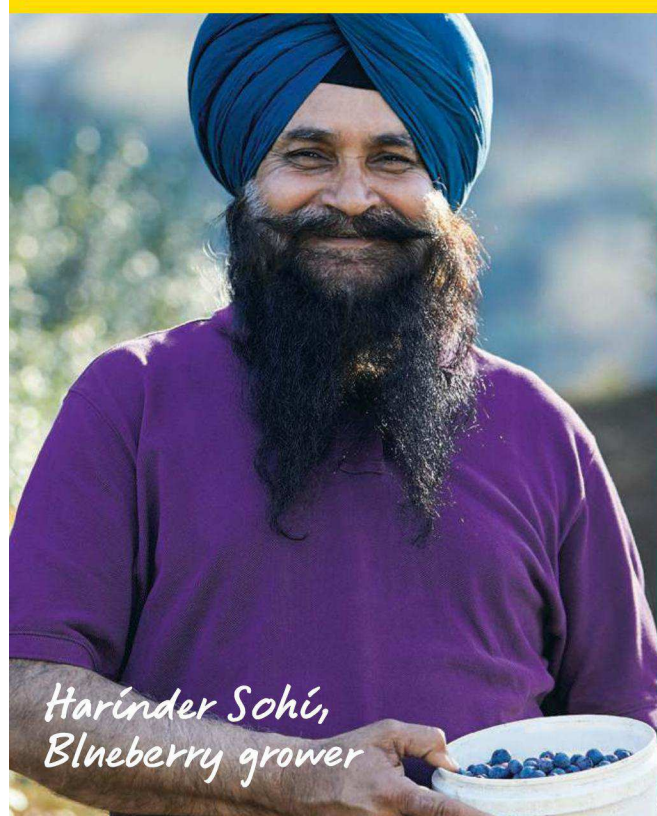


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WP080823V5A

'New' road in disrepair

Resurfaced after only 18 months

KIERAN ROONEY
ED BOURKE

A SUBURBAN road upgraded under a \$1.8bn state government scheme has had to be redone 18 months after it was finished.

Leakes Rd in Tarneit, improved as part of the Western Roads Upgrade, was barely completed in 2021 before locals started to notice the new works were deteriorating rapidly.

Last month, they received letters informing them the entire road was being resurfaced.

Frustrated residents are now asking whether the project has provided value for money amid ongoing concerns about how the \$1.8bn program has been managed.

A litany of issues have emerged from the Western Roads Upgrade over the past year, with dozens of small businesses facing bankruptcy after a major contractor went bust.

Firms who were never paid have been working towards a class action against the Andrews government, who commissioned the project, to get the money they are owed.

Businesses who were duded on the job, and other government work, have also called for an independent probe into the state's handling of projects, including how contracts are awarded and how blowouts are managed.

Danielle Vella, whose house backs on to the section of Leakes Rd being redone, said



Danielle Vella in front of the roadworks. Picture: David Caird

she was surprised works had restarted on the road so soon after the upgrade had been completed.

"There was nothing wrong with the road that I had noticed, I didn't realise they needed to do it again until I got the letter in the mail," Ms Vella said. "I assume they must have done something wrong the first time."

"I think they have just finished one section and are now moving on to another ... it's not ideal, it's a bit noisy."

Ms Vella said she was concerned by the amount of taxpayer funds being spent on a relatively small section of road.

"It kind of just feels like a waste of money," she said.

Netflow, a private consortium who delivered the project,

has also been paid to maintain it until 2040. A Major Roads Project Victoria spokeswoman said the state was "continuing to work with Netflow to identify any repair works on roads that don't meet the required standard as a part of the Western Roads Upgrade maintenance program".

"These resurfacing and repair works will provide certainty for communities in the west that the roads they rely on every day will receive ongoing care and maintenance. This means less disruption, and smoother and more reliable journeys."

Opposition finance spokesman Ryan Smith said the project was an example of poor management.

kieran.rooney@news.com.au

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CHRISTINE CARUSO



LIDIA GEBREHIWOT



LEE WHITTAKER



NADIRE ALTUNKILIC

■ **CHRISTINE** Caruso, 41, is wanted for allegedly failing to answer bail, criminal damage, theft and possessing methylamphetamine. Nine warrants have been issued for her arrest. She is known to frequent Melbourne and Shepparton. She is 160cm tall with a medium build, blue eyes, blonde hair and a fair complexion.

intentionally damaging property, theft and unlawful assault. Nine warrants have been issued for her arrest. She is known to frequent Flemington and Ascot Vale. She is 165cm tall with a thin build, brown eyes, black hair and a dark complexion.

■ **LEE** Whittaker, 38, is wanted for allegedly failing to answer bail, obtaining property by deception, theft and unlicensed driving. Eleven warrants have been issued for his arrest. He is

known to frequent Mill Park. He is 185cm tall with a solid build, green eyes, blond hair and fair complexion.

■ **NADIRE** Altunkilic, 22, is wanted for allegedly obtaining property by deception, theft of a motor vehicle, possessing cocaine and criminal damage. Nine warrants have been issued for her arrest. She is known to frequent Caroline Springs. She is 160cm with a medium build, brown eyes, black hair and an olive complexion.