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**MEDIA RELEASE**

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**Unwary motorists face danger on tourist roads**

Motorists in the Grampians National Park are being warned to take care following an incident where a large tree limb fell on a vehicle travelling along the Dunkeld to Halls Gap tourist road.

David Koch, Member for Western Victoria, said in Parliament this week that recently two separate issues were raised with him about the dangers of overhanging and overgrown vegetation on roads in and near the Grampians National Park.

“In the first instance, an older couple were driving along the main tourist road between Dunkeld and Halls Gap when at the precise moment the front seat passenger looked up to see the immense tree limbs overhanging the roadway, a large limb came crashing down crushing the back of their vehicle and smashing the rear windscreen.

“Shocked and shaken by the experience, and while neither occupant was badly injured, they are hopeful their insurance will cover the cost of repairing their extensively damaged vehicle.

“The following week they came into my office and expressed their disbelief about the management regimes in place that would allow dangerous tree canopies to overhang this and other major roads without any duty of care to motorists.

“Indeed, they are amazed that such an incident could occur on this major tourist road principally managed by VicRoads.

“While the outcome of this incident could have been very different, motorists travelling roads where large trees overhang the roadway need to be aware of the danger.

“The second instance involves the dangers motorists face when travelling on unfamiliar roads with overgrown vegetation on roadside reserves.

“Another constituent called into my office to express his frustration that VicRoads continues to ignore his pleas to remove vegetation, particularly at intersections of minor and major roads in Victoria Valley adjoining the Grampians National Park.

“He pointed out that unchecked regrowth blocking visibility at these intersections had caused him and other drivers to narrowly avoid serious accidents despite slowing to a stop before proceeding.

“It seems VicRoads’ only remedy is to place signs warning motorists to slow down, not removing vegetation obstructions.

“Surely it should not take a serious accident or fatality for action to trigger maintenance of this natural regrowth of vegetation and tree canopies that are clearly hazardous to motorists.

“I have called on the Minister for Roads, Tim Pallas, to direct VicRoads to use better management procedures to improve road safety by removing overgrown and overhanging vegetation”, said David Koch.

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