should lead to VicRoads revisiting the historical speed limits that were set decades ago when road traffic density was very different.

Summary

Given all the above it seems remarkable that we have to wait for persons/s to be harmed or die before action to lower the speed limit can be taken, when expert evidence predicts a high risk situation is present.

We also submit that introducing a permanent reduced speed limit over a section of road which has clearly identified road safety deficiencies is NOT setting a precedent, if that is of concern.

The introduction of an 80 kph speed limit on the Mount Buller Road at Buttercup Road is needed now more than ever before to provide a safe intersection and to comply with Austroads standards which are adopted by VicRoads.

MRAG notes that VicRoads has installed 2 small intersection signs after our first request to lower the speed limit (refer – Appendix 5 - New Signage). Such signage makes no difference to the sight lines or permitted speed and whilst better than nothing, it does not slow traffic movement, or enable safer turn out of Buttercup Road into the main flow of Mount Buller Road through traffic travelling in either direction.

VicRoads states that further consideration will be made to future upgrades (sic.. at this intersection) as funding opportunities permit. Whilst we appreciate this consideration, surely the cost of changing a few speed signs from 100 kph to 80 kph with no roadmaking changes or road furniture requirements, is a very minimal cost.

If it is only funding for signage that is stopping this speed alteration, then MRAG would be happy to fund raise to secure this signage change.

Lowering the speed limit across this intersection, or indeed all the way into Merrijig (where an 80 kph zone already exists and is being pushed for a 60 kph zone) makes strong safety sense. Ignoring this local knowledge makes no sense and does not support the Road Safety Summit convened mid year by Victorian Roads Minister Jaala Pulford in considering rural speed limit reductions (refer – Appendix 8- Brake Point for Rural Roads) and hearing from local community users at regional round table meetings.

Again, MRAG sincerely invites you and/or your colleagues to visit and experience for yourself the line of sight restrictions we all face everyday at the intersection of Buttercup Road and Mount Buller Road. We will be happy to meet you on the site as we feel this visit would be invaluable. Till now all VicRoads judgements have been made remotely by computer simulation. That is not the same.

Please don't hesitate to contact any of us below if you have any concerns or further questions, or would like to arrange a meeting time either on site, in Mansfield, or Merrijig, or in Benalla.

With kind regards

Kym Lynch
MRAG Spokesperson
0409 184 193

Louise Jacob
MRAG Spokesperson
0419 346 249

Des Dunn
MRAG Spokesperson
0412 311 319

Attachment: Traffix Group Report

cc. Mayor Councillor Marg Attley OAM (Tolmie Ward Councillor [includes Merrijig])
Councillor Paul Volkering
Mr. Peter Reeves (Interim CEO)

APPENDIX 1 – Merrijig Residents Action Group Letter – 19 November 2018

19 November 2018

Merrijig Residents Action Group
PO Box 420
Mansfield Vic 3724

[Email: mrag3724@gmail.com](mailto:mrag3724@gmail.com)

Acting Mayor Harry Westerndorp;
Councillor Marg Atley;
Councillor Paul Sladdin;
Councillor Paul Volkering;
Councillor Peter Olver;
Mr Alex Green, CEO

Mansfield Shire Council

DELIVERED BY EMAIL TO ALL RECIPIENTS

Dear Mr Mayor, Councillors and Mr Green,

**TRAFFIC SPEED SUBMISSION
LOWER THE SPEED LIMIT APPROACHING THE INTERESECTION OF MOUNT BULLER
ROAD AND BUTTERCUP ROAD TO 80 km/h – EAST AND WEST**

Further to Merrijig Residents Action Group (MRAG) VCAT defence regarding the proposed stone extraction at 401 Buttercup Road, Merrijig, MRAG commissioned a traffic report from traffic expert consultants, Traffix Group [8/431 Burke Rd, Glen Iris VIC 3146], to consider the ingress and egress of the proposed trucking routes attached to the applicant proposal.

This report was commissioned because MRAG measurements indicated that line of sight distances offered by the applicant in their expert report by One Mile Grid were grossly wrong and as such the Vicroads approval was judged on inaccurate data.

On examination, Mansfield Shire engineers also found that the One Mile Grid data was inaccurate and determined that the proposed trucking route egress was not suitable to have a right hand turn at the top of Buttercup Road and Mount Buller Road.

Given the content of this independent expert Traffix Group report, we feel it is important for the Shire to be fully cognisant of the advice as it relates to road safety in this particular part of the Shire. We have attached and highlighted the pertinent parts for your ready reference on pages 3 and 4.

Please note on page 4 under the heading of Safety, that “If the sight distance is less than that specified for SISD (Safe Intersection Sight Distance)...raise issues with the safety of the intersection, emphasising the limited sight distances and the fact that the speed limit is 100km/h and therefore the consequences of an accident could be fatal.”

The report goes on to articulate “it (Buttercup and Mount Buller Road intersection) is an existing intersection that accommodates traffic associated with farm vehicles.....if there is a safety issue it should be addressed irrespective of the subject development and that is a job for the road authority.”

As users of this intersection everyday of the year, we agree. Residents always approach this turn with caution and vigilance (particularly in the snow season) and in reality this intersection presents an accident waiting to happen. Some of us have had near misses here and know the risk all too well.

Now that expert opinion confirms our experiences and worst fears, even though this consideration is well out of the scope MRAG set out to achieve, we feel it is incumbent on our behalf to advise the Shire and seek your proactive endorsement to approach Vicroads to have the speed limit along Mount Buller Road dropped to 80km/h at the Buttercup Road intersection to the east and west at the earliest possible opportunity.

To have an independent traffic expert, without our prompting, offer thoughts of “fatality” at this intersection is quite chilling, especially for those of us living here.

For MRAG to not offer up this report, we feel, would be extreme negligence. We do not want to have one or more preventable accidents, injuries or fatalities occurring at this site, be they involve locals or visitors, for the want of not alerting the Council to such a potential high risk location when an easy and cost free solution is available.

In the process of doing this, it would also be helpful to apply for the speed limit to be dropped on Buttercup Road to 60 - 80km/h, given dust on the unmade section of this road makes oncoming traffic impossible to see much of the time, as was also discussed at VCAT, and research tells that significant relief from dust burden can be achieved by dropping speeds.

The holiday season is fast approaching and with that increases in the numbers of vehicles, bikes, trailers, horse trailers and boats. We urge you to act quickly to set these Vicroads requests in motion.

MRAG members would be glad to meet with you to discuss either or both of these speed issues.

Safety on Shire roads should be a high Council priority. We are recommending two discrete but co located opportunities to substantially improve this safety. We trust you will look favourably on both opportunities.

Yours sincerely

Kym Lynch

Louise Jacob

Des Dunn

MRAG Spokespersons

Attach: Traffix Group Memorandum – 19 July 2018

Cc. Mr Paul Valente

APPENDIX 2 – Regional Roads Victoria letter 25 March 2019



50-52 Clarke Street
BENALLA VIC 3672
regionalroads.vic.gov.au

25 March 2019

Merrijig Residents' Action Group (MRAG)
Attention: Louise Jacob
P.O. Box 420,
MANSFIELD VIC 3274

Dear Madam,

RE: Mount Buller Road Speed Query

I refer to your letter of 4 December 2018 concerning speed limits along Mount Buller Road near the intersection of Butter Cup Road.

Regional Roads Victoria (RRV) have completed an assessment of the site and are satisfied that a 100km/h speed limit remains appropriate along the Mount Buller Road at this location.

In arriving at this conclusion, RRV would like to highlight the following considerations:

- After liaison with Mansfield Shire Council and the local Highway Patrol, a speed reduction was not supported.
- Local Highway Patrol believe the compliance with a reduced speed limit would be a significant issue.
- Analysis of available crash data over the past 10 years indicates that there are no recorded crashes at this intersection.
- The MRAG VCAT report and Traffix Group Report indicate an additional 2 Truck movements will be generated each day which is a marginal increase over existing traffic volumes.

Through the assessment completed, a minor alteration to the location of associated signage has been completed and further consideration will be given to future upgrades as funding opportunities permit.

Regional Roads Victoria thanks you for your interest in road safety and will continue to monitor the safety of this intersection as part of our routine activities.

Should you wish to discuss the actions undertaken mentioned above, please contact Mr Ajay Kalia, Road Safety Engineer on ajay.kalia@roads.vic.gov.au or 03 5761 1871

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Joshua Lewis".

Joshua Lewis

TEAM LEADER ROAD SAFETY & TRAFFIC ENGINEERING



APPENDIX 3 – Email from Jennifer Baldry (VicRoads) to Louise Jacob (MRAG)

From: Jennifer.Baldry@roads.vic.gov.au

Subject: Re: PPR 1460/16 Fwd: PP Application NO. P049/16

Date: 16 January 2018 at 11:32:16 am AEDT

To: Louise Jacob <buttercup@mansfield.net.au>

Hi Louise

I appreciate your concern. My understanding is that there was no on site measurements taken by the officer assessing, however, our system does allow us to take desk top measurements. Consequently, I don't think a physical measurement would have altered the decision.

Whilst the report contained some inaccuracies, the decision was made on the officers assessment of the site, existing situation and proposal. My understanding is that the increase of traffic movements was very marginal, so this did not present a need for any additional treatment.

As such I cannot see any need to revisit the assessment made.

Regards

Jennifer Baldry

Team Leader Integrated Transport and Land Use
North Eastern

VicRoads

50-52 Clarke Street BENALLA

T 0436 683 123

E Jennifer.Baldry@roads.vic.gov.au

W vicroads.vic.gov.au

APPENDIX 4 – Media pieces – Tourism Increasing



APPENDIX 5 – New Signage (yellow) post MRAG request letter for lower speed limit – this is currently a 100 kph zone



APPENDIX 6– Media piece – Tragic accident at Buttercup and Mount Buller Road intersection

mansfieldcourier.com.au

MANSFIELD COURIER — Wednesday, July 12, 2017 — PAGE 13

P plater ploughed into six people

THE distracted P plate driver who effectively ploughed into six people in Merrijig has been fined \$1000 with no conviction after having his case heard at the Mansfield Magistrates Court.

The male driver was returning home to Melbourne from a day on Mount Buller on July 9 last year in the early afternoon.

His wife was asleep in the front seat beside him.

Cresting the Buttercup Road hill on the Mount Buller Road, the driver veered more than four metres into the grass, ploughing

into the back of a parked Honda Odyssey.

Standing in front of the Odyssey was a family on holidays - four adults and two children.

The offending driver's vehicle hit the stationary vehicle at approximately 88 kilometres an hour, catapulting a young mother and her four year old child five metres through the air.

Magistrate Stella Stuthridge heard that the pair were airlifted to Melbourne where the mother

spent three months in hospital recovering from leg, neck and brain injuries.

Her four year old daughter was taken to intensive care where she remained for 10 days, and still requires ongoing rehabilitation some 12 months later.

Two more family members were taken to the Wangaratta hospital in a serious condition.

"There was no alcohol or drugs present in his system," police prosecutor, Fiona Nation, said.

Man fined \$1000 over "tragic accident" near Merrijig

"His iPhone was checked for activity around the time of the incident and it had not been used."

No skid marks were found at the scene.

Initially, the driver claimed he had blacked out at the time of the incident, but during an interview in September he later stated that the sun had been in his eyes when the crash occurred.

Entering a guilty plea to the charge of negligently causing

serious injury, the defence solicitor told the Mansfield Magistrates Court that it was a "tragic accident".

"He is an ordinary contributor to society," the solicitor said. "The sun was in his eyes... for three to four seconds, he left the highway ... it's tragic."

Immediately following the incident, the driver's licence was suspended for three months.

Asked to take his time off the road into consideration, Magistrate Stuthridge said, "the

problem with driving is that moments of carelessness result in tragic accidents".

When handing down her findings, Ms Stuthridge asked the defendant if he understood the gravity of the situation.

"You are clearly taking this matter very seriously," she said.

"But do you understand how tragic this was - how tragic this was for the four year old child?"

The defendant was fined \$1000 without conviction, with the funds to be donated to the Mansfield SES.

APPENDIX 7 – Media pieces - Victoria Police speeding offences

1000 people caught speeding in Mansfield

Police crack down on dangerous drivers

MANSFIELD'S police have had a busy winter period, which was evident at Mansfield Magistrates' Court on Wednesday last week.

Many tourists had made the trip up to Mansfield for their hearings, after being caught speeding on local roads into and out of town between May and September.

Police officers and members of highway patrol have been left stunned by the alarming number of people caught on our roads this year.

"The winter period (May – September) has proved to be a busy one for Mansfield

Senior Constable Rebecca Watkins said.

Throughout the five month period, 20 vehicles were impounded for excessive speed (45km or more over the speed limit) on Mt Buller Road, plus another four on other roads in the surrounding Mansfield area.

"The drivers of these excessive speeds have been summonsed to attend Mansfield Magistrates' Court to have the matter dealt with," LSC Watkins said.

A number of other drivers

have elected to have their penalty notice heard at court which has resulted in 85 matters currently in the court system.

One man, who was on his p-plates, was caught overtaking a vehicle on Mount Buller Road, Merrijig, at a speed of 154km/h.

When police pulled the man over, it appeared he had been using his phone for directions as well – something he and other probationary drivers aren't allowed to do.

The man told Magistrate

Stella Stuthridge that he was very remorseful, before explaining that he needed his licence to get to and from work and university.

The man's licence was disqualified for 12 months, and before getting back on the road, he will be required to complete a safe driving program.

He also received an \$850 fine.

Another man, who appeared at the Mansfield Magistrates' Court with his brother helping translate the hearing, was told to return when he had found a translator as it would possibly help his case.

Continued page 3

BY SAMANTHA ROUGET
srouget@nemedi.com.au



"Very average" on our local roads

110 plus notices issued over school holidays

MORE than 110 penalty notices were issued to drivers over the school holiday period in Mansfield.

Describing it as a "very average" time on the roads, Senior Constable Scott Woodstock, from Mansfield Highway Patrol, said there was a lack of common sense being displayed.

"It's a decent amount (of penalty notices) – there were some big speeds, and plenty of licences were lost," he said.

Of those caught during the

two week period, one man was clocked doing a crazy 205km/h on the Mount Buller Road, with five people in the car.

Another driver was clocked at Merrijig doing 196km/h, while yet another was caught doing 160km/h.

All drivers will be summonsed to appear before Mansfield Magistrates' Court at a later date.

A further three drivers will be fronting court after having their cars impounded in the Mansfield area over the month.

All up, the cases make up a disastrous – and luckily for Mansfield, not deadly – period on the road.

"We are obviously very disappointed," Snr Con Woodstock said.

On a brighter note, Snr Con Woodstock said there were no cases of drug driving during the school holiday period.

"We might be getting the word out there," Snr Con Woodstock said.

There were four cases of drink driving over the period.

PAGE 2 - MANSFIELD COURIER - Wednesday, July 24, 2019



ON RADAR: Mansfield Highway Patrol officer LSC Rebecca Watkins monitors cars travelling through Merrijig during Operation Early Bird recently.

Police road blitz nabs speedsters

■ Two vehicles impounded, 57 speeding fines issued during Operation Raid in two days

MANSFIELD Highway Patrol officers were out 'in force' recently in an annual operation called "Early Bird" involving the helicopter detection team as well.

Officer in charge of the operation, Mansfield Highway Patrol's Sergeant Marty McLachlan, said the Early Bird operation was successful over its first two days operating at Merrijig.

Officers were on duty from 6am and over the two days a total of 57 speeding fines were issued along with two impoundments of vehicles.

The first impoundment was for a driver found speeding, driving on a disqualified probationary licence, driving a high power vehicle and failing a preliminary drug test.

The second impoundment was for exceeding the speed limit 47km above the 80kmh speed limit.

The highest speeding offences were clocked at 104kmh in an 80kmh zone and 142 in a 100kmh zone.

Police also issued notices for one unlicensed driver, one defective vehicle, one unsafe overtaking, three non-compliance for wearing seat belts and carried out 91 preliminary breath tests.

During the same weekend of July 20 and 21 State Highway Patrol and State Heavy Vehicle police officers were operating throughout the district from Yea to Merrijig.

As part of Operation Stratum, police from the Heavy Vehicle Unit intercepted a bus in Bonnie Doon.

The mini bus was intercepted on Maroondah Highway about 9.30am.

The driver of the bus, a man in his 40s from Clayton, re-

turned an alleged positive test for drugs.

Eight people, including the driver, were on the bus at the time.

The man is expected to be charged on summons with exceed prescribed concentration of drugs, work diary offences and fail to have driver accreditation.

Police from the Heavy Vehicle Unit continued to target heavy vehicles in Mansfield and the surrounding areas as part of the operation which focused on vehicles, including buses and trucks, heading to the snowfields.

Sgt McLachlan thanked his officers and those of the air wing for a great effort over the two days.

He advised that Operation Early Bird will again be conducted this next weekend.



ON AIR: Victoria Police Air Wing division were at Merrijig to give a helping hand to Mansfield Highway Patrol during Operation Early Bird.

10:38 Sat 29 Jun 80%

Search Facebook

ABC Goulburn Murray 57 mins ·

Mansfield Highway Patrol officers are appealing for witnesses following a speeding incident in Merrijig this morning.


A grey Audi station wagon was observed allegedly overtaking a red dual cab ute about 9am.

The Audi was clocked at 196km/h and pulled over a short time later.

The driver, a 21-year-old Vermont South man, has been charged with reckless conduct endangering life and other traffic matters.

Police would like to speak to the driver of the red ute and the driver of a silver vehicle that was on the Mount Buller Road between the Merrijig Motor Inn and Howqua Track.

Anyone with information is urged to contact Mansfield Highway Patrol on 5775 2555.



VICTORIA POLICE

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APPENDIX 8 –Road Safety Summit

SPEED LIMITS

Brake point for rural roads

By ALEX SINNOTT

SWEEPING reductions to country speed limits are being considered by the Victorian Roads Minister following a spike in fatalities. The state's road toll stands at 143, up from 89 at the same time last year, with a West Gippsland motorist and a Mallee pedestrian the latest in a line of casualties over the weekend.

Roads Minister Jaala Pulford convened a Road Safety Summit in Melbourne last month due to the rural toll rise, which escalated to 86 from 48

HAVE YOUR SAY

Should speed limits be reduced in the country?

theweeklytimes.com.au

deaths at the same time last year.

Among the concepts discussed at the summit was a move to reduce the default country road limit on single lane thoroughfares from 100km/h to 80km/h as well a cut to the freeway top tier limit from 110 to 100km/h.

Ms Pulford declined to rule



Down, down: Speed limit reductions may be considered.

out a cut to either the country default or the freeway limit when questioned by *The*

Weekly Times. "More than two-thirds of Victorians who died on country roads this year were within 30km of home – on local roads that they're familiar with, roads they probably drive all the time," Ms Pulford said.

"A strong message from the Road Safety Summit was that to turn this tragic situation around we need to be looking at speed limits on rural roads – and we're now holding regional roundtables to hear more from the people who use those roads every day."

The default country roads

limit of 100km/h was introduced by the Hamer Government when Victorian signs underwent metrication in 1974. The default is standard across all Australian states with the Northern Territory's 110km/h default the exception.

Opposition roads spokeswoman Roma Britnell said lowering speed limits would penalise country drivers for a lack of road investment.

"The state budget shows Labor is planning to spend \$220 million less on rural road upgrade projects this year," Mrs Britnell said. "Now Labor

seems to be going for the easy option and is planning to slow people down."

Several speakers at last month's TAC summit warned that 100km/h was too dangerous on single-lane sealed and unsealed country roads.

Centre for Accident Research and Safety expert Narelle Haworth told summit attendees that country roads were often in poor condition and the speed limit should be reduced.

"To fix roads costs money. To fix speeds costs votes," Professor Haworth said.

12 December 2019

Merrijig Residents Action Group (MRAG)
Attention: Louise Jacobs
PO Box 20
MANSFIELD VIC 3724

Dear Louise,

RE: Speed limit reduction request reconsideration by VicRoads- Intersection Mount Buller Road with Buttercup Road, Merrijig – Onsite visit 11/12/19

Regional Roads Victoria (RRV) would like to provide notes to the Merrijig Residents Action Group (MRAG) in response to our onsite visit on 11/12/19 at Buttercup Road.

Attendees: Mansfield Shire Council: Marg Atley, Mayor and Peter Reeves, CEO
MRAG: Louise & Laurie Jacobs, Kim Lynch, Des Dunn and Rob Ekers
RRV: Josh Lewis, Team Leader Road Safety & Traffic Engineering and Kerry Craig, Comms & Engagement Manager

Kim presented on behalf of MRAG, highlighting their road safety concerns and provided evidence to support their proposal for RRV to reconsider their request for a speed limit reduction.

I provided a response to MRAG's safety concerns from a road safety and traffic engineering perspective, along with treatment options which could be investigated further by RRV.

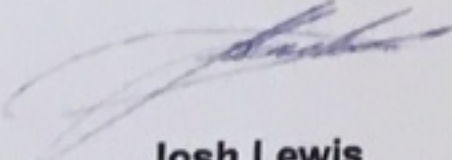
MRAG provided newspaper clippings from the Mansfield Courier as further evidence of motorists' non-compliance with speed limits and detail on increased tourism traffic along both Mount Buller Road and Buttercup Road.

Based on the information we collected today and community sentiment, the next steps for RRV are:

- Commence an application for a Side Road Activated Speed (SRAS) treatment to be installed at the intersection of Mount Buller Road and Buttercup Road and keep both MRAG and Mansfield Shire informed
- Meet with Victoria Police to ascertain their support of a Speed Change Request, reducing speed from 100km/h to 80km/h in vicinity of the intersection:
 - If VicPol support the Request, we will proceed with an assessment and determination by March 2020 and keep MRAG and Mansfield Shire informed
 - If VicPol do not support the Request, we will not proceed with the Speed Change Request and will inform MRAG and Mansfield Shire of the outcome

We thank you for your time and effort in escalating your concerns. We will keep a look out for correspondence from Mansfield Shire and other key stakeholders which may be forthcoming.

Kind regards


Josh Lewis
Team Leader-Road Safety and Traffic Engineering



VICTORIA POLICE ALPINE CLUB

Incorporated
ABN 927 949 311 34

P.O. Box 33 Blackburn South. Victoria. 3130

www.vpski.com



6th January 2020

Kerry Craig
Regional Engagement Manager
Vic Roads
kerry.craig@roads.vic.gov.au

Dear Kerry,

My name is Jeff Maher and I am the President of the Victoria Police Alpine Club (VPAC) situated at 283 Buttercup Road, Merrijig Victoria 3723. I am a recently retired Police Officer with 43-years experience.

I am writing to you in relation to the intersection of Buttercup and Mount Buller Roads Merrijig 3723 with consideration to reducing the speed limit to 80 km/h through this intersection.

Our Alpine Lodge has been in existence since 1983. Some facts and figures that may assist you in your decision making process:

- VPAC operates about 3,000 bed nights per annum.
- It is an all year round venue.
- Our members are predominantly emergency personnel, family and guests.
- Only a portion of members/visitors comes for the snow.
- I have been visiting VPAC for more than 30 years
- I have noticed a marked increase in Mt Buller Road traffic across that time
- My experience using the Buttercup Road corner is that the limit is too high with vehicles rapidly approaching from your rear upon nearing the intersection when you are turning off.
- The line of sight of vehicles travelling along Mt Buller Road in both directions is reduced at the intersection of Buttercup Road for vehicles turning onto Mt Buller Road.
- I believe the reduction of the speed to 80 km/h would be of a safety benefit at Buttercup Road corner.

I would very much appreciate if you could consider the above request and please, do not hesitate to contact me with any clarification or queries.

Yours Sincerely,

Jeff Maher
President, Victoria Police Alpine Club.
0419746411