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Re roads

Upgrades: Midlands Highway

It is common knowledge that "Wider roads are safer roads, with room to run off" and that is the adopted policy for Australian roads but it does not seem to be the in thing in Tasmania! Why? Anyone who with intelligence who has worked in the vehicle repair industry will tell you the dislike re flexible wire barriers. One wonders, who are the share holders in the wire cable makers and is the cable made in Australia?

Motor bike riders detest flexible wire barriers. As a number of older vehicles on our road leak oil, as this oil is deposited on the roads add a short wet shower and you have a "skid" spot for a motor bike rider and the wire barriers act like cheese graters thus putting the rider at the risk of death. There is nothing worse the seeing a bike rider die on the road with bloody injuries and you can do nothing. I have been there and experienced it first hand a number of times have you?

If you talk to the old generation of tow truck drivers you would avoid installing flexible wire barriers. To retrieve a vehicle that is tangled up in a wire barrier the odds are you will need to cut it loose and the preferred tool oxy - acetylene cutting torch. When you light up your cutting torch in a fire danger period you at risk of starting a fire. Who has to put the fire out when it is out of control burning toward some ones house? The fire fighters many of whom are volunteers in rural area. A common complaint from fire fighters re wire barriers is the hindrance of having to travel

extra distance to get clear of wire barrier so they can access the fire area.

When it come to divided lanes where you have two barriers one way and one lane the other way you are creating a system of hidden death. If a person in need of urgent medical treatment (heart attack, stroke, ruptured appendix, snake bite, hypo black out etc. where time is of the essence they need to get to hospital as quick as possible, just in case you don't know a person with a blood clot needs treatment within four hours or they are dead) as one was saying needs to get to hospital as quick as possible the last thing that an ambo driver needs is to be boxed into a single lane with wire barriers on each side and no where to go but follow the vehicle in front and if the vehicle in front is carrying a legal wide load appropriate marked will flashing beacons etc. going down hill the driver will be in the low range of their gear box and has no where to go but follow the road. In the mean time the patient in the ambulance is running out of time with their life on the line. Now if that patient has internal bleeding or a blood clot on or in the heart they could be dead due to time delay cased by single lane wire barriers. Don't tell me people will pull over, they don't if they can get out of it! I have been a patient in an ambulance with a blood clot on the heart and my odds got down to one per cent chance of survival and had we saved three minutes the odds would have been no heart attack. Any one at any time can have a blood clot moving around in their body and it can cause a stroke or heat attack or death. To say you can remove the barriers in emergency by the time you get people there the odds are to late. Get in the real world if flexible wire barriers save 8 live due to head on collisions but causes 14 people to die in the back of an ambulance because they can not get to hospital in time what have you saved? Is it a case of passing the buck and saying you have reduced the road toll while minister for health cops the flack for people dropping dead in the back of ambulances? Are we going to have a state of the art helicopters and light plane ambo service for all in the midlands so your wire barriers can save a few head on crashes?

In the mean time if you live in a timber house in the country near the Midlands Highway (Constitution Hill) and you have a fire in your timber weather board house and you call the fire brigade to put

your house fire out, the chances are by the time the volunteers man the fire appliance at Bagdad travel up Constitution Hill past the wire barriers do a u-turn and travel down to the side road and go up the side road to the house the odds are the house will be burnt to the ground.

When you look at heavy trucks and flexible wire barriers it makes it very awkward for truck to manoeuvre when doing u-turns especially B-doubles picking up and dropping of stock from farms and if you care to look the Midlands Highway passes many farms as it travels through the Midlands of Tasmania and on these farms they have live stock and grow crops and need trucks movement as part of the production cycle.

Now if a heavy truck or bus is caught in snow conditions in an area of flexible wire barriers especially going up hill and loses traction in the snow it can be very scary and dangerous to manoeuvre that vehicle down the hill. It has happened on Constitution Hill in 2015 where a truck lost traction in the snow and the highway had to be closed! So where was the snow clearing equipment (snow plough and high speed heavy sweeper with heating equipment)?

People with horse do not like flexible wire barriers especially when towing a horse float with two large restless horses in the float and have to slow down to a crawl to make a tight turn into a narrow drive with a deep ditch on each side of the drive and have the likelihood of some stupid person not concentrating (on the mobile phone) slamming into the rear and possibly killing the horses and others.

As we are barred by law from using mobile phones while driving yet people still use mobile phones while driving so prey tell me how are you going to police a single lane with wire barriers on both side when you have five or more vehicles in that section and the person in the middle of the vehicle bunch decides to use a mobile phone or worse still a laptop computer? I have experience a stupid young lass using a laptop computer while driving down Constitution Hill and near clobbered the rear end of my vehicle at least seven times. Now if one was not observant with many years

experience she would have demolished her car and possibly herself as she was battling to stay within the speed limit not to mention the damage to the vehicles in front of her.

There are a number of people driving on our roads that hate driving but have no choice but to drive, this is the only means of transport they have and just in case you have overlooked public transport you will find minimal public transport in the country area between Hobart and Launceston and rarely does it run for people that need to go to work in the city, hence these people have to drive cars or ride motor bikes. Now these people that do not like driving usually suffer from judging distance and width. A test was put together in the UK for driving double decker buses and it is alarming as to how many people can not judge distance or width. Two double decker buses were parked side by side with enough room to drive another bus through the gap between the two parked double decker buses with a metre to spare on each side, sadly the majority of first time bus driver were afraid to drive through the gap. Less than 10 per cent can drive a double decker bus through a gap between two parked double decker buses with 150 mil to spare on each side of the moving bus. Now how does this fit with flexible wire barriers? Quite simple if you have a percentage of sight loss (or just one eye) or your eyes are tired or strained your focus on width will be out of kilter and you will tend to keep away from the outside edge of the road thus the odds are you will drive nearer to the centre hence divided roads become an important factor. The best way to resolve this problem is divided "wider roads with room to run off" and the road be sealed to the guide post and where possible the verge be compatible to the road to allow a vehicle to run off or pull over to answer the phone or check load or to have a break. So if we are not alert enough to drive through a gap what hope have you got for a vehicle to pull over to the left to let emergency vehicle through?

We are encouraged to pull over and take a break and how do you do that in a single lane with a flexible wire barrier up each side and down the middle?

People with eye disorders find the flickering of posts going by annoying and the problem is worse when the sun is at a low angle casting shadows and distortion through the flexible wire barriers.

The list goes on against wire barriers. One of our biggest road problems is tourist (with minimum driving experience) from Asian countries hiring rent a cars. As we go down the path of political correctness, rent a car companies have to hire out their cars to people many of which have had less driving experience than our local learn to drive applicants that have to display L plates or P plates when they pass their tests. Any driver coming from overseas with less than 3 years experience should have to display a P plate or similar. Don't blame the Tasmanians for the prangs caused by overseas tourist! Make it harder for those who drive on the opposite side of the roads, put up signs "keep left". There are so many things we can all do to make our roads safer without the need for Flexible wire barriers.

When it comes to "Flexible wire barriers" in time the wire deteriorates with metal fatigue and has to be replaced. If a vehicle crashes into a flexible wire barrier the wire will suffer a degree of metal fatigue and should be replaced like seat belts in a car when the car has been in a crash.

When one looks at Flexible wire barriers in depth it does not add up. Sadly the State government and its road department is behind the times and needs to catch up "Wider roads are safer roads with room to run off"

Just to get work done on B31 Mud Walls Road took the government 8 years and 6 months and then they ran out of money and did a patch up job on Peckham Hill hence it is now going into pot holes and the promised barriers have not been installed on the drop off near the railway line and when will that get done?

Periodic vehicle registration took more than 4 years to become reality because of negative arguments from the government and its departments but when introduced a large number of unregistered cars became registered cars. Are we to go through more negative arguments and waste of money re Midlands Highway upgrade or

are we going to adopt the "wider roads are safer roads, with room to run off" ?

Now when you look at the advancement of vehicle technology you will see vehicles are being designed to be "smart" and not slam into

moving and stationary vehicle in front, at the side, at the rear and not to cross over the centre line into the path of another vehicle. They are testing driver less cars that carry out all necessary functions including turning their lights on and off thus the need for barriers is becoming redundant as the majority of the current cars on the road will be replaced in 12 years or less with smarter cars. If we are to be smart we would be building our highways as near to level as possible doing away with steep inclines and in return we would be saving millions in fuel cost, vehicle maintenance and repairs, reduce pollution to the planet and go from point A to point B in less time without speeding.

If you talk to the people the feedback is they want a four lane highway. Talk to the government they will say traffic flow does not warrant a four lane (Midlands) highway. No both are right but the government is not looking ahead and the people do not understand the cost. Now if we want growth in the midlands then it makes sense to build a 4 lane Midland Highway from Pontville to Oatlands over a 10 year time span and 4 lanes from Breadalbane to Campbelltown (or Ross) over a 10 year span. Sooner or later it needs to be done. With the Mud Walls Road upgrade the people were prepared to have it upgraded section by section on a yearly basis the same can be applied to the Midlands Highway. This makes sense as it complies with "Wider roads are safer roads with room to run off". Now your argument will be against but you are not looking at history or the future. If one looks at your current mentality and applied it to Sydney Harbour Bridge (before it was built), 2 traffic lanes, one tram track and one train track that was all that was needed pre 1950. The designed and built a bridge for the future the in the seventies it was chock o block with vehicles and could not meet demand hence a tunnel was built. If you look at Bowen Bridge for a large part of the day (and night) it is under utilised yet it was built all because a shit hit the Tasman Bridge. When the Bowen Bridge was built the Eastern Shore grew at a rapid rate simple because people know they can get to work and home again in a short space of time even if the Tasman Bridge is closed. When you look at the Southern Outlet when that was built Kingston became a great place to live hence the municipality grew. Where ever roads / highways have been upgraded towns along the Highway have grown. Have a look at Leith, Turners Beach, Hadspen and Ulverstone just to name a few towns that have grown because of Highway upgrade. The same could apply to

Mangalore, Bagdad, Kempton and to the lesser extent Oatlands if the Midlands Highway was four lanes not a mishmash of two plus one fenced in with wire barriers.

My recommendation having listen to the people go back to the drawing board put the right model together and work with the people and the future of this state so Tasmania can grow instead of being held back because of politics and negative minded outdated and in some case inexperience people in government departments. Have a look at Switzerland and how it works with people and the transport system and how they deal with rural and the over populated areas. Switzerland is a land locked country while Tasmania is a sea locked state yet both share many common factors and the Swiss deal with their problems we do shot term patch up jobs so politician look like they are doing something so they can get re-elected and continue to potter on and the government departments return to their old routine of doing something to make it look like they are getting the job done.

The people want a four lane Midlands Highway not a mishmash two plus one stung together by wire barriers.

Re Midlands Highway, Mangalore to Bagdad no cables except for drop off's and deep drains. Reduce speed to 80 from southern entrance of school south past service station / post mail centre.

Re Midlands Highway, Kempton to Melton Mowbray no cables wider road if needed!

Yours Bob Campbell

About the author,

Bob has worked in the construction of heavy earth moving machinery and construction of road making machinery. Worked for the Hydro on roads, power stations, spillways, tunnels and dams.. Worked in the auto industry as a vehicle tester, vehicle assembler / painter / quality control / panel beating. Worked in the vehicle retail sector, tow truck driver, panel beating and spray painting. Owned and operated bodyworks for many years repairing and painting cars, trucks, buses and light commercials. Lobbied for Periodic Vehicle Registration and Up Grade of Mud Walls Road, Ex Member of the Liberal Party, currently a member of council, standing for the board of a well known auto club.