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Main Roads maintenance backlog remains high

In a follow-on audit released today, Auditor General Colin Murphy found that the backlog of overdue maintenance remains high at \$845 million and is likely to stay high given the minimal effort directed at preventative maintenance.

The maintenance backlog was \$820 million in 2009.

Mr Murphy said it is disappointing there has been no further progress in reducing the backlog and moving to a maintenance approach that would minimise whole-of-life costs.

‘Although Main Roads has done some preventative resurfacing on parts of the network, overall the approach to maintenance is still reactive – it’s done when it becomes critical,’ Mr Murphy said.

This approach does not offer good value for money because critical maintenance is more complex and costs more meaning less can be done with available funding.

Main Roads has better information about maintenance and network performance, but it is not yet making full use of the information.

Mr Murphy said Main Roads needs to have a long-term strategic approach to planning and undertaking maintenance and move to a preventative approach while still undertaking critical repairs.

‘If Main Roads continue with business as usual there is a significant risk that the state road network will continue to deteriorate and the backlog will rise.

In the 2009 report, a third of the network was older than its 40-year design life, now it is 46%.

Allowing a road to become older than the intended design life increases the risk it will fail, which can result in higher costs to replace.

With Main Roads implementing a new contract model in 2017, it is essential lessons learnt from previous models are used to establish effective maintenance contracts moving forward.

The report contains a number of recommendations that assist Main Roads in achieving long-term value for money, while simultaneously addressing critical maintenance needs.

The Auditor General’s report, *Maintaining the State Road Network – Follow-on Audit* (Report 13 – June 2016), is available on the Office of the Auditor General website at www.audit.wa.gov.au

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