ENVIRONMENT

Run-off from roadworks on Toodyay Road near Coorinja Winery pollutes Harper Brook which flows into the Avon River near Extracts Weir.

Coorinja roadworks demonstrate bad engineering

Safe and Scenic Toodyay Roads
Andrew St John

THE NEWLY completed section of upgraded Toodyay Road, close to the Coorinja winery, has recently become a spectacle of the good and the bad features of road engineering by Main Roads Western Australia (MRWA).

The upgraded section has been engineered to what MRWA calls the Regional Standard with a wider carriageway and sealed edges with rumble strips.

An additional feature is a one-metre centre strip to provide greater separation between traffic streams.

All of the above features are obviously an improvement over the narrower traffic lanes and broken edges which characterise many kilometres along the current Wheatbelt section of Toodyay Road.

And such improvements clearly represent good engineering.

In contrast the bad engineering associated with these improvements was on show after heavy September rain washed large amounts of soil off the newly constructed embankments or batters into Harper Brook, a significant tributary of the Avon River.

Inspection by a representative of Toodyay Council indicated that material was being deposited into the brook at more than one point, with some culverts completely blocked with sand and mud.

The inspection showed this was likely due to a faulty design of the batters – an integral part of the new alignment of the road at Coorinja – and will occur again unless remedial work is undertaken.

This is not the first time our valuable waterways have been treated poorly.

When the section of the road just west of the town was being improved, contractors' negligence in disposing of large volumes of water resulted in damage to the banks of the Avon River.

Since the start of this project, Safe and Scenic Toodyay Roads (SASTR) has held ongoing concerns that waterways along Toodyay Road are not adequately surveyed or considered when designing road upgrades.

SASTR believes the original designs for the realigned road to cross Jimperding Brook – to be completed in a later stage of the project – would have it merely redirected into a culvert, ignoring the fact that the brook runs adjacent to the road virtually all year.

When this deficiency was pointed out to MRWA there was subsequent confirmation that a new bridge would be constructed across the creek.

Another topic of conversation in the community about the recently completed Coorinja section is what did we actually get after all the traffic disruption and extended time to complete the project?

To be fair to the engineers, a large amount of rock had to be blasted to improve the road alignment.

But I am sure many would have preferred the bend to be removed completely and the straightened road linked up with the previously improved section east of Harper Brook – and completed three years ago.

Perhaps such work was beyond the budget, and improvements to the new section of road have been achieved in the most cost-effective way.

But cost effectiveness must also be based on leaving our precious and valuable waterways in pristine condition.

Come and see us at the Toodyay Show where the SASTR stall will have more on the good and the bad of road engineering along Toodyay Road.