

David Koch

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MEDIA RELEASE

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Transport Safety Services must remain in Hamilton

Calls for Hamilton's VicRoads Transport Safety Services (TSS) officers not to be relocated to Warrnambool were raised in Parliament this week by David Koch, Member for Western Victoria.

David Koch said that the transfer of a recent TSS position to the Warrnambool VicRoads office and the proposed transferring of the other positions to Warrnambool indicated an intention to downgrade the Hamilton office.

"I am extremely concerned that the successful applicant for a recent vacant position in Hamilton was advertised for the Warrnambool office thus reducing the staff capacity in Hamilton.

"Transferring positions to a centralised service point in larger regional centres may seem efficient, but in practice this reduces services. A reduction of service could well result in less compliance of road safety regulations leading to reduced road safety on country roads.

"My concern extends to officers working overtime on fee for service jobs who are discouraged from undertaking routine heavy vehicle inspections outside normal working hours. This may necessitate officers turning a blind eye to offences they witness while travelling outside normal working hours.

David Koch said that in the past TSS officers based at Hamilton have provided an excellent service for many years to heavy vehicle drivers by helping them comply with heavy vehicle regulations. Their role includes checking vehicles are within prescribed limits for weight and size, ensuring vehicles are road worthy and that log book entries are compliant. They also provide a pilot service for over dimensional loads and give advice on safety issues particularly relating to heavy vehicles.

"The regional knowledge and expertise of the Hamilton officers far outweighs any perceived benefit in relocating these positions to Warrnambool. Hamilton's more central location is within an hour of all areas patrolled to the north, south and west and within similar times as Warrnambool in areas to the east. Being on the coast, coverage from Warrnambool is limited by comparison and costs more to deliver the same level of services as Hamilton.

"Downgrading of local VicRoads offices will disadvantage country Victorians. Already those seeking permits for over dimensional loads must now obtain approval through Melbourne and be prepared for possible lengthy delays in obtaining the required permits. With the outsourcing of other functions like articulated and motorcycle learner's permits and licenses, many country residents travel long distances and incur additional costs to obtain these permits and licences.

"By endorsing a possible further downgrade of the Hamilton office, the State Government is breaking yet another pre-election commitment to maintain existing services at country centres.

"I call on the Minister for Roads, Tim Pallas to ensure TSS positions are maintained in Hamilton and that the Hamilton VicRoads office is not downgraded any further."

David Koch is the Deputy Chair of the Parliamentary Road Safety Committee.

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