

## **Road repair innovation supports local jobs**

AN innovative road repair machine, the Sidewinder, was making roads safer and wider in the Lachlan Valley last week, and because the technology will be operating in conjunction with Boorowa Council's own roadwork team it has the additional benefit of retaining local jobs.

Road repair and maintenance company, Sharp Bros has reported to increasing unemployment rates with a new solution that generates work for locals by moving away from the traditional contractor arrangement in which all equipment and staff are brought in from other parts of the state.

Joint Managing Director, Michael Sharpe, said it was more important than ever to protect local jobs and keep costs down for councils so the company had begun working in closely with councils' own roads crews to quickly and efficiently fix dangerous narrow roads and soft edges.

"Boorowa Council was one of the first council's to recognise the benefits of bringing in the most effective shoulder-widening technology and a number of highly trained Sharp Bros road repair specialists to work as part of a united team with their own staff," Mr Sharpe said.

The sidewinder machine will be paving a one metre wide gravel shoulder on a 1.5km stretch of Lachlan Valley Way with work starting on June 3.

Mr Sharpe said the family company

had spent millions of dollars to develop a series of technologies to repair and widen roads, without extensive reconstruction and traffic delays.

"Costs are substantially reduced for councils because a project that would normally take at least a week using traditional methods can be completed in a day using the sidewinder," Mr Sharpe said.

Mr Sharpe said the usual way of repairing broken edges or widening a road, is to dig up a substantial amount of the road before resurfacing, which takes a long time, causes major traffic disruption and is quite costly.

"The Sidewinder process, which extends the life of the road and reduces traffic disruption, uses one purpose built machine to dig a neat trench along the side of the road, and another to fill the excavated trench with gravel, hotmix asphalt or even recycled materials," Mr Sharpe said.

Mr Sharpe said more councils were using the Sidewinder to fix road edges due to the environmental, safety, quality and cost benefits the process provided.

"Widening roads is a valuable investment for councils, as it provides better access for residents in regional areas, and can reduce the incidence of road accidents in the community," Mr Sharpe said.

According to the Australian Collage of Road Safety, the sealing of crumbling road edges can reduce the number of run-off and head-on crashes by 60 per cent.